

6-6-2013

# The power of belief: Innocents and innocence in children's fantasy fiction

Haley Elizabeth Atkinson

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2013

# The Power of Belief: Innocents and Innocence in Children's Fantasy Fiction

Haley Elizabeth Atkinson

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The Power of Belief:  
Innocents and Innocence in Children's Fantasy Fiction

by  
Haley Elizabeth Atkinson

MA Thesis

Submitted to the Department of English Language and Literature  
Eastern Michigan University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in  
Children's Literature

Thesis Committee:

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6 June 2013

Ypsilanti, Michigan

## Acknowledgements

The idea for this thesis has been percolating in my mind for several years, and the final result is an amalgamation of work put in by a number of individuals. Dr. Annette Wannamaker, my thesis advisor, has offered continual support and encouragement, for which I am most grateful. I would also like to thank Dr. Amanda Allen who has acted as my second reader, offering tips on the improvement and direction of my work, especially where Harry Potter is concerned. I would like to thank my mom, who remains stubbornly steadfast in her insistence that I follow every dream down every road, whether it is paved or not, never wavering in her belief in me; my dad, who has always reminded me that I can come home anytime, which has given me the courage not to; and Adam, my love, who first prompted me to write this thesis and remained full of hope and confidence throughout, even when I took occasional stumbles into those festering, self-fulfilling puddles of doubt. He has helped me to structure my days, writing in time slots for the consumption of carrot cake, walks, and wasting time, without which I would have been much less productive. Thank you all.

## Abstract

The power of belief is a reoccurring theme in fantasy fiction for children and young adults. Oftentimes such belief merely affects the internal make-up of children or child-like characters, giving them the confidence that they need to act upon the world, but at other times belief acts to magically impose an imagined reality onto a physical reality. Fairies are brought back from the dead, destinies are divined through a golden compass, phantom stags lead the way to hidden swords. This thesis explores the power of belief and its associations with the innocence of childhood as found in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan and Wendy*, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, and L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Each of the novels that I explore features child characters whose belief in an imagined reality produces a profound effect on the world around her or him.

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## Introduction: The Power of Belief

Throughout my thesis I will explore several works of literature written for children, analyzing how the child characters within these stories use their own made-up stories to create their realities. This idea is a reoccurring one in literature for young people. With the traditional view of childhood being linked with a state of innocence—and perhaps, because of it—the child’s imagination comes alive in fantasy literature for children. The child characters do more than simply pretend something is real; through belief, they make it real. The imagination of child characters and, by extension, of the child readers as well, has a power similar to that of a magic wand or a handful of pixie dust, for it makes possible the alteration and improvement of their present reality.

### The Child Reader as Creator

This magic happens for the child reader as well. Every time a child picks up a book to read, he or she is participating in an act of creation. The chosen book may have a torn cover and worn pages; it may have been in print for a hundred years, but by simply reading it, you are creating a new story, a story that no one has ever read before, a story that even the author will never know. The words on the page remain the same, but the story inside is transformed into something unique for each new reader, and even for the same reader at different times in his or her life. As Perry Nodelman writes in *The Pleasures of Children’s Literature*, “Different readers never produce the same stories or poems [...] everyone has different ideas about the meanings of the words people share” (52). Though set in ink on paper, it is impossible to capture just one story, experience, or emotion in the pages of a book, just as it is impossible to step in the same stream twice because the water is constantly in motion. The words are the rocks at the bottom of the stream, but the meaning of the words is in constant flux. Like the stream, our minds and

imaginings shift as new information is gathered, changing the filter (the mind) through which the words of any story must pass, and so, with each new reader, the meaning of the text changes.

Stories are different because readers are different. If every human being were the same, then every story would have only one interpretation. Nodelman writes, “Although the words on the page do imply certain experiences for readers—a poem, for example, about an owl and a cat—the words themselves are not the experiences” (17). The act of reading and interpreting the words is what transforms them into experiences. All stories are written assuming that their readers will have already had certain experiences, or what Nodelman refers to as a repertoire of knowledge. In the case of “The Owl and the Pussy-Cat,” the repertoire of knowledge that is expected is a basic familiarity with how ordinary cats and owls behave (17). Nodelman calls this made-up reader the “implied reader,” because it is this person who the writer is expecting to read their work. In order to experience a book, Nodelman argues, the reader must, at least to some extent, take on the part of the implied reader. Otherwise he or she will not be able to enter the story. The words will remain rocks, unmoving, and the reader will remain unmoved.

In the process of interpretation neither reader nor writer can ever leave behind or exist outside of their ideology or culture. Leaving behind one’s ideology would be just as impossible as leaving behind one’s own head. Perhaps in Wonderland it would be possible, where flamingos are used as bats and babies turn into pigs, but certainly not in this world. Nodelman goes on to say that, “Until read, a text is merely something with the potential to come into existence [...] texts come into existence only in the minds of readers” (17). Another way to think about it is to think about a work of art. A picture is made up of negative space. It is the white space between the lines, the angles and the curves that give the finished picture its shape.

It is not possible to leave behind one's experiences and the assumptions of the culture in which one was raised. Even if rejected, that culture has still impacted your life through your rejection of it. Every event, experienced directly or through the pages of a book, makes an impact. Every story helps to build upon or alter the opinions and ideas of its readers and, in turn, helps to create the reader, as the reader helps to create the story. David Rudd, in "Children's Literature and the Return to Rose," writes, "Ideology in its Althusserian version expanded to devour the entire terrain of lived experience" (301). In this extreme version, every moment in which you are alive, every taste, smell, sight, every touch goes into making you, you. Every story heard or read with or even without a sympathetic ear impacts who you will become. We are created and transformed by language.

### The Story as Creator

A writer takes a story and puts form to it, molding it into a song, a poem, a novella, but the reader also participates in its creation even as the story participates in creating the reader, only the reader moves backward. The reader must take the poem, limerick, or novel and, through experiencing it, draw the story out. In this way, we all create our own stories, not just those expressed by others in books but those we experience simply through the process of living. Memories, for instance, are altered almost as soon as they are made, details are changed, tone of voice shifts, or perhaps shadows are darkened. We constantly take thoughts and emotions and draw them anew using words, and we believe the words. The words that we have chosen to describe reality become a part of our reality. By believing them, we create our lives using the stories that we tell and retell ourselves and others.

Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, promotes language as creator, claiming that we do not recognize ourselves as independent beings until we are given a name and pass through the

mirror stage in which we recognize ourselves as separate from our surroundings (Coats 16). Karen Coats in “How to Save Your Life: Lessons from a Runt Pig” looks at E. B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web* using a Lacanian perspective, to show how language helps to create. Coats writes, “Wilbur emerges as the effect of Charlotte’s words” (30). Throughout the story we see Wilbur responding to what is said about him. He is called radiant and, as a result, he holds his head a little higher than before. Coats goes on to reason, “If language can be said to have effects, then it must function in some way, that is, it must act rather than simply refer to something that already exists” (30). Like the chicken and the egg, one might ask which came first. Did story come first or did self? There is no real answer. As J. R. R. Tolkien writes in his famous essay “On Fairy Stories,” “To ask what is the origin of stories (however qualified) is to ask what is the origin of language and of the mind” (6). Authors, rather than putting names to things that already exist, are bringing things into existence by putting names to them. Every invention—the light bulb, the automobile, the radio, the Reese cup—had to be imagined before it was invented, just as stories begin inside the mind, tiny sparks of imaginative wonderings and impossible ideas.

### Defining the Child

Children are often credited with having the most adept imaginations, though they have not had time to see much of the world. The assumption is that the more experiences a person has and the more grown-up they appear, the less credit they are often given, especially in children’s literature, with having a good imagination. This idea, that a lack of experience promotes imagination, seems contradictory. Logically, would not more adventure and understanding make a person more inventive and make imagining the unseen and the unknown easier? As L. M. Montgomery’s Anne Shirley exclaims when faced with a room rich in culture and art and luxuries like velvet carpet and silk curtains, “There are so many things in this room and all so

splendid that there is no scope for imagination” (323). A plethora of beauty obviously stifles beauties that would be imagined if the mind was not so busy with the surrounding external beauty. She goes on to muse, “That is one consolation of being poor—there are so many things you can imagine about” (323). This view of the imagination is even more ironic when one considers that the writers of children’s literature are almost exclusively adults themselves with years of experience and access to art, culture, and any number of pretty and exciting things.

Still, this idea that innocence, youth, and inexperience hold the key to creation has a strong foothold. Answers to divine questions, questions unanswerable by logic, can presumably be read more clearly by the young because they are not yet confused and corrupted by a fallen world. Of himself, Tolkien writes, “While he is there [inside of a fairy-story] it is dangerous for him to ask too many questions, lest the gates should be shut and the keys be lost” (2). He seems to imply that the less one knows, the more one can imagine. Magic is killed by knowledge, innocence by experience. That is the assumption. Yet something cannot be created out of nothing. Each experience, whether it is filled with laughter or tears, brings more material we can use to imagine new wonders. Why is it, then, that the child’s imagination is treated with such reverence, seen as something foreign or exotic, something untouchable? What is a child? Is it simply a person with less experience, less knowledge, or fewer years? It would be impossible to draw distinct lines around childhood just as it would be impossible to define the child. As Jacqueline Rose points out, the word *child*, as all words functioning as mirrors to reality must be, is a construct, not the actuality. In describing a piece of reality, a new reality is created. Every time a sentence, phrase, or even word is read, more and more meaning is created as each new reader interprets it anew. In this way, language both fails and transforms reality. What is more,

the word *child* is always defined by its opposite, by adults, who can only ever observe other children or remember being a child but can never again experience life as a child.

Looking briefly at the history of the word *child* and adult ideas about this creature called *child*, it is impossible not to see how those ideas have changed throughout the ages and how they continue to change. The definition for *child* holds contradictions, not just from one era to the next but in today's society as well. We idolize the child as we condemn the state of childhood. Though the image of the child is still regarded as something sacred, we use words for children or young people as insults to degrade and humiliate. In her book *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America*, Beverley Clark points to "phrases like 'immature response,' 'childish reaction,' 'adolescent quarreling,' 'juvenile behavior,' 'puerile thinking'" (4). At the same time, our society uses the notion of childhood innocence and purity to promote adult causes, permitted through its object status. We can "use" the status of childhood because we see it as less than ourselves. Clark points out that we use the child's physical image in sales, politics, and art while conveniently ignoring the actual child (1-2). She writes, "We value childhood. But we also dismiss it. We value the image even as we ignore the reality" (1). The ideas and images now inspired by the word *child* are complex and contradictory.

Just as the word *child* is defined by adults, child characters, for the most part, are imagined and written by adult authors. The child reader is entirely dependent upon adults to portray them accurately. This already places the child at a distinct disadvantage. Most children cannot write their own stories, for they do not yet have the skill or learning. Adults, therefore, must write children's literature. Such authors have perhaps the widest audience, for not only do children read their books (sometimes intended for a child's age range, sometimes not), but adult editors, publishers, librarians, teachers, and parents read them as well. Clark points out, "None of

those who edit or publish or market it, and very few of those who buy it, belong to its ostensible audience” (14). To an adult, the child is distant; either a romanticized ideal, a memory, or a specimen to be observed. With this in consideration, it is no wonder the child has remained such a mysterious figure, used to represent both the sublime and angelic and the base, untamed animal. So, what is this literary *child* that adult authors have created? Is it anyone under the age of thirteen? Anyone under eighteen? Anyone still living at home? Anyone who can skip down the sidewalk and not feel like a fool? Anyone who gets a thrill from riding a carousel?

### The Historical Child

While the main portion of my thesis will consist of a close reading of works by five fantasy novelists writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the United States and the United Kingdom—Philip Pullman, J. K. Rowling, J. M. Barrie, Frank L. Baum, and Lewis Carroll and the worlds they created—I will first look briefly at how preconceptions about children have shaped the literary child, imposing upon him or her incredible powers of creation. Some critics argue that literature for children could not exist until children were looked at and defined as a distinct group. As Perry Nodelman points out, during the Middle Ages children were looked upon and treated very much like mini adults (80-81). Other than religious texts, there was very little distinction between texts for adults and texts for children. Jacqueline Rose goes even further, claiming boldly that children themselves did not exist until defined. Though children have obviously existed for as long as human beings have existed, the meaning of The Child has changed just as children themselves have changed—the most obvious example being the shift and significant increase in the accepted age range encompassing childhood.

I will begin my (very brief and simplified) overview of children and their literature with the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the majority of the texts produced for children were written with the

purpose of instructing their readers. Authors and critics such as Maria Edgeworth and other Sunday School Moralists considered it their personal duty to look after the spiritual safety of England's children in order to secure for them a blissful hereafter. At the same time Rational Moralists, like Maria Edgeworth, also condemned imaginative fancies but for a different reason. They believed that such whimsy took away from the happiness that knowledge could, if given the chance, bring to children in their present, earthbound state. As Andrew O'Malley notes in his article "The Coach and Six: Chapbook Residue in Late Eighteenth-Century Children's Literature," they did this by monitoring the texts written and produced for children. Evangelicalism reigned in England at the time, and the literature reflected this (18). Fantasy fiction including fairy and folk tales was looked upon as dangerous, and the claim was made that these would turn the child's thoughts away from God. Any text that stimulated the imagination—in other words, any text not about the familiar—was deemed unfit. Children's books were seen as windows through which the child would gaze, and if the child found things less than savory, their minds would be polluted. In citing a study written by Mary Jackson, O'Malley notes that there were several shifts taking place in England during this time such as a shift toward a more conservative outlook, as well as a shift from the inexpensive chapbook to the more didactic texts written for the middle class (20). Chapbooks in general contained a much wider variety of subject matter than authors such as Trimmer, who were primarily writing for the middle to upper-class, approved of. Written to also include the lower class, chapbooks included, alongside the more widely accepted themes of religion and morality, fantasy, magic, adventure, crime, and horror (O'Malley 20). Trimmer, who was not only a writer but an influential reviewer and author of "The Guardian of Education," "[felt the] need to rid the nursery of the vicious and potentially subversive influences of the chapbooks and fairy tales" (O'Malley 4.74–75). In her view, the

inexpensive chapbooks were full of vulgar, sinful fancies, and fairy tales were dangerous and improper, especially as reading material for children. Was this because she might have feared the imaginative power of the child?

It is impossible to draw definitive lines around the construction of any genre. There are no clear cut boundaries, and children's literature did not start neatly at the beginning or end of any respective era. Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, morally heavy-handed books were still being produced, and much of the literature written specifically for children was Puritan and produced for the purification of the soul. However, it is commonly argued that with the advent of more playful books like *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* as early as the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, children's literature began to experience a shift, moving gradually from instruction towards delight (O'Malley 18). In the Victorian era, literature for children experienced a rather radical growth spurt, and, in a simplification of a very complicated topic, most people cite this as the beginning of children's literature as a genre.

This brings up the question of whether it is even possible to have a children's book that is entirely free from didacticism. Is it possible to have any piece of literature without an inherent message, even if that message is not spelled out in the text? Any story about a person or anthropomorphized animal, car, or toaster overcoming prejudice, cruelty, pain, selfishness, or weakness, whether it is coming from themselves or from some force outside of themselves, whether it is threatening to them or someone else, is about good triumphing over evil. Can a story avoid promoting *anything*? Children's books, more so than books for an older audience, are about growth and change, subjects natural for the child reader as well as the child character, and such subjects cater to a certain degree of moralizing.

The Romantic and Victorian eras imposed upon children ideas of unearthly beauty and innocence, ideals that no human being could ever embody. The idea of the child was (and continues to be) placed in a kind of purgatory, hanging in limbo, with one foot in this world of corruption and decay and one foot lingering on that golden ground of perfection, hemmed not by the flesh and bones of a body, but free. It is this freedom that authors often use as explanation for the child's supernatural powers within fantasy fiction. The romantic poets, including William Wordsworth and William Blake, describe the child as one just departed from some ethereal realm and still draped in remnants of the grace of another world. Wordsworth writes in "Ode: Imitations of Immortality," "Heaven lies about us in our infancy" (66). It is a world that grownups have long since forgotten. The heavenly light that the child is privy to, "the Man perceives it die away,/ And fade into the light of common day" (Wordsworth 75-76). Many argue that, in contrast to the mini-adults of the Middle Ages, children became a new species: sexless beings, uncomplicated by a world of sin but constantly in danger from it. They were and continue to be portrayed in literature, because of their innocence or perhaps their ignorance, as existing outside of the laws that bind adults. They can defy the laws of gravity with laughter and rise up into the air as the Banks siblings do in P. L. Travers's *Mary Poppins*. They can think happy thoughts and fly off to the Never Neverland. They can even clear their minds and divine the future as Lyra does in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*.

To be innocent then is to be viewed as having a greater capacity to believe. Taken together, imagination, belief, and innocence place the child in a God-like position. The child has, inside of the mind of the adult, been constructed to resemble a fallen angel, a visitor from a more divine realm, an uncorrupted innocent. This unearthly persona is shown in the literary child by giving that child an imagination of incredible proportions, an imagination that has the power to

bring to life whatever is imagined. Sweet enchantments, lost or forgotten, are reborn, but nightmares are also given birth, reflecting the fear society has felt in regard to the child's imaginative capacity.

### The Child and the Imagination

A fear of the imagination persists even to this day. We see the evidence of it in the banning of the *Harry Potter* series. In *Harry Potter and Philosophy*, David Baggett explores the arguments of those who would mark the novels as unsafe and unfit for children. Those who would see them banned, including a number of religious groups, claim that the novels “glamorize the occult, piquing kids' curiosity about it and desensitizing them to its dangers by making it appear as harmless fun. Stirring children's curiosity in this way, it is argued, makes them vulnerable to dark spiritual forces” (159). This seems to imply that children are like Silly Putty, imprinted with whatever they read as literal, irrevocable fact with no filter for humor and imagined fancies.

At the same time, in a contradictory twist, the child's affinity for imaging things is viewed as evidence of their purity and divinity. Fantasy itself can be defined as an unrestrained use of the imagination, mental images full of wonder and magic. Nodelman writes, “A main purpose of most children's stories and poems and picture books from Newbury's time to our own is to encourage and allow children [...] to indulge in their childlike delight in sensation” (84). Fantasy encouraged and even demanded use of the child reader's imagination, which is exactly what many grownups found so terrifying.

Fantasy stories written for and about children are often enclosed in an additional imaginative layer in which the idea of the “over-active” imagination is used as a plot device and in some cases comes close to becoming its own character. This concept is frequently used in the

construction of a story within a story. Child characters in such works of fiction have a tendency to either get lost inside their imaginations or bring what they imagine into the physical world in a strange mirroring of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey, but without the physical journey. Often, the two are combined within one story. For example, Max in Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* begins by imposing his imagination upon his bedroom and gradually enters entirely into the island of his own mind. The bedposts become trees and the carpet becomes grass. Bastian, in Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story*, does the opposite. He enters his imagination and gradually brings that magical world back with him. As Carl Jung writes in, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," "The special significance of a true work of art resides in the fact that it has escaped from the limitations of the personal and has soared beyond the personal concerns of its creator [and can affect other people, a contagious disease]" (6). Jung is referring to one's artistic expression affecting others, yet we see this theme taking place within the art itself, especially in the art of children's fiction. This theme of escape is seen again and again as objects, people, and ideas existing solely in the imaginations of the child characters break free, escaping the confines of their creators' imaginations and entering into the real world of the book. One common model is to tell a story and at the end have the child character wake up from the story that is being told, as with Catherine Storr's *Marianne Dreams*, and after having passed these imagined worlds off as imaginary, giving some clue, usually an object left under the pillow, beside the bed, or perchance in a pocket, to suggest the reality of the supposed dream. A perfect example would be Harold from Crockett Johnson's picture book *Harold and the Purple Crayon*. Using a purple crayon, the young boy Harold literally draws what he wants or what he needs and it becomes a part of his world. When he is sleepy, he draws a bed and draws covers to keep him warm.

Like the adult writer, the child characters bring their own worlds to life, not through words, for they do not have the knowledge that the adult possesses to sew sentences together with such dexterity, but through belief in themselves and their worlds. By believing in what they imagine, by virtue of their perceived innocence and naivety, the imagined is brought to life, and the child character becomes a creator. As Nikos Kazantzakis writes in *Report to Greco*, “By believing passionately in something that still does not exist, we create it” (434). The child gives life and a physical reality to their fantasy by creating it visually inside their heads, as if the imagination was a kind of blueprints to reality.

As I will be using the term frequently throughout my thesis, I would like to take a moment to explore the concept of the “imagination.” Using a psychoanalytic approach, I will look at what the theorists Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Jacques Lacan, Joseph Campbell, and Bruno Bettelheim thought of whenever they spoke of the imagination and, in particular, what links the imagination specifically with youth. Much psychoanalytic criticism would have it that children are compensating for a lack of power, that they are taking their inner experiences and externalizing them through the use of symbolic stories. In other words, children have a special kinship with the imagination because they are in greater need of its service. They are in need because the real world is still too new and frightening to face directly, especially since they lack power and control. For example, in *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bruno Bettelheim claims, “The imagery of fairy tales helps children better than anything else in their most difficult and yet most important and satisfying task: achieving a more mature consciousness to civilize the chaotic pressures of their unconscious” (23). This is in accordance with the idea that the child is an uncivilized force. The child, like the adult, is full of inner turmoil, thoughts, emotions, and feelings, but unlike the adult, the child has not yet learned that this inner life can be divided,

categorized, shaped into words, and diagnosed. According to such theories, the child uses fantasy to give the chaos of the mind its order.

Many believe that the child's mind is like a wild rumpus, to use the words of Maurice Sendak, whose *Wild Things*, besides being terrible monsters who live on an island way out to sea, can be seen as symbolic representations of the id. Sigmund Freud broke the psyche into three parts: the id (unconscious), the ego (consciousness), and the superego (conscience). It is the id which reigns supreme in very small children, according to Freud, and represents want and desire untethered by concern for consequence (Barry 93). Bettelheim argues that fantasy stories and fairy tales that promote the use of imaginative responses aid the child in dealing with everyday problems, including problems created when the id clashes with societal expectations of what is a proper way to behave. By putting their own concerns and troubles into allegorical stories, the child can better look at the situation, because it is not, in a literal sense, the child's own situation. It is in disguise.

Bettelheim argues against the watered-down, prettified versions of fantastical tales that Disney so loves to produce, claiming that it is the older, more gruesome versions that are the best translators for the child's inner life. He would have Ariel's voice stolen and her tail sliced in two as in Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid." He would have the heels and toes cut off the step-sisters in the Grimm Brother's "Cinderella" and the pigeons peck out their eyes at the end. The child knows that her own thoughts are not always good and pure, and so a story in which all of the uncertainty, pain, and immorality has been filtered out only serves to isolate the child more and make her fear and even hate herself (Bettelheim 7). Bettelheim writes, "The child intuitively comprehends that although these stories are unreal, they are not untrue; that while what these stories tell about does not happen in fact, it must happen as inner experience and

personal development” (73). Bettelheim is not alone in this belief. G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis, both writers and critics, claim that “Fairy stories are ‘spiritual explorations’ and hence ‘the most life-like’ since they reveal ‘human life as seen, or felt, or divined from the inside’” (Bettelheim 24).

One theory is that because children have such little control over their outer lives, they turn inward to the imagination. Seven days a week children are told what to eat, what to wear, when to sleep, when to bathe, when to speak, and what to say when they do speak. It is assumed that generally their minds are not burdened with practical responsibilities such as what to have for dinner or how to fill out tax forms properly, but neither do they have the luxury of actualizing their desires. Fairy stories, and arguably all good stories, allow their readers to put themselves in the place of the character and through such associations see solutions to problems in their own lives. A child might be reading about overcoming a dragon when in reality he spends part of his day in fear of a bully or a strict, totalitarian teacher. The correlation, according to Bettelheim, does not and should not be understood by the child reader. It is felt and that is enough.

The child, perhaps, does not yet have the “repertoire” of knowledge to face the hundreds of living stories surrounding her. According to Coats, Lacan is of the opinion that “all humans [...] are born prematurely” (1). In opposition to the view of the child as the last resource of uncorrupted heaven-on-earth, Lacan’s theories seem to look at the child as an incomplete human without an identity. Based on these theories, the very young child does not see herself as a separate entity in this wide world, but as an essential part of it, the heart of it. Lacan writes that it is only when the child sees herself in a mirror and begins to recognize that she is separate from the table, her blanket, her mother that she begins to view the world as foreign.

Like Lacan, Freud sees the very young child as premature, unable to distinguish itself from others or reality from the imaginary. According to Freud, the child is not bound by the reality-principle because, unlike the adult, the child does not know where reality ends and fantasy begins. Freud's theories about the imagination center around want and desire. He views the imagination as a tool for creating substitutes for unfulfilled and forbidden desires. Fantasy is fantastical, in part, because we make it so. Shame for our darker desires, those that reside in Freud's unconscious, causes us to disguise them with symbol and metaphor. Thus, we create fantasy.

Jung, who was a student of Freud, took this idea and expanded upon it. He claimed that all human beings share an unconscious and help build upon it by living their everyday life, by laughing and crying, by making mistakes and having adventures. He called this the collective unconscious. Archetypes such as the old crone, the trickster, and the child hero exist in the collective unconscious. Nodelman claims, "The basic story pattern of children's fiction, in which characters leave home to seek adventure and then are sufficiently transformed by their adventure and return home in triumph, is a version of this archetypal plot" (228). Each of the child characters that I will look at can be loosely traced through the Hero's Journey, as Joseph Campbell christened this type of plot. This is not always a physical journey but is often one of the mind where the child enters the imagination, for it is within the mind that our desires and fears are best known and where the most can be gained.

Whatever the reason, a popular adult concept of the child is that children are inextricably allied with the imagination. Within fantasy fiction this link turns into a magical power greater than any other, but a power dependent on the child's ignorance of it. Lyra is able to divine the answers to any question. Harry can expel depression with a loving memory and a flick of his

wand. Peter can imagine he is eating a scrumptious plateful of food and be filled up as though he had actually eaten. Dorothy simply wishes to be home and is transported, and Alice brings to end a dream and the entire kingdom of Wonderland by stamping her foot and claiming their nonexistence. The body of my thesis will consist of a close reading of select texts looking at the child as an innocent and, as such, in possession of a belief that has a corporeal power, directly influencing the material world.

### The Children of Children's Literature

In Chapter One I discuss J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. Within the text, Barrie actually describes the child's mind, writing, "It is all rather confusing, especially as nothing will stand still" (6). I will look at the act of flying as something that only children can do, because presumably (though it is not stated directly) only a child would ever believe it was possible. Without belief, of course, one cannot fly. In an attempt to discern what The Child is, I will also examine The Adult and what separates one from the other, and why children are more proficient at believing. The fairies are an interesting case of study for belief. Their very existence hinges upon the belief of human children. Not only does disbelief kill fairies, belief has the power to save them. In this case, it is childlikeness, not age, that distinguishes one as innocent, for adults along with children clap to save Tinker Bell. I will also look at Peter in relation to belief and the imagination, for he seems to be able to flit through the minds of children as easily as the adult enters various clothing stores in a shopping mall.

In Chapter Two, I will turn to look at J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter Series*. There are several specific spells that require, in addition to the right words and the correct flick of a wand, the concentrated belief of the witch or wizard casting them. The forbidden curse, *Crucio*, requires that its caster desire to cause pain. This is the only way the spell is effective. Both the

Patronus charm and the Riddikulus spell require the caster to hold an image inside their heads and to project that image upon a physical space. Similarly, in order to gain access to platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$ , one must preemptively believe in its existence. I will also look at the chapter “King’s Cross” in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, which takes place in a liminal space that is not here or there, and while in it, Harry is neither living nor dead. Dumbledore tells Harry, “Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real” (DH 723). The fact that the conversation exists only inside his imagination does not matter, because though the meeting does not affect the physical world, it does affect Harry. It gives him the courage to return to the world outside of his mind and continue fighting, and *he* affects the physical world.

Chapter Three will examine Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*, considering the way in which he presents the child and what he calls “grace” as something that one loses when one grows up. While in possession of this mysterious quality, Lyra, the protagonist, has the power to read the Alethiometer. She does not use reason and logic to deduce the answers. Instead, by clearing her mind and thinking of nothing, the answers mysteriously appear on the face of the Alethiometer as if by magic. Pullman ultimately subverts the notion that this state of innocence is ideal. He does this not by taking this mysterious quality of grace and innocence away from the child, but by giving the adult a chance to regain something akin to—and ultimately more powerful than—innocence: a grace attained through a lifetime of hard work, study, and experience. I will examine the Specters in an attempt to define The Child as portrayed by Pullman. Children, in addition to being immune, cannot see the Specters. The only weapon an adult has against a Specter is to ignore them and to concentrate very hard on something else. This, however, only provides a temporary escape. The Specters eat a person’s daemon or soul,

which I will also examine, for within Pullman's universe, the daemon's form is transient until one reaches puberty, and then it is trapped inside one form until death releases it to Dust. This seems to imply that after puberty, internal change or change in character is impossible.

Chapter Four will look at Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. Alice's fantasy world exists as long as she is willing to play along. She plays along by believing in and accepting the absurdity of the world in which she finds herself. In *Wonderland*, I will mostly focus on the last scene in the palace of the Queen of Hearts. As soon as Alice names the cards as the commonplace, mundane objects that they are in her world "nothing but a pack of cards," the world of *Wonderland* falls apart, the dream ends, and she wakes up on the riverbank (97). In *Through the Looking Glass*, I will look at the argument of whose dream Alice is in. Is it hers? Or is it the King's? It is interesting that Alice is certain that she must be the dreamer, and yet she chooses to let the King remain asleep just in case, leaving the reader to wonder. As long as one is unaware of the fact, does it really matter if we are simply a character in someone else's mind—if we refuse to believe it?

In Chapter Five, I will examine Frank L. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and look at the role (what I will argue is a darker role) that belief plays in the lives and confidence levels of Dorothy and her friends. The Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion each possess in abundance what they see themselves as most lacking. The Scarecrow, who believes he has no brain, solves the majority of their problems while traveling to the Emerald City. The Cowardly Lion, though admittedly afraid, faces each of his fears as they confront him. The Tin Woodman, who has no beating heart, is by far the kindest, gentlest character, bursting into tears when he accidentally treads on an ant and squishes it. They stubbornly refuse to believe in themselves until an adult tells them that they should. Ironically, it is the adult who is the fraud.

The Wizard is the only character who publically and consciously lays claim to power he does not have.

Coupled with belief, the imaginations of these child characters have a power capable of altering and improving upon their present reality. In Chapter Six, I will bring in evidence drawn from each of the texts discussed in order to show the imaginary dividing line separating children and adults and the consequences of having a line at all. C.S. Lewis writes in *Of Other Worlds*, “The whole association of [...] fantasy with childhood is local and accidental” (26). Adults may not believe in the imaginary in the same way that children do, but they do believe in it. They just give it different names and create it through different mediums, such as writing, acting, painting, and dancing. Tolkien claimed that the adult fantasy writer is exercising “his function as a ‘subcreator’; not, as they love to say now, making a ‘comment upon life’ but making, so far as possible, a subordinate world of his own” (Lewis 27). Fantasy is promoted as a “proper function” (27). Are imagined worlds any less real for the adult? I will argue that, if anything, the imagination is more real because the adult believes, not necessarily in the thing being imagined, but in her need for and in the importance of creating the thing itself—whatever it may be. In other words, psychology is given as a reason for creating imaginary fantasies. Children simply do not need a reason, so adults, who must label, have deemed what the child does as imagining, pretending, and making-belief.

## Chapter One: J. M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy*:

### The Power of Happy Thoughts and Copious Applause

I will begin my exploration of this literary child prototype, whose unquestioning belief grants him or her access to unimaginable powers, with James M. Barrie's classic text *Peter and Wendy*. It is impossible to talk about Peter Pan without also talking about belief. Following a long tradition in children's fantasy fiction, Barrie explores the idea of the imagination bestowing upon the child unexplainable powers. In the narrative, not just Peter but all children have the ability to alter the present reality. They do this by simply believing in a different one. By virtue of their ignorance of things like taxes and uncomfortable office chairs, these child characters are able to believe in what they imagine and thus bestow life upon their fancies. Within Barrie's text, it is this assumed innocence of the child that gives children so much of their power. Innocence is depicted almost synonymously with ignorance, for with knowledge and experience, this innocence is lost. It makes sense then that Peter, as the perpetual youth, the essence of childhood who refuses to grow up and cannot retain knowledge because his memory is simply too short, would be the strongest case for belief having a corporeal power.

Peter is most closely linked to the Neverland. He is capable of flying without fairy dust because of a wish he made to the fairies, and he is the only one able to guide children, appropriated from the world of logic where all children must grow up, to the Neverland. In fact, like a mother searching the park for her child, the island flies around the world, in and out of the minds and imaginations of mortal children, in search of Peter. In contrast with Barrie's London, a place ruled by adults, the Neverland is a world built by the dreams of children. It is recreated according to each child's imagination. For example: "John lived in a boat turned upside down on the sands, Michael in a wigwam, Wendy in a house of leaves deftly sewn together. John had no

friends, Michael had friends at night, Wendy had a pet wolf forsaken by its parents” (7). Barrie goes on to say that though the Neverland differs for each child, they are all similar. For one, they all have Peter. He is found in the Neverland of each of the three Darling children. When they physically arrive in the Neverland, it is as if all of their individual versions, the ones that they dreamt of at night in their beds, had been mashed together. John’s flamingo is there as well as his boat where he slept as well as Wendy’s wolf cub and Michael’s cave (Barrie 55). For all children possess some portion of Peter’s power of imagination, or at least they possess the potential for it. Even a few adults maintain a remnant. For those characters who are innocent (or naïve) enough to believe in the unseen, this power of the imagination bestows upon them a most god-like power.

We see Mrs. Darling discovering bits and pieces of the Neverland as she is reordering her children’s minds, for the island is often pushed back by the daily routine of a properly run British household and awakes in the mind whenever the child goes to sleep (17). It is a world in which Peter Pan rules with careless ease and from which Mrs. Darling catches him peeping. Barrie writes, “She dreamt that the Neverland had come too near and that a strange boy had broken through [...] he had rent the film that obscures the Neverland, and she saw Wendy and John and Michael peeping though the gap” (25). Without the drudgery of having to match suit with tie, calculate figures, and dispense medicine, tasks which Mr. Darling dreads with a passion, his children’s minds are left open to possession by this secret, hidden world of the imagination. This is reminiscent of a Puritan proverb, “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop.” According to Barrie, the Darling children, and perhaps the majority of upper middle class Victorian children, do not even have responsibility over their own minds. Their mother reigns supreme inside as well as

out. Mrs. Darling exercises complete and utter control over her children, going into their minds and rearranging their thoughts as they sleep. Barrie writes:

It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day. If you could keep awake (but of course you can't) you would see your own mother doing this, and you would find it very interesting to watch her. It is quite like tidying up drawers. You would see her on her knees, I expect, lingering humorously over some of your contents, wondering where on earth you had picked this thing up, making discoveries sweet and not so sweet (5).

Every thought, wondering, emotion, hope, and fear is laid out and examined. According to this description, all mothers, all good mothers anyway, remake their children while they are sleeping so that they will wake up in a state more desirable to the mother in question. The child's naughty thoughts are stuffed into the corners at the back and the sweet thoughts are pulled to the forefront of the mind ready for the next morning. In contrast to the minimal power the Darling children have in London, the Neverland is always there, overlapping the known, familiar world, and by simply believing in its existence, they are able to gain control over it.

Adults are seen making use of their imaginations too, though in a very different way. We see Mrs. Darling dreaming of babies, sketching out what Barrie calls her "guesses" (14-15). What then separates the child's power of belief from the adult's much diminished power of belief? For some reason, as power over the physical world grows, power over the Neverland

wanes. Within the text, it is the innocence of the child that makes their belief powerful enough to influence reality. Grown-ups are not completely barred from the Neverland, though they can only ever dream of it. Barrie tells us that the Darling children, and indeed most children and some adults, dream of the Neverland.

Though the island exists in children's minds, we see with the Darling children that it is a real place as well (this is not to say that something is not real if it only exists inside the mind). Wendy, John, and Michael physically rise off the nursery floor and soar out of the window towards the second star on the right. To fly to the Neverland, the child must have a pinch of fairy dust as well as a good supply of happy thoughts or, as Peter says, "lovely wonderful thoughts" (44). Like Dorothy in Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Wendy must be able to visualize whatever it is that will bring her joy first in order to achieve it. In Wendy's case, it is a mermaid lagoon. In Dorothy's case, it is a Kansas farm. When Wendy first begins to think of flying and mermaids and lost boys to take care of and play mother to, before Peter has even sprinkled her with fairy dust, she begins to wiggle, "as if she were trying to remain on the nursery floor" (47). The fairy dust, like Dorothy's silver slippers, is just the catalyst.

It is not only children who are subject to being recreated and rearranged by bigger, more powerful people—namely, parents. The fairies' very existence is dependent upon the belief of human beings. Peter tells Wendy, "You see children know such a lot now, they soon don't believe in fairies, and every time a child says, 'I don't believe in fairies,' there is a fairy somewhere that falls down dead" (37). Whether they know it or not, these children are creating their own reality. The origin of the fairy species is also linked with human beings. Peter explains that fairies come from the first laugh of every human child. Barrie departs from traditional fairy lore by having his fairies live not only in the Neverland but also in London's own Kensington

Gardens, thus melding the fantastical world and the real. As Maria Tartar writes in *The Annotated Peter Pan*, “Fairyland is usually represented in folklore as a parallel universe, one that can [only] be entered by stepping into a fairy ring or interrupting a fairy dance” (37). This idea of dancing comes up again and again in traditional fairy lore, and a mortal caught up in a dance with the fairies is often unable to stop (Evans-Wentz). With this in mind, it is interesting that the part of Mrs. Darling most closely aligned with the supernatural essence of Peter, her kiss, is most visible when she dances. Barrie writes, “And gayest of all was Mrs. Darling, who would pirouette so wildly that all you could see of her was the kiss” (17). It is while she is in action, breathless and out of control, that she most embodies the childlike quality that makes up Peter, the fairies, and the Neverland.

There are countless theories explaining what fairies might be. According to D. L. Ashliman in *Fairy Lore: A Handbook*, one belief espouses that fairies grew out of the rotting corpse of a Norse god, another that they are the spirits of the dead, that they are fallen angels, the unwashed ancestors of Eve’s children, evil spirits, and even aliens (137-51). Whatever they are, fairies are often closely aligned with children. Ashliman writes that the fear of fairies abducting human babies was “found throughout Europe, and beyond, stretching from the pre-Christian era into the twentieth century” (25). Barrie carries on and at the same time twists this tradition of linking fairies with children. According to Barrie, there should be one fairy for every child, for the first laugh of every child births a fairy. Looking at this coupling of fairy with child, might fairies be physical representations of the imagination? After all, the imagination is that quality that enables human beings to see things differently from how they presently exist. Imagination also helps children physically build upon the Neverland, just as the dust of the fairies is needed to access the Neverland.

Fairies live and die by the devotion and belief of human children. Perhaps Barrie meant them to be representations of the spirit or soul, as with Phillip Pullman's daemons in *His Dark Materials Trilogy*. In *Idea of the Soul*, A. E. Crawley studies traditional representations of the soul. Published in 1909, seven years after Peter first appeared in Barrie's *The Little White Bird* and two years before Peter's story was put into novel form as *Peter and Wendy*, Crawley writes, "First among the attributes of the soul in its primary form may be placed its size [...] in the majority of cases it is a miniature replica of the person" (qtd. in Evans-Wentz 239). Along with their miniature size, Fairies also contribute a vital ingredient to flight, another common characteristic of the soul, according to Crawley. Marina Warner writes in "Little Angels, Little Monsters" that this association of child with soul has stuck, and even today it is taken as an unproven fact that "the child and the soul are somehow interchangeable, and that consequently children are the keepers and the guarantors of humanity's reputation" (134). This is a rather convenient excuse for adults who are not all they hoped they would be. Looking back on an ideal state lost, they never have to take full responsibility for the future. This objectifying of the child as being all things good and wholesome seems a cowardly move on the part of the adult who is basically saying, it is impossible for us to be good because the world has already corrupted us and there is no going back. Peter Coveney calls it "a means of escape from the pressures of adult adjustment" (328).

Whatever fairies may represent for Barrie, their origins are rooted in the mirth of children. Barrie writes, "When the first baby laughed for the first time, its laugh broke into a thousand pieces, and they all went skipping about, and that was the beginning of fairies" (Tartar 42). From that moment on, fairies are vulnerable. Fairies exist because they are believed to exist. Belief is the air that they breathe. Within Barrie's text, the presence of fairies in the physical

world is maintained by this belief. The potential for this power to bestow life is possessed by all children, babies especially, and it wanes as one grows older and fills one's head with the cares and worries of what is expected by society. Of children, Warner writes, "Their fluid make-believe play seem to give them access to a world of wisdom [...] ideas [that] were grown in the ground of Romanticism" (135). The difference between wisdom and knowledge here is that wisdom is innate while knowledge is learned. Wisdom is seen as instinctual and does not need to be understood logically. It is knowledge that is often seen as the enemy of the imagination, just as experience is seen as the enemy of innocence.

As I discussed earlier, this idea of the child as a vessel of purity and innocence developed significantly during the Victorian era. The child became the "other," a species outside of the human race and one as closely related to angels and fairies as to flat-footed, flightless mortal adults. Warner goes on to call it "the nostalgic worship of childhood innocence" (134). Adults continue to look upon children as ignorant of the corrupt world, the world to which Adam and Eve relegated humanity by disobeying the word of God in Christian mythology. Innocence, then, is often believed to belong strictly to the young, and innocence or rather ignorance is coupled with magic; the imagination is not reined in by self-doubt or doubt about the world. By not knowing what is real and what is not, the child has the facilities to make anything real. Rather than a blank canvas, the child is a canvas brimming with paints of every imaginable color waiting to be rearranged and molded into shapes.

Knowledge, like Mrs. Darlings self-proclaimed sense, bars people from the differing realities (layered over like a many tiered cake) that surround them, realities that could be real if only they could be imagined. Even within the fairy community, knowledge is presented as something to be avoided at all costs. As it is explained in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*,

“Favoring youth, they [the fairies] always appoint the youngest among them as schoolmistress so that nothing will ever be taught [...] The head of the family is always the youngest” (Qtd. in Tartar 243). Knowledge is depicted in direct opposition to imagination and belief. It is knowledge of things that makes one skeptical of those other things which have not yet been proven, things that children have access to through their imaginations, because children do not yet know enough to know how impossible these “other” things may be.

Not only does disbelief kill fairies, within Barrie’s world, belief has the power to pull them from the brink of death. Near the end of the novel, after Tinker Bell has drunk the vial of poison meant for Peter and is dying, she tells him, “She thought she could get well again if children believed in fairies” (144). It is obviously not enough that she believes in herself. She needs the belief of others and most specifically children to survive. The children on whom Peter calls for aid are not on the island but at home asleep in their beds. Their outer realities have not changed, and yet that does not make their effect on the Neverland and on Tinker Bell any less real. What they dream, for Peter, “addressed all who might be dreaming of the Neverland,” and what they believe, “If you believe [...] clap your hands” is cemented in reality for the very reason that they have dreamt and believed in it. Still, it is not a reality that exists in the daylight hours of a London nursery and is certainly not a reality perceived by grownups, as we see when “The clapping stopped suddenly; as if countless mothers had rushed to their nurseries to see what on earth was happening” (145). With the decisions they make—we see them choosing to clap, remain silent, or hiss—every child has the power to create his or her own reality. Fairies are another matter, born out of merriment and killed from dejection. It is human children who grant them both.

In Great Britain in the early 1900's, belief in fairies was still common, especially among rural people (Evans-Wentz i-xvi). Tartar describes Barrie's hometown of Kirriemuir as, "a place that had been sustained by faith, not only in matters religious but also in fairies and sprites" (42). Fairies were rarely seen by human eyes and were believed to prefer invisibility. Fairyland was believed to only be accessible in certain wild places and only at specific times during the year. The metaphorical door might be in the middle of a strange wood or perhaps around a turn in a familiar path, a path that has always led to the same place but all of sudden leads someplace different. One explanation for such accessibility is that the veil between our world and that of Faery is thin or torn. In his introduction to Evans-Wentz' *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, Terence McKenna calls it "an invisible co-present dimension in which dwell the transformed souls of the ancient dead, able to interact with humans who wander into the lonely, enchanted landscapes that seem partial doorways between the fairy world and our own" (ii). One of the most common superstitions regarding the fairy folk was that of the changeling, the stealing away of a healthy human baby and replacing it with an old or sick fairy in disguise. Real or imaginary, fairies were perceived to affect the human world, and offerings of food were left out as payment or appeasement, wishes were made, tiny stone houses were built, and tales of warning were passed along from one generation to the next. Like the Gods and Goddesses of ancient mythologies that were created to explain natural phenomenon, fairies might have been created (within the imagination) as explanations of the unseen. Even when there was no evidence of fairies, belief in them, as belief in anything is likely to do, changed the way the people thought and acted. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a spiritualist and friend of Barrie, describes exactly how belief in fairies could change something as ordinary as a walk where no fairies or signs of supernatural happenings are seen. Doyle writes:

The thought of them [fairies], even when unseen, will add a charm to every brook and valley and give romantic interest to every country walk. The recognition of their existence will jolt the material twentieth-century mind out of its heavy ruts in the mud, and will make it admit that there is a glamour and a mystery to life.” (qtd. in Tartar 42)

An invisible influence upon the reality of the physical world, this is what fairies were. This is also how magic is often defined, as something that is beyond the natural, explainable world. Fairies function, in many ways, as another name for magic. Whether they actually existed or not is beside the point. People see what they believe they will see. Like any religion, fairies were created by those who believed in them. There is a reason belief in fairies is called the Fairy-Faith (Evans-Wentz ii). Just as Wendy passes tales of the fairies down to her daughter Jane who in turn passes them down to her own daughter, oral tales kept faith in fairies alive in Britain.

In Barrie’s world, six words (There’s no such thing as...well, you know the rest), spoken by a child, end the life of a fairy. There are many things that link the fairy and the child. Speaking of a hypothetical baby sister, Barrie writes in the introduction to *Peter and Wendy*, “Her fits of passion, which are awful to behold, and are usually called teething, are no such thing; they are her natural exasperation, because we don’t understand her, though she is talking an intelligible language. She is talking fairy’ (Tartar 243). This suggests either that wherever babies were before they were born, they were with fairies or that before they were born, they were fairies. Before Barrie, this notion was espoused by the Romantic poets who looked upon the child as being closer to the divine than the aged adult. John Wynne writes in “Subjection of the Child,” that, “To Wordsworth it was the blissful recollection of heaven that gave young

children an instinctive and joyful kinship with the natural world” (qtd. in *Crosscurrents* 142). The romantic poets placed the child on a pedestal, a shining example of how far humankind has fallen. According to Hanlon in *Crosscurrents of Children’s Literature*, they were not trying to distance themselves from the child but were trying to better understand the relationship of the adult with the child. Coveney writes, “In their concern with childhood, Wordsworth and Coleridge were interested in growth and continuity, in tracing the organic development of the human consciousness, and, also, in lowering the psychic barriers between adult and child” (327). The Romantic poets’ attempts at defining the child came from a desire to understand the child, not to create a barrier between child and adult.

Another important similarity between the fairy creature and the child is their assumed strength of and vulnerability to emotion. Peter tells us that fairies are so small they can only ever contain one emotion at a time. One moment a fairy may be good and act kind and lovingly and the next feel only hateful mischief. In each moment, the emotion that they happen to be feeling utterly consumes them. They do not have space inside their diminutive bodies to think ahead to the consequences of their actions. Likewise, children are often seen to act impulsively without stopping to consider the long-term consequences of their words and actions. It takes children time to learn what kind of emotional displays are socially acceptable and to what degree. As a result children are often seen as emotionally out of control, similar to Barrie’s representation of fairies.

The ability to fly is another thing that links fairies with human children in Barrie’s text. Only children have the power of flight, because only a child would ever believe it was possible. Without belief, one cannot fly. Therefore, one must create the fantasy of happy thoughts. I call it a fantasy because each of the three Darling children imagines things that are inaccessible at the

present moment. Jeremy Russell writes in his article, “Embracing Neverland: Getting Real with Peter Pan,” “Barrie argues that a better reality waits in fantasy, but to get there, you've got to believe” (42). The children are not satisfied with their current reality, so they imagine a different one. Coupled with fairy dust, their imagined fantasies give them the ability to fly off to the Neverland with Peter. Barrie presents adults as only believing in what they can see, but in order to see magic, you must believe in it before you can see it.

The Neverland is no less real than London, but unlike London, its shape and content is subject to the whim of the smallest child. Just as each child has her own specific happy thoughts, whether they be cream puffs, ice cream, mermaids, or Christmas, each child also has her own image of the Neverland. Barrie does not tell us where or how the Neverland first came into existence, if it was birthed inside the imaginations of children and from there assumed a physical three-dimensional form or if began as a magical island and upon entering the imaginations of children opened itself up to being recreated to fit the desires and needs of any who would believe in it. This brings to mind the Room of Requirement in J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter Series*. This mysterious room appears to those who are in need, adding to its content based on the needs of that individual person. It might be a workshop for one, a bathroom for another, and a sanctuary for a third all in the same day. Children’s fantasy fiction is full of these ephemeral spaces that reorder themselves for the characters. Tartar describes the Neverland as, “a theater for the imagination” (x1). This is a fitting description as the theater is also a place where people are expected to suspend disbelief in order to make room in their minds for impossibilities. The audience is expected to believe for a time what they know to be false.

The Darling children are transported to the shores of the Neverland because they believe in it. Russell points out, “You can't get to Never Land if you can't fly, you can't fly if you don't

have pixie dust, and the source of the pixie dust has to be believed in to exist” (43). Belief is the foundation of the Neverland. Without belief, the Neverland can never be accessed. Belief is key to the story of Peter and Wendy, as well and to any story, in fact, whether you are seeing it performed at a theatre or sitting in your comfy chair at home reading about it. The reader is creating the text and for the time it takes her to read it, the story exists as a reality in her mind for the very reason that she is willing to believe in it.

Perry Nodelman talks about the reader as creator in *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*, saying that the story does not exist as a story until a reader reads it. Nodelman writes, “Like the instructions in a recipe, the words of a text are incomplete until somebody makes them into an experience” (52). In a way, what Barrie has done is turned the experience of reading, of creating a story through the act of reading of it, into an allegorical tale about British children who are transported to a magical island, an island they have been playing at and dreaming about. Both for the fictional characters within the story and for the readers outside of it, the story must be believed in order for it to be real. This is true of any story, but Barrie, with the existence of fairies hanging in the balance, makes a point of asking children to choose. This seems to imply that in Barrie's world you cannot have both; you cannot grow up and still retain the magic of the imagination, that magical ability to transport yourself fully into a story.

As the ideal child, Peter's power of belief surpasses that of ordinary children. He is ideal in that he remains a child forever, a state regarded in the Victorian and Edwardian periods as a state of innocent perfection. Tartar writes, “Childhood remained a sacred preserve for the delights of the world that he [Barrie] and his contemporaries had lost. Children [...] become the last refuge of beauty, purity, and pleasure” (xli). As I have said, the romantic poets did much to promote this belief. In “Ode: Imitations of Immortality,” William Wordsworth mourns the loss

of innocence, “Shades of the prison-house begin to close/Upon the growing Boy” (qtd. in Hanlon 144). William Blake links the “vast majority of children to be on the side of Imagination or Spiritual Sensation” (Qtd. in Coveney 51). This idea was influenced by Plato who believed that the soul existed before it found a body. Therefore, the child’s soul was closer to that time before the fleshy envelope of the body offered ways to corrupt it (Hanlon 142-45). In 19<sup>th</sup> Century America, Henry David Thoreau followed in this tradition of believing that the child is possessed of some magical ability to see things that adults cannot. He writes, “Children, who play at life, discern its true law and relations more clearly than men” (411). Children went from being, in the Puritan era, thought of as full of undiluted original sin to being thought of as angels on earth. Similarly, fantasy went from being a corrupting influence to being able, in Hanlon’s words, “to convey the deepest psychological and spiritual truths” (411).

Through staying forever young, Peter retains his connection with the psychic world and is not bound by the laws of science and reason. Barrie tells us quite plainly that, “He [Peter] escaped from being human when he was seven days old; he escaped by the window” (42). Peter then flew, using his nightgown as a sail, to Kensington Gardens where he lived with the fairies and became, “a little half-and-half [...] a Betwixt-and-Between” (Tatar 18). He is as much bird as he is boy, existing both within the physical world and in the imagination, for he slips in and out of the dreams of children just as easily as those same children slip into their suits and school jackets the next morning. Peter is the soul of childhood, containing within him all that is irresistibly innocent; he is the idea of The Child. Peter is not just one child but has access to all children. Barrie describes the child’s mind as, “going around all the time. There are zigzag lines on it, just like your temperature on a card, and these are probably roads in the island [...] It is all rather confusing, especially as nothing will stand still” (6). However, there is something tragic

about Peter as well. With the power of belief acting as a constant upon Peter's life, he is unable to escape the joy of imagination, but he is also unable to escape the terror. Barrie distinguishes Peter from the others by saying that "to him make-believe and true were exactly the same thing" (83). Peter gets lonely and hurt and angry just like normal children. The difference between Peter and other children is that Peter cannot hold memories in his head; he does not remember his past, painful or otherwise. This is also what saves Peter's story from being a full blown tragedy.

Even Mrs. Darling, who finds Peter Pan in her children's minds, vaguely remembers him from her own childhood. Barrie writes, "She had believed in him at the time, but now that she was married and full of sense she quite doubted whether there was any such person" (8). Mrs. Darlings' belief in her own sense and reasonableness keeps her from dreaming of the Neverland and of Peter. In *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture*, James Kincaid writes, "Peter, the child, is lodged in the world of play and the adult is stuck in the world of power" (qtd. in Billone 4). This power over reality, over what you eat, wear, when you go to bed, is gained only in exchange for your innate power over imagined worlds. Barrie gives adults little sympathy and credits them with hardly any imagination. Though Mrs. Darling rifles through her children's minds and dreams, a magical act indeed, she does so in the mundane likeness of "tidying drawers" (73). Adults, with their sense and their responsibilities, have no, or very little, access to the Neverland. They know too much or, rather, they believe they do. So, belief creates their reality as well.

This seems to be the major distinction that Barrie is drawing between the child and the adult. The child is possessed of an innocence (or ignorance) that opens all realities to him or her. Whatever they can imagine, they can make real, whereas adults, in becoming more familiar with the reality of one world, have closed themselves off from the potential realities of all the others.

Adults are not excluded entirely, however. As we have seen, Mrs. Darling dreams of the Neverland, though her dreams are not acts of creation. She is simply seeing what is happening in the waking world of her nursery (25).

By not questioning them, children allow fairylands to exist, and when they get too scary, they employ their fathers and mothers to question these lands and the magic that comes from them, telling the children that there is no such thing as monsters under the bed or fairy thieves who would steal them away. Barrie instills belief with an invisible power, one that only children possess, but it is a power that the children do not always have control over. Evans-Wentz writes, "Fairyland exists as a supernormal state of consciousness into which men and women may enter temporarily in dreams, trances, or in various ecstatic conditions" (490). This is the rational explanation of an adult, however, it does not make fairyland any less real to the one experiencing it. After waking from her dream, Mrs. Darling catches sight of Peter, and Nana snags his shadow. Barrie tells us, "Mrs. Darling could not leave it [the shadow] hanging out at the window; it looked like the washing and lowered the whole tone of the house" (26-7). Instead of stopping to wonder at the strangeness of it all, she thinks instead of the neighbors and of mundane, everyday worries.

Peter does not stop to worry what others might think of him. He does what he pleases without thought. If he does not like something, he simply pretends that it is not true and forgets it. Barrie describes him as, "gay and innocent and heartless" (187). The heartlessness of Peter is best illustrated when he thinks that Wendy is dead, pierced by Curly's arrow. His first impulse is to turn away from her and pretend nothing happened. Tartar writes, "Once again, we see that Peter cannot be touched (in the sense of moved emotionally) by those around him" (80). I would not be quite so hard on Peter. It seems that it is for this very reason that Peter wishes to turn

away. Peter is afraid of death and of love, perhaps, because he understands neither. Obviously something is lost when one grows up, for the adults in the story are passively pining away in the nursery while the children are out having fabulous adventures. It is not given up for nothing, however. The ability to believe unreservedly in the imaginary and the magical powers that come with it are traded in rather than simply lost. Experience and memory take the place of innocence, a heart takes the place of a lack of one, and with experience and heart come solemnity rather than perpetual cheerfulness.

One of the most noticeable things about Peter is his unquenchable optimism. Mrs. Darling calls it cockiness, and it is the first thing that she notices about his name when she finds it “scrawled all over [Wendy’s mind]” (7). Perhaps, it is because of this self-confidence that Peter has such control over the hidden world of the imagination. He has no doubts. He can reach into the tiny, hidden places of a person’s being, the secret places where others cannot go. Barrie writes of Mrs. Darling, “Her sweet mocking mouth had one kiss on it that Wendy could never get, though there it was, perfectly conspicuous in the right-hand corner” (2). Mr. Darling also tries for the kiss and fails. Wendy doubts whether Napoleon could have gotten it. Somehow it is not a thing that can be won. It is of a substance of such delicacy that only a creature of the same kind as itself can ever attain it. Like the island of Neverland, and the very essence of Peter Pan, the kiss is a magical thing apart from the world of grownups and the reality in which we are familiar. When Peter flies away at the end of the story, leaving Wendy behind with her mother, he takes the elusive kiss with him. Barrie writes, “The kiss that had been for no one else Peter took quite easily. Funny. But she [Mrs. Darling] seemed satisfied.” (222). Inside Mrs. Darling, Peter obviously sees something wonderful: a youthful, romantic spirit that she has managed to hold onto even into adulthood. Peter will keep it safe. After all, he is the spirit of youth. As Amy

Billone writes in her article, “The Boy Who Lived: From Carroll's Alice and Barrie's Peter Pan to Rowling's Harry Potter,” “The knowledge that dreams and reality do not coincide accompanies their [children's] growth out of childhood” (1). Since Peter is the only child who will never grow up, he will retain the power to make his dreams real. Billone writes, “For Barrie, children have principally three skills that adults do not have: 1) they can enter their own dreams and make these dreams come true; 2) they can play fantasy games in which the imaginary world takes the place of concrete reality; 3) they can fly” (11). Not only does Peter imagine things into reality and refuse to follow the laws of gravity, he also refuses to conform to the English language (the medium of his story). He creates his own language, or rather, Wendy creates it for him. Wendy tells Peter that a kiss is a thimble and a thimble is a kiss, and so, that becomes his reality. Wendy kisses him whenever she tells him that she is giving him a thimble and gives him a thimble whenever she tells him that she is giving him a kiss. Words can never accurately portray reality since everyone interprets words differently. As Peter and Wendy both agree to believe “thimble” means a kiss and “kiss” means a thimble, they make it true.

Fantasy literature for children is often critiqued for creating unreal expectations of the world. Upon reading about Peter Pan, might a child believe she could fly and jump out of an upstairs window? A child old enough to read the novel would hopefully know better. C.S. Lewis writes in *Of Other Worlds*, “It [imaginative fantasy] is accused of giving children a false impression of the world they live in. But I think no literature that children could read gives them less of a false impression. I think what professes to be realistic stories for children are far more likely to deceive them” (28). However unreal or fantastical the story may be, the characters' belief in their dreams enables them to achieve what they most hoped for: adventure, flight, love.

The power of suggestion is paramount in *Peter and Wendy* just as it often is with children, which is perhaps one of the most wonderful and troubling things about those mysterious creatures.

## Chapter Two: J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* Series:

### The Power of Emotions

Much of the Witch and Wizarding World that J. K. Rowling has created in the *Harry Potter Series* stands upon a pedestal of belief, and without it, what Rowling terms “magic” would crumble to nothing. To perform spells and cast charms, to transfigure and even to enter into the magical spaces invisible to Muggles, the students of Hogwarts often have to envision the magic first; they have to believe in it to make it real.

Belief, and by association faith, is most often applied to a power greater than ourselves, usually a deity of some form, but the faith a witch or wizard must have in order to make magical things happen is a faith in themselves and their own abilities. Rowling plays with ideas of alternate worlds, spirits, the power of souls to transcend the known reality, the animation of inanimate objects, purity, immortality, and creation, and yet she never once in seven novels and over a million words, directly addresses faith in a religious context. In “It’s all About God,” Elisabeth DeVous writes of Hogwarts, “Religion is notably absent, science is marginalized and technology is a curiosity” (74). There are literary allusions, such as Biblical references on tombstones, but there is no chapel on the grounds of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. No member of the student body or staff is ever seen praying to a higher power. There is not the remotest interest shown in the idea of a divine creator, though with ghosts floating about the castle, life after death is a fact of life (or rather, death). DeVous writes, “It [magic] is a natural superpower that obviously springs from the source of all nature, even though that source is never named and worshipped” (77). The question of religion is never addressed, perhaps, for this very reason—that the witches and wizards who populate the magical world possess for

themselves seemingly divine powers, and their humanity, their ability to love and feel *is* the well spring of magic.

Even as children, witches and wizards play at creating things out of nothing, resisting gravity, and altering reality. With a wand, a piece of wood encasing heartstrings, feathers, or hair, a person with magical talents can accomplish the impossible, defying the laws of nature as we know them. They are most godlike in their ability to manipulate their own souls, to split them, share them, and expand them, thus creating a separate consciousness from their own. The impetus' behind such magical power, belief, imagination, and faith, are things that Muggles and Magical folk alike are capable of, though only those with talents for magic can cast them upon reality for a physical purpose.

It is human nature to wonder about what we do not know. This universal desire to fill in the blanks is the basis for the world's greatest religious mythologies. Since human beings first drew on the walls of caves, we have used our imagination to create stories and to explain phenomenon that we had no explanation for. Marguerite Krause writes in "Harry Potter and the End of Religion," "Prehistoric populations are identified as fully human—or not—based in part on the presence or absence of cave drawings, carved figurines, ritualized burial of the dead or other signs of spiritual self-expression" (55). With the use of a little thing called imagination, we are capable of dreaming about possibilities that, as far as we know, do not exist. David Baggett writes in "Magic, Muggles, and Moral Imagination," "Not only is a vivid imagination crucial to morality, it's integral to religious faith" (170). As Muggles, whether we truly believe in what we imagine affects only ourselves and our own happiness, but, where the witches and wizards of Hogwarts are concerned, belief is a different story. What they imagine, they also have the ability to give the solidity of a physical reality. Like the divine deities of most world religions, they

have the ability to make their thoughts real. As DeVous writes, “The forces of nature are theirs to harness with a well-pronounced phrase and the skillful flick of a stick” (76). For witches and wizards, magic—a word Muggles often give to what they cannot explain—is an accessible, ordinary part of everyday life.

Belief certainly plays a part in getting out of the Muggle portion of King’s Cross Station and onto platform 9 and 3/4. Many of the children who accomplish this seemingly impossible feat were raised by Muggles and have never been exposed to magic. Mrs. Weasley tells Harry to walk straight at the wall. She says, “Don’t stop and don’t be scared you’ll crash into it, that’s very important” (SS 93). What might have happened if Harry had suddenly let his doubts convince him that there was no way he could get through a solid brick wall and tried to stop himself? Perhaps he would have crashed into what he believed was there—a brick wall and nothing more. His idea of reality creates it. He believes that there is something to all the wild tales that Hagrid has told him about Hogwarts and Wizardry; he believes he will not crash, and so, he finds the way open for him.

The witch or wizard’s preexisting image of reality affects how they handle boggarts as well. A boggart is a very real monster, and yet it does not even possess a shape of its own until it comes face to face with a person. It can read that person’s darkest fear and promptly assumes that shape. Lupin tells us, to defeat a boggart requires, “force of mind” (PA 134). Whatever exists in a witch or wizard’s mind is imposed upon the boggart and becomes its reality. This is both the boggart’s strength and its weakness. In “A Skewed Reflection: The Nature of Evil,” David and Catherine Deavel write, “Boggarts don’t seem to be able to be anything without the fear and unhappiness of others” (134). Lupin tells his students, you must imagine some scenario that would transform your fear into something funny, “and concentrate hard” (PA135). The

imagined image then becomes a physical reality as the boggart assumes the humorous version of its would-be victim's greatest fear. The boggart is something of a canvas for witches and wizards to draw on. Where their fears are concerned the students seem to have no choice, but in the transformation of their fears they become artists, though they are not drawing with pen or pencil but with their imaginations.

Even Muggles see what they expect to see. That is why they are so often blind to the supernatural influence of the witches and wizards who live amongst them. According to Stan Shunpike, the driver of the night bus that is invisible to Muggles though it traverses the busy streets of London, Muggles "Don' listen properly, do they? Don' look properly either" (PA 36). Gareth Matthews writes "Finding Platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$ : The Idea of a Different Reality," "What they [Muggles] see and hear is pretty much restricted to what they have become accustomed to think they will see and hear" (184). Intent, expectation, and belief all play a part in what reality exists for each individual. In the case of Muggles, it blinds them, but for the skilled possessor of magical talent, belief and expectation gives them the power to twist the world into what they want it to be.

In addition to the spells, potions, charms, and enchantments a witch or wizard can perform and the inherent powers he or she possesses, the artists of the magical world go even further by performing an act accredited nearly always to a Godhead: the act of creating a consciousness physically separate from themselves. Using the same ingredients as Muggle artists, namely: paints and brushes, wood and carving utensils, needles and fabrics and paper, they create pieces of art that are imbued with self-awareness. This is seen in the wands of the great wand maker, Ollivander, in the portraits that line the halls of Hogwarts School, the Sorting Hat, the Goblet of Fire, Hogwarts Castle itself, and in the Marauder's Map, and this is far from

an exhaustive list. Each of these objects required the working hands of a witch or wizard to bring it into being, but after being created these objects are left with more than the magnificent yet stagnant beauty of a master iron castor or wood carver. These objects are aware of themselves. Ollivander tells Harry, “If you are any kind of wizard at all you will be able to channel your magic through almost any instrument” (DH 494). Therefore, with intent and the proper visualization, a witch or wizard should be able to turn a rat into a teacup using nothing more than his or her mind. Ollivander goes on to say, “The best results, however, must always come where there is a strong affinity between wizard and wand [...] An initial attraction, and then a mutual quest for experience” (DH 494). A desire for knowledge and experience drives the ability to perform magic.

The dark magic of creating a horcrux is similar to that of creating a piece of artwork except that the consciousness of a horcrux comes from a piece of someone’s soul that has been ripped away from the original. It is a splitting of the original consciousness, not a wholly new creation or its expansion. The subject of a painting, whether human, animal, or object, remains whole even after the painting is completed, otherwise who would ever sit for a painting? To create a horcrux, a person’s soul must tear, making the original soul less than what it once was. It is a cut and paste job, whereas a painting is closer to reproduction or even cloning. Horcruxes do not have the freedom of paintings. They are frozen at the time of their creation. According to Tom Riddle who speaks to Harry in Book 2, he is, “A memory [...] preserved in a diary for fifty years” (CS 308). Left to its own devices, the horcrux Tom is incapable of change or growth. This is reminiscent of the ideal Victorian child for whom it is almost better to die than to grow up. A larger portion of Voldemort’s soul is in this state of stasis than is out of it in his flesh and blood body. This is also similar to “cut” children in Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*. Children,

who have been cut away from their daemons in order that they may stay children forever, are weak, ghostlike, and incapable of change. Perhaps the squalling baby that Harry encounters when he is in that liminal space between life and death at the end of Book 7 is that piece of Voldemort's soul, the piece that was inside Harry, malformed and incomplete.

In his search for information on horcruxes, Harry learns that, "The soul is supposed to remain intact and whole. Splitting it is an act of violation, it is against nature," and it is only accomplished by "committing murder" (HBP 498). The horcrux, Tom Riddle, is a parasite. He needs another's strength in order to manifest himself. Tom tells Harry, "Ginny poured out her soul to me, and her soul happened to be exactly what I wanted... I grew stronger and stronger on a diet of her deepest fears, her darkest secrets" (CS 310). Ginny is giving her soul to the diary not by pouring some life-giving elixir from her body into his but by feeding him the thoughts of her mind and the feelings of her heart until he is strong enough to begin pouring his soul, "back into *her*" (CS 312). Ginny puts her soul into the diary, injecting it with her own life. Ginny does this by believing in it. Her emotions are its energy. Eventually she gives enough of her soul that Tom is able to take physical form while Ginny's body lies in the shadows, unconscious and dying.

Magic goes wherever a witch or wizard focuses his or her attention, and in many cases, part of the soul seems to go with it. Could the soul be synonymous with magic? Perhaps the soul is the power that goes forth from a witch or wizard's wand to perform whatever will they have injected into it. Perhaps Rowling intended the idea of the soul to be whatever her characters believe it to be, creating a race of gods and goddesses each responsible for creating their own inner cosmologies.

In Book 7, Hermione reveals that wizards can put their soul back together again if they express true remorse. This implies that to split the soul at all, you must not kill but desire to kill.

The intention is what creates the division within the soul. Even if a soul tears, a horcrux will not necessarily be created. As Slughorn tells Harry, the soul must be captured inside an object in order for a horcrux to be made. Yet we see the creation of a horcrux that is not done intentionally. When Voldemort kills Lily and James Potter and attempts to kill Harry, his soul tears and unbeknownst to him, takes refuge in Harry. This seems to presuppose the soul has an intention independent of the body's rational, thinking brain. If someone sent out a killing curse with all of the intention and desire to kill but the intended victim ducked, it stands to reason that the soul would still tear. Dumbledore tells Snape when Snape is faced with the prospect of committing murder, "You alone know whether it will harm your soul" (DH 683). The intentions of the wizard who casts the spell determine the effect of the spell.

Just as believing in the magic that one wishes to perform helps to make it real within Rowling's universe, it seems logical that an evil intention would cause harm whether or not it is made actual. If every soul detached from its body latched onto the closest living thing as Voldemort's did, every witch and wizard would essentially be patchworks of others' souls. Perhaps Voldemort's particular maniacal desire for immortality and his fear of death was so ingrained in his soul that the torn-off piece knew instinctively to take refuge in another living soul (just as the fearful ghost takes refuge in the memories of familiar places). This still implies that his soul *knew* to take refuge, implying a consciousness.

This idea of souls having autonomy leaves the reader to wonder about the spell that Lily Potter unwittingly performs at the moment of her death. Just before Voldemort kills her, she is filled with love and a desperate desire to protect her son. Rowling assures the reader, "The love of a mother for her child [...] is more powerful than the most evil intention" (DeVos 77). If the soul fragments with violence, could it not grow with love and affection? The protective barrier

that Lily creates around Harry could be her own soul expanding, like the process of creating a painting—an addition to the soul, psychically connected perhaps but physically separate. It is desire and emotion, want and need that are the impetus behind the magic of the Wizarding world. Lily's desire is given form. She wants to protect her son, and this desire is impressed onto the world; it is impressed into Harry's very blood, giving him a shield against malicious magical harm.

Horcruxes are not the only things that are dangerous to the soul, nor are they the only things affected by belief, desire, and intent. Dementors literally take a rattling breath and draw the happiness and joy out of whomever they are near and even, on occasion, suck out their victim's soul by using what is referred to in the series as a Dementor's Kiss. David and Catherine Deavel write, "The dementors' very presence brings a physical sensation of cold—the feeling of corpses—and the feeling that the presence of ghosts is traditionally described as bringing" (135). This equates the soul with happiness, contributing to the idea that a soul will not only diminish in the terrible act of murder but will also grow in and through happiness. The soul in Rowling's world seems to be made up of everything good. Lupin says, "If it can, the dementor will feed on you long enough to reduce you to something like itself . . . soul-less and evil" (PA 187). The only part of the Dementors' physical bodies that are visible are their hands, which are "glistening, grayish, slimy-looking, and scabbed, like something dead that had decayed in water" (PA 83). The Dementors are upright and move about, yet their physical description suggests lifelessness. The hopelessness represented by the Dementors is in direct opposition to the idea of magic that we have discussed so far. For magic is propelled by desire, and it is desire that the Dementors take away. Throughout the series magic is seen as the projection of the imagination upon a physical reality by the willful belief of a witch or wizard.

There is never any mention of the possibility of killing or even of harming a Dementor. Throughout the series, witches and wizards are only ever seen holding Dementors at bay or at most driving them away. Of the prison that they guard, Rowling writes, “The fortress is set on a tiny island, way out to sea [...] trapped inside their own heads, [the inmates are] incapable of a single cheerful thought. Most of them go mad within weeks” (PA 188). This is why there has never been any concern over prisoners escaping. Sirius Black is the obvious exception. There is no doubt that he is affected by the Dementors, for he is sallow and miserable looking when he finally escapes, however, the fact that he manages to escape at all is proof that his mind is his own, at least in part. As he explains to Harry, he was able to hold onto the knowledge of his innocence, and it was this, as well as the intense yearning for revenge upon Peter Pettigrew, that kept him sane. Belief in his innocence kept him mentally free. This is congruous with the idea of innocence as otherworldly, beyond and above the powers of this world. Just as the innocent child is often given supernatural powers in fantasy fiction, innocence gives Sirius Black the power to do the impossible, to resist the black hole of depression that the Dementors represent. However, since Sirius blames himself for indirectly causing the deaths of Harry’s parents, the knowledge of his innocence does not bring him happiness, so the Dementors cannot take it from him. Rowling brings to this more common form of innocence the same kind of magical power that childhood innocence often has in children’s literature. It is an innocence not bound by age. This more inclusive form of innocence is not the innocence of ignorance but an innocence born of knowledge.

Rowling gives to Harry what Philip Pullman gives to Lyra: a chance to grow up without losing the magic that is associated with childhood. Chonin writes, “The death of childhood is a terrible thing to watch, true. But it also marks an exhilarating passage into a larger and more

diverse fictional world” (3). Far from losing his innocence, Harry brings his innocence with him into battle and uses it to his advantage. Innocence is Harry’s kindness and unwillingness to kill—even for the greater good—and it becomes, through experience, an advantage he uses in his battles. His unwillingness to harm others is thought naive by those adults around him who assure him in Book 7 that the other team is not shooting to disarm. Lupin tells Harry, “the time for disarming is past” and refers to the disarming spell that Harry consistently uses as his “signature move” (DH 70,71). In the final battle, however, it is the unexpectedness of Harry’s merciful stance that undoes Voldemort when Harry shoots to disarm rather than to kill. The so-called “innocence” of childhood loses its association with helplessness and, alongside love (specifically, innocent love), becomes the ultimate power.

As love is presented as the most powerful magic of all, it is fitting that it would be a memory of loved ones lost that the Dementors would use against Harry. Unlike love, which is often described as something that fills you up, depression is an emptiness. Dementors force people to relive their worst memories over and over again in an endless cycle. Dementors are depression personified. In an interview with Treneman Ann of *The Times*, Rowling describes such depression as, “that absence of being able to envisage that you will ever be cheerful again. The absence of hope. That very deadened feeling, which is so different from feeling sad. Sad hurts but it’s a healthy feeling” (Ark 82). Just as we cannot see depression, Muggles cannot see Dementors, but they are still affected by them. Elizabeth D. Schafer, in her book *Exploring Harry Potter*, likens Dementors to the Grim Reaper whose name literally means to reap grim (70). This strikes me as an inaccurate comparison, though, as traditionally the Grim Reaper served a purpose. He was a gatekeeper, moving people between two states of being. The

Dementors have no redeemable qualities and no apparent purpose. Human beings, through their memories and the emotions associated with them, give the Dementors their power.

Like most natural and supernatural creatures, Dementors have their weaknesses, though garlic, sage, and salt circles are not among them. Dementors, like depression, are guarded against by happy thoughts and chocolate. To drive a Dementor away, a witch or wizard (Muggles have no defense, as far as the reader is aware) conjures up a Patronus, described as, “a kind of anti-Dementor—a guardian that acts as a shield between you and the Dementor” (PA 237). A Patronus takes a form unique to the witch or wizard who conjured it, reflecting some aspect of that witch or wizard’s personality. Harry’s, for example, takes the form of a white stag to represent his connection with his father. This idea of a Patronus is similar to Philip Pullman’s idea of daemons in *His Dark Materials*. In both cases, the animal represents an inner aspect of their human. The daemon is a physical and external representation of a person’s soul. To dispel a dementor, its intended victim must use his or her imagination to reconstruct a happy memory in the mind’s eye, and this enables the witch or wizard to conjure a patronus. Might the patronus be a part of the soul? Perhaps it is the soul taking flight from the body temporarily to defend itself against the dementors. The dementors are at odds with this idea of the soul, for if the dementors are equated with crippling despair, the soul is certainly equated with joy and happiness. David and Catherine Deavel note, “Dementors can survive only by taking the happiness out of a person’s mind [...] They survive as parasites, soul-vampires” (133). Dementors feed upon a person’s soul, the thing that they lack. Lupin describes the Patronus as “a kind of positive force, a projection of the very things that the Dementor feeds upon—hope, happiness, the desire to survive” (PA 237). A patronus is conjured by concentrating very hard on a particularly happy

thought. The happier the thought, the stronger the Patronus will be. Since what a Dementor desires is also what drives it away, the Patronus can be understood as the soul fighting back.

As witches and wizards have the power to create or at least to externalize the Patronus, might they also be inadvertently responsible for creating the Dementors out of their own feelings of worthlessness and despair? Perhaps each person has their own Dementor that follows them around whispering horrible things in their ears, telling them that they are less than human, the twisted equivalent to a devil on the shoulder? When the dementors are done sucking out a person's soul, "[You are] left with nothing but the worst experiences of your life" (PA 188). This seems to suggest another possible explanation for how the Dementors are created. Perhaps they were once human just like their victims. This could be why Dementors are constantly seeking happy thoughts—they have none of their own.

Rustin writes of Azkaban, "The aim of the prison, if one can describe such a thing, is to seek out the inner despair, guilt, or shame in each prisoner and allow this to destroy him [or her]" (279). The Dementors destroy people from the inside out, using what is already inside of their victims, using their heartaches. However, just as love lost can be used against someone, powerful memories of love can also serve as their salvation. As Rustin writes, "Only those who have strong internal objects (identifications, memories, knowledge of having given and received love) can resist the deathly effects of these creatures" (280). By focusing hard on a positive memory, a Patronus is created. One of the strongest cases of love that we see in the novels is Severus Snape's unrequited love for Lily Potter. Lily's Patronus was that of a doe, and in memory of her, Snape's Patronus assumes the same shape. His love for her has affected something inside of him, his spirit or soul, perhaps? Whatever name you want to use, his love has changed his internal makeup enough to change the physical form of his Patronus, the physical form of his happiness.

The most powerful weapon a Dementor has is aligned with and is a perversion of love. Most simply, it is a kiss. Rustin writes, “The kiss as an act of love, [changed] into an act that brings psychological death” (280). One mouth goes over another, but instead of giving a kiss, the dementors draw the souls of their victims out of their bodies through their mouths. This horrific act is described by both Lupin and Dumbledore as being a fate worse than death. Rowling writes, “You can exist without your soul, you know, as long as your brain and heart are still working. But you’ll have no sense of self anymore, no memory, no...anything” (PA 247). It is never explained where the soul goes only that it is lost beyond recovery. Perhaps it is Lily’s soul that protects Harry from danger? Voldemort’s soul is seen acting of its own accord whenever it takes refuge inside Harry’s body. Perhaps Lily’s soul did the same, though out of love rather than fear. Dumbledore tells Snape, “Lord Voldemort’s soul, maimed as it is, cannot bare close contact with a soul like Harry’s” (DH 685). He is referring to a previous incident in Book 5 when Voldemort possesses Harry but cannot abide the emotion that is inside of him and so retreats. This implies that emotions, most certainly love, live inside the soul or are synonymous with it. On love, Rowling writes, “[It is] a force that is at once more wonderful and more terrible than death, than human intelligence, than forces of nature [...] In the end, it mattered not that you could not close your mind. It was your heart that saved you” (OP 843). That Harry is filled with love for others makes his mind uninhabitable by one who is loveless.

It is impossible to look at the idea of the soul within Rowling’s Universe without also looking at this idea of love. As we have seen, the series is full of fantastical enchantments, dragons and unicorns, castles complete with secret passageways, moving staircases, talking portraits, and melodramatic ghosts. Though there are many definitions of fantasy, one of the most common definitions equates fantasy with “creative imagination; unrestrained fancy”

(Fantasy 489). Yet, with the limits set only by the bounds of her imagination, Rowling writes love in as the ultimate magic, making superfluous the supernatural elements she invents. Love is something that Muggles and Magical folk have a capacity for and is presented as a power that is beyond magic. Within the series, magic has no affect upon love; however, love can very easily affect magic. Like magic, which is defined in relation to the supernatural, encompassing every wonder and mystery that resides in that space around and beyond the natural, love has hundreds of definitions and yet is still undefinable. The word love is most often defined by other abstracts: tenderness, deep affection, devotion. Love has been equated with insanity and with divine ecstasy. Samuel Taylor Coleridge claims, “All thoughts, all passions, all delights,/Whatever stirs this mortal frame,/All are but ministers of Love” (Coleridge 1-3). Plato claimed that it made ordinary people into poets, and that it was the proper response to “The beauty of a person’s soul, and, ultimately [...] a response to the form, Beauty” (qtd. in Helm 2). Whether love is a gift or curse from the gods, a substance pulled from the primordial chaos in order to hold the world together, the fusion of two souls, the trick of a lustful mind, or a combination of hormones producing a natural love potion within the body, it has yet to be clearly defined, like magic.

What saves Harry again and again is the fact that his mother died defending him, giving up her life for his. Rowling writes, “His mother left upon him the traces of her sacrifice.... This is old magic” (GF 653). This old magic is treated as the most ancient, not something created by human beings, as we discover spells are in Book 6, but something that exists naturally so long as love itself exists. The spell is created by the act of loving, proof of emotion as a form of magic. Voldemort views love only as weakness, and yet, it is the one thing that is able to defeat him. In Book 1, Professor Quirrell cannot even touch Harry, for, “It is agony to touch a person marked by something so good” (SS 216). He might have added that it is agony for someone with the

intention to harm, for obviously, Harry's friends' skin never boils over whenever they try and hug him. Again, the intention of the person directs the magic.

This was not a spell that Lily Potter performed knowingly. There were no magical words spoken, no potion brewed; her sacrifice was the spell. Just before Voldemort kills her, she is filled with love and a desperate desire to protect her son. Emotion, desire, and want, such intangibles are made tangible, and it is called magic. Dumbledore tells Harry, "Love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign ... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection for ever. It is in your very skin (SS 216). The love that Lily has for her son imprints him with a magical shield. This would imply that to love at all, whether you die for the one you love or live a long and healthy life, has an effect upon that person and, in turn, upon their lives. Lily's sacrifice is never fully explained. For example, one might wonder why it protects Harry only against magical harm and not against being bullied by Dudley, having his arm broken, or his face smashed. Why does the spell only last until his seventeenth birthday, the legal age for witches and wizards to be allowed to perform magic outside of school? Technically, at seventeen, Harry goes from being a child to being an adult. One would think that a spell employing such an ancient magic would not conform to modern day Wizarding law. Certainly, Lily's spell is born out of the love of a mother for her son, but had she survived Voldemort's attack, she would not have simply stopped loving Harry once he reached adulthood. Finally, why does James' death have no apparent affect?

In Book 4, Voldemort uses Lily's spell to his own advantage by using Harry's blood in a potion that creates for Voldemort a new body. Instead of earning the love of another, he literally cuts it out of Harry, for the magic that was created through his mother's love has a physical

existence. That Lily's spell exists in Harry's blood is also revealed in the fact that Harry is safest when he is living with blood relatives of his mother. Dumbledore tells him, "While you can still call home the place where your mother's blood dwells, there you cannot be touched or harmed by Voldemort" (OP 836). In Book 5, we learn that Voldemort never had the love of his own parents but instead grew up in an orphanage. Margaret and Michael Rustin suggest in *Narratives of Love and Loss*, that this feeling of abandonment by a child could serve, in part, as an explanation of the "deep identifications that underlie the compulsion to destroy – to become the destroyer as a way of escaping the fear of annihilation" (289). In contrast to Dumbledore, who accepts death, Voldemort considers his own death to be the worst of all fates (OP 814). For Dumbledore, who has loved and lost, it is the death of a loved one that is the worst fate of all. Belief creates and protects life, and Voldemort believes only in himself. Lily, however, believed in Harry and so gave him life once at birth and once a year later when Voldemort killed her and marked Harry with his lightning bolt scar.

All that Voldemort sees is that love for another takes one's attention away from oneself. He sees only the sacrifice or rather, the expense, involved in loving another. His closest followers, the Death Eaters, kill and are killed doing his will, and yet, they do not follow Voldemort out of love but out of fear and greed. When Peter Pettigrew gives his hand to generate a body for Voldemort, he does not act out of love for his master. In "'Sacrifice' in the *Harry Potter Series* from a Girardian Perspective," Nikolaus Wandinger writes, "Pettigrew's 'donation' is a direct reversal—a perversion in the literal sense—of a self-sacrifice out of love; it is a self-mutilation out of sheer terror" (31). Voldemort refers to his followers as his "true family" yet they more closely resemble slaves, greeting him by crawling on their knees and kissing the hem of his robes (GF 646). Voldemort is loved by no one and feared by nearly everyone. David and

Catherine Deavel write, “To have friends one must be a friend; not to understand love is to make friendship—and life itself—impossible” (138). As Dumbledore tells Harry in Book 1, “Not being truly alive, he cannot be killed” (216). Jennifer Hart Weed in “Voldemort, Boethius and the Destructive Effects of Evil,” calls him “a creature not quite human and yet not quite a ghost” (154). Voldemort has made of himself a new species, and in his apparent immortality, he is utterly alone, making him the most vulnerable of all. Chonin notes that Harry is not without his own weaknesses. She writes, “In a moment of grief, he declares that if the capacity to love and suffer is what it takes to be human, ‘then I don’t want to be human’” (3). Yet, it is his humanity, his ability to love that is his greatest power.

The love that Harry feels makes him fear for others, which is all that Voldemort sees, but it also gives him, in his desire to protect those he loves, extraordinary bravery, a bravery that Voldemort cannot fully understand or anticipate as he does not understand its source. Love causes pain whenever a loved one is harmed, and Voldemort sees this as vulnerability. Through loving another, a person exists in more places than one. For Voldemort, this means that there are more places for that person to be attacked. This is ironic when one considers the many horcruxes that Voldemort has created. Not only has Voldemort isolated himself from others, he has broken his soul into pieces so that he can spread them out in an attempt to better hide himself from anyone who would harm him. So consumed by a fear of death, he denies himself life. It is Harry’s ability to put others, both those who have lived and died and those who live still, before himself that saves him in the end. Rowling writes:

“You [Harry] are protected, in short, by your ability to love! [...] The only protection that can possibly work against the allure of power like Voldemort’s! In

spite of all the temptation you have endured, all the suffering, you remain pure of heart, just as pure as you were at the age of eleven” (HBP 511).

Just as in the Romantic and Victorian eras, the purity of innocence is portrayed as the greatest of all powers. However, in this case, it is not innocence of age but an innocent heart that saves the day. Still, the innocent heart of the seventeen-year-old Harry Potter is described using an age associated with childhood, specifically the “age of eleven.” Youth, then, continues to be associated with innocence, even when it is applied to an adult.

Voldemort defies this norm, for even as a child he is portrayed as cruel and heartless, torturing other children and small animals. As an adult his deepest desire is to completely disassociate himself from age, to become immortal. The horcrux becomes Voldemort’s most defining feature, making him the creature that he is, created from a twisted, narcissistic self-love. For, a horcrux can only be made if you care for yourself more than another, if you put your life above theirs. Lily is shown in direct contrast as she loves another more than herself and faces death willingly for his sake. Wandinger writes, the series “is suffused with the language of *sacrifice*” (27). Snape, though with much less dramatic flair, does the same, though his love is that of a man’s for a woman rather than a mother’s for her child. It is in their footsteps that Harry follows at the end. Chonin writes, “The magic his mother used to save his life as an infant is the same magic he must use to save the Wizarding world” (3). The fact that Harry is generous with himself is what enables him to defeat Voldemort by forcing Voldemort to kill him, thereby unknowingly destroying his own horcrux. Rowling writes, “Harry would not let anyone else die for him now that he had discovered it was in his power to stop it” (DH 693). It is this innocent love, the love that wishes to combine with others and to create that is called goodness. The ideal of love as seen through Lily, Harry, and Snape’s sacrifices are in direct opposition with

Voldemort's highest ideal of power, which he sees as synonymous with magic. Jennifer Weed notes, "Voldemort denies the very existence of good and evil" (153). One thing that Dumbledore and Voldemort agree upon is that magic itself is neither good nor bad. It is the intention of the spell caster that decides to what affect the magic is used; the words alone are not enough.

Witches and Wizards serve as the architects, not only of reality but of their own, body-encased souls. They have the power to tear their souls and the power, through simply living and loving, to build them up again. Through their ability to share their souls and to manipulate them, they act as their own gods and goddesses. They alone are responsible for themselves. There is no devil to sway them to darkness or angel to reward them if they follow the light. Jennifer Wall writes in "Heaven, Hell, and Harry Potter," "It is because love is the deepest reality that it makes sense to do the right thing even if it requires sacrifice to do so" (75). Goodness is literally its own reward as evil is its own punishment.

## Chapter Three: Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*

### A Union of Innocence and Experience

At first glance, Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* seems to be an ideal portrayal of the Romantic Child. For example, children's souls are physically different from their adult counterparts. While the child is blessed with a natural elasticity of form in their souls ability to transfigure, the adult is stagnant. An adult's soul is stuck in one form be it the form of a cougar, a whale, or a slug. Daemons also seem to attend to social class, something that one would think the inner essence of a person would not attend to. Maude Hines notes in "Second Nature: Daemons and Ideology in *The Golden Compass*," "Servant is not merely a profession, but ontology (39). Pullman writes of the Steward, "He was a servant, so she [his daemon] was a dog; but a superior servant, so a superior dog" (NL 7). After it has settled, the daemon only changes again whenever its human dies. Then it disperses into Dust. Children are also shown to be blessed with a metaphysical grace that simply drops away when they grow up. We see this mysterious grace used when Lyra reads the Alethiometer from which she divines answers through a meditative state. The rational adult, however, is denied access to such invisible wisdom and must spend a lifetime studying in order to gain a semblance of the abilities that came naturally with childhood. However, with all of its gifts, Pullman does not present the child's innocent state as the superior one.

In *The Northern Lights*, Pullman introduces a world parallel to our own, identical in some ways and entirely strange and foreign in others. Daemons illustrate the most obvious difference between the children and the adults of this world. Daemons represent a person's soul in the form of an animal. Andrew Leet writes in "Rediscovering Faith through Science Fiction: Pullman's *His Dark Materials*," "[Daemons] represent a type of guardian or inner spirit" (179). They

comfort, reprimand, and give advice, somewhat like Jiminy Cricket in Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. Children's daemons have the ability to assume any form imaginable, both realistic and mythological, so they can adapt to what is most needed in any situation. If their human is engaged in battle, they might assume the form of a wild cat or dragon, but if secrecy is needed, they might become a moth or a snake. As Susan Matthews writes in "Pullman's Blake for Children," Pullman is "introducing an idea of the constant flux of identity (in the child at least)" (130). It is only once the child reaches puberty that the daemon settles to one form, a form that Lyra is told reflects, "what kind of person you are" (NL 167). There is no predicting what form a daemon will take, and their human counterpart is not always happy with the form, just as people are not always happy with themselves. Happy are unhappy, Pullman tells us that adults are stuck. There does not seem to be any chance of reform. We are simply told, "That's part of growing up. There'll come a time when you'll be tired of his changing about, and you'll want a settled kind of form for him" (NL 167). This is in keeping with the Romantic notion that children are between worlds, somehow connected both to this world and to the metaphysical world from which they came. Pullman's daemons exist in our world as well, yet they are internal rather than external to us. The daemons of Lyra's world are separate entities, not physically connected to their human counterparts but attached by an invisible force which Pullman calls Dust.

Throughout the trilogy, Dust is called many different things. Pullman's trilogy title, *His Dark Materials*, refers to Dust. Mary Malone calls them "shadow particles," and Lord Asriel calls them "elementary particles" (SK 90-92, NL 370). Angels, we are told, are made from thickly condensed Dust (AS 33). Dust is a part of all living things or non-living things that have been worked, loved, or touched by the living. Dust is what brought about an awareness of self into Pullman's world; it is at once conscious and consciousness itself. Anne-Marie Bird in her

article “Dust as an Alternative Theological Vision” writes, “Dust is the cosmic material from which the universe is composed [...] Dust and the universe appear to be interchangeable in that there is no distinction between the “source” and the “product” (192).

Though Pullman is often credited with a disenchanting denial of religion, I would argue that he simply makes his own religion using, among many, elements of Christianity, Gnosticism, and a Paganism in the identification of all living things from trees to flowers to birds as part of conscious Dust. David Colbert writes in *The Magical World of Philip Pullman*, “The decision by Lyra and Will to choose knowledge over obedience is exactly the choice that Gnosticism requires” (93). Catholicism also plays a role in Pullman’s representation of the human as being made of three parts: the body, the ghost, and the daemon (Lenz 135). However, both ghost and daemon ultimately turn back to Dust with a capital D. As Mary Malone tells Lyra and Will, “The Catholic Church that I used to belong to—wouldn’t use the word *daemon*, but St. Paul talks about spirit *and* soul *and* body (AS 439). It is true that Pullman dispels the God in the sky, which resembles Christianity’s God and instead makes the universe, the very air, into a god, a creator. However, it is not a god that human beings are removed from. It is a god in which we share and are a part of. Humans are made from Dust, but we also help to make it. Colbert writes, “The creation of art—a sign of trying to understand the world, and to tell stories about humankind’s place in it, is the date at which human consciousness began [...] that process began with the arrival of Dust” (111). The stories and art that we create also create Dust, so that humankind becomes its own creator. We are our own saviors. Bird writes, “[Within the novels] enlightenment can be achieved only by means of humanities own exertions” (188). The physical body becomes not a test of our spiritual strength and something we must resist in order to gain access to some metaphysical heaven, but the source of that heaven. The possibility of an afterlife

in and as Dust can only exist if we live fully in the here and now. The power of gods and goddess is not simply disproven as Pullman's God is revealed to be an angel posing as creator, but humans are proven to be capable of godlike creation themselves.

Only adults, however, can make Dust. Mary Malone is watching Lyra and Will in *The Amber Spyglass*, and it is only when they declare their love for one another that they begin attracting Dust. Pullman writes that Mary saw Dust flowing out of the world and getting lost in the void between the worlds until it "found a living home again, and these children-no- longer children, saturated with love, were the cause of it all" (AS 470). Love of another is presented as the most powerful force, a force capable of dealing in Dust, the very substance of creation. In a way, though Pullman, an atheist himself, is often seen as putting an end to religion in his novels, I would argue that he brings the essence of religion (an explanation and purpose of our own existence) to earth. For Lyra and Will to make enough Dust, they must live to the fullest. Millicent Lenz writes in *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction*, "[With a single kiss] they cause the Dust to reverse its direction and flow back into the world of conscious beings" (136). In this way, Pullman promotes growing up and the experience of love and sex not as sinful but as an act of creation, not just as the potential for a physical biological creation but a metaphysical one. Lenz writes, "The 'fall' into consciousness is 'good,' and thus it follows that Eve *must* be tempted" and refers to what John Milton, a great influence on Pullman, calls, "the fortunate fall" (134). The knowledge and experience that comes with years is encouraged, and Lyra, playing the role of the mythical Eve, is a heroine for choosing knowledge and the world rather than ignorance and an Eden whose borders are defined by a tyrannical Church and an impostor-god.

Dust might also be seen as the product of the imagined being brought into existence, for Dust is change. Bird writes, "Dust is the logos or 'Total Being,' the 'ultimate cause'" (191). It is

creation, not the thing created or the creator but the very act of creation. Children in fantasy fiction often possess the power to make the imagined real. Karen Patricia Smith in “Fantasy Legacy and *His Dark Materials*” writes, “Part of the fantasy tradition embraces the concept that a person is particularly accessible to the wiles of the fantastic *before* adolescence. Youth offers a rationale for ignoring or denying the logic associated with adulthood” (138). Pullman continues this tradition, but he gives the greater power to adults and demystifies the process of attaining such power by speaking of hard work, study, and discipline. In many fantasy worlds, adult “logic” is true on earth but somehow false on a divine level, thus polluting the child’s innate divine logic. Pullman promotes an adult’s lifetime of work as a “deeper and fuller” grace than that which comes naturally with childhood. He also reveals a mystical element behind all of creation and behind the “work” of living a life—Dust (AS 491). In Pullman’s world, adult logic creates the divine. It creates Dust.

Though he promotes knowledge, he also makes the child (the creature who does not attract Dust) the instrument which decides the outcome of the entire war between heaven and earth. What is more, Lyra must fulfill her mission blindly. The witch consul calls Lyra a “strange innocent creature” and claims that she has a great destiny but “must fulfill this destiny in ignorance of what she is doing, because only in her ignorance can we be saved” (175-76). Lyra’s destiny is to bring freedom to humankind by bringing about an end to destiny, but it is rather curious that she must do this because it *is* her destiny.

As a metaphysical concept, there are many ideas with parallels to Dust that can be found outside of Pullman’s text. Dust has similarities to beliefs and traditions associated with cultures from around the world as well as from different periods of time. The Chinese philosopher, Meng Ke spoke of a vital energy force called Chi which he claimed flowed through the world and that

human beings could work and cultivate this Chi until it was capable of extending across the entire cosmos. Zhuang Zi claimed that human beings were born when an accumulation of Chi is gathered together, much like when Pullman's angels are born (Reid). A.C. Graham in *Chuang-Tzu: The Inner Chapter* calls Chi the substance that holds all of matter in its present shape. He writes, "The universe is not constituted from inert matter, it is a pool of energetic fluid" (Graham 18). Many Native American tribes have stories about The-Spirit-That-Moves-Through-All-Things. The Navajo speak of the Winds, Hawaiians of *Mana*, and Indians of *prana*, subtle energy. Similar concepts have also made their way into popular science fiction culture. For example, this idea of an invisible conscious substance is seen in George Lucas' *Star Wars* (Campbell). Luke is told to trust the force, and so, rather than aim his laser at the target using his eyes, he closes them and allows *the force* to guide his shot rather than using his own skill and knowledge. In much the same way, Lyra half closes her eyes whenever she is reading the Alethiometer and lets the needle swing back and forth at will. In many ways, Pullman's Dust is comparable to the breath of God that he breathed into the clay figure of Adam to make him come to life in the Christian mythology. Islamic people have a similar belief about humankind being the breath and spirit of Allah which will, when we die, return to him. Pullman takes the "him" out of God and simply leaves us with the breath. Chi is often considered synonymous with light just as Dust is mistaken for light by the scholars of Jordan College at the beginning of *The Northern Lights*. Kenneth Cohen writes in *The Way of Qigong: The Art and Science of Chinese Healing* that the philosopher Kang Youwei believed that Chi was a substance that filled the entire universe, called luminiferous ether, which carried light and had the power of life. Luminiferous ether was dubbed by Aristotle as the fifth element and was considered to be pure energy (Cohen 53).

That Dust can retain the will of its human vessel is hinted at when Will tells Lyra, “I *will* love you forever, whatever happens. Till I die and after I die, and when I find my way out of the land of the dead, I’ll drift about forever, all my atoms, till I find you again...” (AS 497). Lyra replies, “And when we do find each other again, we’ll cling together [...] Every atom of me and every atom of you [...] And when they use our atoms to make new lives, they won’t just be able to take *one*, they’ll have to take *two*, one of you and one of me, we’ll be joined so tight...” (AS 497). This implies, if not an existence after death, a continued existence of the love that one felt during life. Perhaps that is how immortality is to be achieved in Pullman’s trilogy. The romantic love that Lyra and Will feel for each other serves as the threshold to adulthood for them both.

In Pullman’s narrative, the fact that Dust is not attracted to children is perhaps one of its most puzzling properties. Asriel tells Lyra, “When Rusakov discovered Dust, at last there was a physical proof that something happened when innocence changed into experience” (NL 373). The Church clearly believes in a Romantic Child, not yet stained with sin and encompassing all potentialities. The Gobblers, a radical branch of the church, view childhood (not children) as something to be protected. They do this by attempting to trap the child in an everlasting childhood, denying them all the pains and joys that come with growing up. Pullman names the process intercision. It is a cutting away of the daemon from his or her human child before the daemon has a chance to become fixed and the nature of the child decided. We see this fear of growing up again in *The Subtle Knife* when Mrs. Coulter has Lyra trapped in a cave in the mountains. Matthews writes, “Mrs. Coulter [...] drugs her to protect her from the experience that is prophesized” (126). In this sleep, Lyra parallels Lyca, whom William Blake takes on a journey through innocence into experience in his poems “Little Girl Lost” and “Little Girl Found.” Matthews writes, “The books, just like Lyca in the Experience poem, are able to confront danger

and difficulty, resisting the attempt of Mrs. Coulter (or culture) to censor and simplify” (129). Fear drives Mrs. Coulter and the church in Pullman’s trilogy, fear of what the child might become, for with knowledge comes the power to overthrow the foundation of ignorance with which they have sought to build the world on and from which they wish to rule.

William Blake described the ideal Man as analogous with the Romantic Child, in that he was capable of everything but had not yet done anything. This is the state in which the Gobblers want to trap children. They want to protect them by making them helpless. Generally children are thought of as having a less fixed view of both the world and of their own identities because they are at an age of concentrated growth and therefore of intense change. They are not viewed as fully formed. How many times are children asked, “What are you going to be when you grow up?” They can be anything and are nothing; that seems to be the reoccurring message. Harold Bloom writes in *The Visionary Company*, “Fully integrated, Blake’s Man is all Imagination, an extraordinary actuality whose consciousness is a final apprehension of human potential, and who is therefore God as well as Man, a vision of all that is” (32). I would argue that it is a vision of all that *could* be. In many ways this description is a fitting one for the child characters of fantasy fiction. In Pullman’s work, the two central characters, Lyra and Will, are children, full of potential, and capable, as expressed in the last line of the trilogy, of godlike power. This limitless array of possibilities that resides in the child is given a visual expression by Pullman in the children’s daemons. This potentiality is undermined, however, as Hines notes, “[Just] the fact that all servants have dog daemons belies the infinite possibility represented before puberty” (39). Perhaps after the trilogies close and destiny is dismissed by Lyra’s choice of knowledge over ignorance, servants will have a chance of breaking free of the pre-fitted mold they have been chosen for.

It is Dust, the church believes, that Eve invited into the world whenever she made the same choice of knowledge and ate the apple from the Garden of Eden. The church may be right if the child is viewed as innocent and the adult as sinful, seeing as Dust is only attracted to the adult; however, in this case, “sin” is not evil, it is knowledge. Leet points out that this concept of sin “runs counter to the long-held belief that sin is the negative aspect of ourselves, a darkness that must be held in check or denied” (181). Sin is what makes us human, and humanity is not a trial state before one can attain heavenly perfection, but the state in which heaven is made.

It is the child’s enigmatic “grace” that gives Lyra the ability to read the Alethiometer. To read the Alethiometer, you cannot think about which option seems more likely or what you think this or that symbol means. In fact, you are not meant to think at all. Thinking and reasoning are seen as distractions. Lyra has to clear her mind, and perhaps most importantly she has to trust in the Alethiometer to tell her whatever it is she wants to know. Pullman describes it as a “calm state in which the symbol-meanings clarified themselves, and those great mountain-ranges touched by sunlight emerged into vision” (151). Lyra describes it as, “climbing down a ladder at night, you put your foot down and there’s another rung [...] I put my mind down and there’s another meaning, and I kind of sense what it is” (152). She has to trust that it is there in order to find it, just as witches and wizards must trust in the existence of Platform 9 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  in J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter*. At the end of the trilogy, when Lyra is growing up, Pullman disrupts the notion that this grace-filled state of innocence is ideal. He does this by making the grace that is attained consciously, through growing and changing and learning, the higher form. In “Religious Subversion in *His Dark Materials*,” Bernard Schweizer writes, “This seems to suggest a feminine understanding of grace as fusing both sex and wisdom, something that is more wholesome and affirmative than the arbitrary operations of providence” (169). As a

woman, Lyra must make her own providence. This second grace is a grace achieved through exploration of physical pleasures and romantic commitment, celebrating the transfer of faith and belief onto another human being (as Will bestows the same upon Lyra) rather than upon an absent and untouchable deity.

The fact that a child's daemon has not yet settled also helps to explain why the Specters, who feed off a person's soul or daemon, do not attack children. Lenz writes, "Children, less focused and intense in their attention, are not so attractive to these predators" (141). A victim of the specters can temporarily escape consumption by pretending that they are not there. If they can believe that they are safe, then they are safe in whatever activity they use to distract themselves. Not only are children immune, they cannot even see Specters that are in many ways representative of depression, something against which children are often thought to be invulnerable. Using make-believe creatures to represent real psychological issues, Pullman writes, "What I've tried to do there is use the apparatus of fantasy to say something that I think is true about human psychology" (qtd. in Hade 40). Specters are very similar to J. K. Rowling's dementors, though they are not deterred by happy thoughts. Instead, they are deterred when their intended victim is able to ignore them and concentrate upon something else, for instance, the number of leaves on a bush. In *The Subtle Knife*, when a young man, Tullio, is being attacked by Specters, Pullman writes:

[He] stood with his back against the wall on the other side of the narrow street waving his arms in the air as if trying to keep a flock of bats from his face. Then he turned away and began to run his hands along the stones in the wall, looking closely at each one, counting them, feeling the edges, hunching up his shoulders as if to ward off something behind him, shaking his head [...] His movements

became more and more lethargic, and presently they stopped altogether. (SK 178-79)

The term Spectre comes from William Blake who wrote about shadowy devil-like figures that follow close behind human beings. In *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake*, Northrop Frye writes, “Abstract ideas are called spectres by Blake, and Spectre with a capital letter is the Selfhood” (73). Every human has his or her own personal Spectre, according to Blake, just as every human in Pullman’s universe has his or her own daemon. Perhaps they each have their own Specters too, waiting for them in the nothingness of the void. For Blake, “The corresponding term is ‘Emanation,’ which means the total form of all the things a man loves and creates. In the fallen states the Emanation is conceived as outside” (Frye 73). Blake’s Emanation is comparable to Pullman’s daemon which grows just as its human grows, through the simple process of creating a life for oneself.

In religious terms, it is only after death that a human is often thought of as leaving behind the fallen state of sin. Similarly, it is after death that the daemon and its human no longer need to be separate. As long as the ghost of a person is not trapped in The Land of the Dead, then the particles of Dust that make up the essence of both the human (in ghost form) and the daemon can find one another and join together, intermingling at last. Rowling’s Patronus is also similar to Blake’s Emanation in that it is created out of a person’s very best memories: “the things a man [or woman] loves” (Frye 73). To love then makes one stronger, and for good or ill, Blake believed that we were the creators of our own Spectres. Frye writes, “Any kind of imagination separated from its material or emanation becomes a Spectre” (281). What we imagine becomes real, even if it does not assume a physical existence. Like Pullman’s Daemons, an Emanation has the power to fight the Spectres, though in Blake’s poem, *The Four Zoas*, it weeps instead. Good

thoughts fight bad, bringing up the mental image of an angel on one shoulder and a demon on the other. The important thing to know, though, is that we create and give power to them both, for they have nothing of their own.

Pullman's specters do not originate in any one world. They come out of the nothingness between the worlds. In fact, they are the nothingness. Pullman writes, "It's like a little bit of the abyss that floats out and enters the world" (AS 486). Every time Will cuts a slit in the veil separating two worlds, he creates a new Specter or, at least, aids in its release. Though the Subtle Knife helps bring them into being, the Specters fear it, for it can also kill them (SK 234). This is similar to the Dementors' fear of the thing that they most crave—hope and happiness. Dementors crave a person's happy thoughts, and yet it is those thoughts in the form of a Patronus that pushes them away.

Dust represents this act of creation for Pullman. Bloom writes, "If this creation does not take place, the restrained creator is trapped [by his/her Spectre]" (*Blake's Apocalypse* 285-86). In Blake's poem, *The Four Zoas*, the Spectre "is a protective shadow whose 'guarding' has become an ambiguous menace, for it keeps others from the Self" (*Blake's Apocalypse* 285). Therefore, it is the act of love, that attracts specters and Dust. Both Pullman's Specters and Blake's Spectres create walls inside a person's mind, shielding them but also holding them apart from the outside world, just as Mrs. Coulter does with Lyra.

If a person in Pullman's world does not create enough Dust during his or her life, meaning that he or she does not live to their full potential, gathering stories and memories to tell the harpies who reside in the underworld, they will be trapped, forever separated for all of eternity from their daemons, their potentials. Bloom adds, "What [...] Man creates Blake calls his Emanation; when the creation assumes an object status the creator becomes only a shadow of

himself, an isolated self, Blake calls the Spectre” (Visionary 32). Those trapped in The Land of the Dead before Lyra and Will arrive have become like shadows of themselves. Through their fear to live, they have created inside of themselves their very own worst nightmares. Of the dead, Pullman writes, “Their voices were no louder than dry leaves falling. And it was only the children who spoke; the adults all seemed sunk in a lethargy so ancient that they might never move or speak again” (Amber 297). This idea of unlived potential being the greatest of sins turns the tables yet again on childhood innocence as the ideal state. Within the stories, one does not need to lose innocence in order to grow up, only ignorance.

#### Chapter Four: Lewis Carroll's *Alice*: A Corrupt Innocent?

Plato once asked, "How can you prove whether at this moment we are sleeping, and all our thoughts are in a dream; or whether we are awake, and talking to one another in the waking state?" (Plato). Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books use this dream trope to create levels of narration. We are not just reading about Alice; we are reading about Alice dreaming. Alice herself is distanced from the fantasy of Wonderland. Even from inside of her dream Alice questions whether or not she is dreaming or whether she is merely being dreamt of by another. Like the reader, she is not experiencing the adventure directly, though her time in Wonderland seems real enough as Alice gets hungry, anxious, angry, and frightened. Yet nothing makes sense in Wonderland, at least not to Alice, and Wonderland only exists as long as she is willing to believe in it just as Carroll's story can only exist as long as the reader believes in it. Though a reader knows that a novel is fictional, through the very act of reading, a story is given life within the imagination of the reader; at least for a time.

In *Alice's Adventures*, it is when she denies the reality of what is happening around her, saying, "Who cares for *you*" that she wakes up, and the court of living playing cards turn into dead leaves (97). In *Through the Looking-Glass*, it is when she takes charge of the absurd situation at hand that she wakes up. She cries, "I ca'n't stand this any longer" and declares "I'll shake you into a kitten, that I will" (204). She picks up the Red Queen who has been yelling and ordering her about and shakes her until she is no longer holding a Queen but a kitten. Both dreams are only allowed to be real as long as Alice, their dreamer, is willing to go along with them. She creates the realities of both worlds as the reader creates the reality of a novel. In both cases, belief is the impetus behind such creation. Though nothing physical is created, ideas and opinions are formed from reading a story, as are emotions. You feel for the characters; you are

frightened for them whenever they are in danger, pleased for them whenever they have achieved the heart's desire, and frustrated with them whenever they act silly or impetuous.

Alice is a Victorian child creating her own worlds, but her fantasy is not an imagined one or a remembered Eden created by the child's other-worldly sixth sense. It is a reflection of the adult world around her. Peter Hunt in *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* calls Carroll's books a "fantasy locked onto the real world" (24). From a child's eye, it is a world with strange, nonsensical rules, a frightening world moving inevitably closer and closer with unstoppable force, as unstoppable as growing up.

The dream spaces in both *Alice's Adventures* and *Through the Looking-Glass* offer cutting critiques of Victorian society. J.D. Stahl in *Crosscurrents of Children's Literature* notes that Carroll "derides the familiar moralism of Victorian children's literature and portrays adult authority figures with sarcasm and irony" (62). Indeed, all of the adults that we see are either ridiculous or cruel or both. The Red Queen sentences people to death for beating her at croquet or planting white roses instead of red ones. The Cook throws fire irons and dishes at a mother and her baby. Prisoners are given only oyster-shells to eat. Alison Lurie in *Don't Tell the Grown-ups* writes, "All the adults, especially those who resemble governesses or professors, are foolish, arbitrary, cruel, or mad" (6). Alice's adventures are from the child's view point with Alice as the only logical character, however her logic does her little good in the illogical Wonderland just as children in the adult world often have trouble explaining the world through their eyes and are often forced to conform to the world as it is viewed and created by their parents and teachers.

While the bulk of Carroll's stories, the parts that take place inside Alice's dream world, are full of stinging criticisms of this adult world and feature a less than ideal child, Lewis Carroll undermines his witty satire by framing his stories in his own nostalgic poetry, idolizing

childhood and mourning its loss. He further undermines the importance of Alice's journeys by making them nothing more than dreams from which she awakens. The dream frame of the stories undermines the power of the child's magic, for Alice has not created or experienced anything real. Whereas the other characters in the books that I have looked at come away with something, in *Alice's Adventures*, Alice simply calls it "a curious dream" and runs off to tea (98). In J. M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy*, Wendy and the Lost Boys gain valuable experience from their adventures with Peter, realizing that they do want to grow up after all and that growing up and falling in love is its own adventure. Pullman's Lyra overthrows a dogmatic religious organization and plans on building a Republic of Heaven. Rowling's Harry Potter defeats a dangerous wizard who would subjugate all non-magical folk. Even Dorothy, who I will discuss in the next chapter, learns a valuable lesson, that, "There is no place like home" (Baum). Alice, however, simply wakes up.

Though a professor of mathematics, it is evident from his poetry that Carroll valued the perceived innocence and ignorance of childhood. Like many Victorian authors, he seems to view such ignorance as a window to wonders unimaginable to adults. Without a head full of worries and concerns, the child has the ability to imagine. That is the idea. Sheila Egoff notes in *Only Connect*, that there is a prevailing belief that "Children [...] are at the height of their imaginative powers during the mid-elementary school years and often utilize supernatural characters in their play" (134). At once, these "imaginative powers" are viewed with suspicion, as the Puritans viewed them, as though the child will become a devil by playing one, or else, they are viewed with awe as though they come from some heavenly realm whose music still rings in the ears of children and manifests itself through make-believe, revealing universal but hidden truths. Egoff writes, "It is not difficult for them [children] to accept highly imaginative and unusual elements

in a story (134). The idea is that since children know less, they are open to more. One would think that the more one knew, the more wondrous things one could imagine, like a painter for whom experiences are different shades of color. However, where the child is concerned, knowledge is often looked upon as a cage that bars him or her from the mysteries of other worlds.

Adults took and continue to take comfort in this idea of childhood as it affords them an excuse to fail. By labeling children as innocents, they label themselves as corrupt. As Peter Coveneny writes in "Escape," "The romantic child could become a currency only too easily seized by the writer who had every good reason to seek its comfort in face of a sense of personal failure and shame" (331). Knowing that they are not all good, grown-ups place this burden of goodness upon the child. One's intentions may be good, but this is too heavy a burden for any human being, child or adult. Bettelheim writes: "There is a widespread refusal to let children know that the source of much that goes wrong in life is due to our very own natures [...] we want our children to believe that, inherently, all men are good." (7). The impulse is to protect children, to only give them bright sunny images with which to amuse themselves. Children, however, are not always bright and sunny themselves. They have dark impulses, just as adults do. Bettelheim continues, "Children know that they are not always good; and often, even when they are, they would prefer not to be. This contradicts what they are told by their parents, and therefore makes the child a monster in his own eyes" (7). Presenting the child reader solely with morally correct child characters who never struggle internally with themselves and who are always well-behaved and kind will only serve to isolate the child, leaving him or her uncommunicative and full of shame.

If Wonderland is to be viewed as a twisted form of Victorian England with all of its rigid social customs seen from a child's point of view, then Alice is the innocent who is thrown in the middle and left to fend for herself. Alice tries to conform, but to do so she must force her body through grotesque changes again and again. Her innocence here is seen in the fact that she is willing to mold herself to Wonderland thus making herself a victim as Carroll sees children as victims of Victorian society. Alice, however, does not imagine that she is innocent. Just as some children often do not see themselves as children, Alice considers herself quite the mature lady. Despite this, it is her innocence that makes Wonderland possible, for she does not yet accept the societal code that surrounds her waking life. She still sees it with innocent eyes, and it is these eyes that make visible the rules and regulation that adult humans have forced upon themselves and their children. Through her imagination, she changes adults and their society into vanishing cats, smoking caterpillars, talking playing cards, and flamingo bats. It is not the fantastical that Carroll's child does not understand, but her own society that she is, being a child, a relatively new member. Of stories written around the publication of *Alice*, Egoff writes, "On a whole they are set in a world of delight and innocence, which is described lovingly and nostalgically" (417). But, Wonderland is a far cry from this world of innocence. Carroll seems to have written the nightmare that he imagines children must see whenever they look around at the real world. Whatever innocent fantasy (perceived as innocent by the adult viewer) Alice might have once created through her innate imaginative powers of childhood is overshadowed by the distorted and often times hideously unfair Wonderland.

Alice does not accept this twisted Wonderland without a fight, however. Far from the unconcerned innocent, she is constantly asking questions and casting doubt upon this adult world. Stahl writes, "Alice herself is a contradictory, confused, and at times cruel child—not an

idealized innocent” (Crosscurrents 62). In many respects Alice is not at all likeable. She is constantly belittling other people’s ideas, claiming them false, and getting offended, though she is the foreigner in the strange land. “Nobody asked *your* opinion,” she tells the Hatter when he tells her “It’s very easy to take *more* than nothing” (59). Alice is certainly not the model of the Victorian ideal of childhood. As Ruth Jenkins notes in “Imagining the Object in Kingsley, MacDonlad, and Carroll,” “She [Alice] refuses to perform appropriate girl qualities” (79). She is loud, quick tempered, and outspoken. Lurie writes, “Except for her proper manners, she is by no means a good little girl in mid-Victorian terms. She is not gentle, timid, and docile, but active, brave, and impatient” (7). Alice, as she is depicted in her journeys in Wonderland, does not conform to anyone’s ideal, except perhaps Carroll’s.

Despite Alice’s many character flaws, Carroll frames his story and Alice’s dream in wishful yearnings that she should remain just as she is. Stahl calls Carroll’s framing, “sentimental tributes to the Victorians’ romantic conception of childhood: ‘where Childhood’s dreams are twined / In Memory’s mystic band,’ and the ‘simple sorrows’ and ‘simple joys’ or ‘child-life’” (Crosscurrents 62). Though the child character he created is unlikeable most of the time, Carroll still mourns her loss of childhood. Perhaps Alice’s unlikableness is the poisonous influence of Victorian society (as seen by the absurdity of Wonderland) already working on the purity of her childhood. Alice, like anyone who lives in and is a part of a society, must conform, at least to some extent, to that society. Perhaps the child Carroll portrays is imperfect because the world in which she finds herself is imperfect.

The two poems that precede *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* are from the adult’s point of view rather than the child’s. In both poems, awkward and uncomfortable children are smoothed over, replaced by idealized versions that are longed for and

mourned by the adult narrator. The reader, however, never sees these versions of childhood within the story and certainly does not find them represented in Alice. John Goldthwaite in *The Natural History of Make-Believe* calls *Alice's Adventures* preface poem, Carroll's "most ambitious pretense," claiming that Carroll transforms Alice "from a disgruntled, sassing daughter into a 'dream-child' (154). Goldthwaite writes that Carroll's poems are a combination of William Wordsworth's "Imitations of Immortality" and William Blake's *Songs of Innocence*. We see the theme of childhood at one with nature repeated in all three poems, Wordsworth's, Blake's, and Carroll's poem at the beginning of *Alice's Adventures*. This is congruent with the romantic notion that the child can somehow understand the wind and birds, that they can hear the music of faery, a music no longer heard by adult ears. Speaking of fairytales, Bruno Bettelheim writes in *The Uses of Enchantment*, "The hero is helped by being in touch with primitive things—a tree, an animal, nature—as the child feels more in touch with those things than most adults do" (11). Wordsworth writes of a youth that "is Nature's priest" (73). In Blake's poem, his child character, Lyca, lies asleep "While the beasts of prey,/Come from caverns deep,/View'd the maid asleep" and "Leopards, tygers, play/Round her as she lay,/While the lion old/Bow'd his mane of gold" (34-36, 41-44). Lyca, as a child, exists in a paradisiacal state of innocence. This innocence and helplessness is heightened by the fact that she is asleep and so cannot be afraid by all the wild beasts that surround her because she is not consciously aware of them. It is both because she is a child and because she is unaware that she is not in danger. Here, innocence is ignorance and this ignorance protects the child from harm.

Carroll, though his "dream-child" is "in friendly chat with bird or beast" she only "half believe[s] it true" (23, 24). This suggests that perhaps all the beautiful glories of childhood are only imaginary and the child's state is the better one because he or she is ignorant enough to

believe that they are true. By not merely pretending but by believing in what they pretend, the child creates paradise on earth. Perhaps, this is the child's mysterious power. In this case, it would be the child who is creating her own "wonders wild and new" because, though it is the adult Carroll who is telling the story, the Liddell sisters are the ones who are supposedly believing it (22). At least, Carroll imagines that they believe it. Like the Victorian ideal, this is still an idea of childhood created and longed for by adults. Perhaps the children do not believe Carroll's stories at all but are simply enjoying a well-told tale. In this case, the magic of belief (or the illusions of ignorance) is reversed and Carroll is the one envisioning an idealized state, one he thrusts upon the child.

This idealized child dreams and imagines, but she does not think. Thinking is a troublesome thing, and thinking leads to a questioning and a wondering that the idealized child is free from. Though Carroll wrote fantasy, many adults at the time considered, "fantasy not as a 'literary form' but as a 'psychological illness,'" saying that it would lead to "Unwholesome fantasizing on the part of children or make them withdraw from the world" (135). For Carroll, however, the child in the fantasy land of Wonderland is encountering the harshness of reality, not the other way around. It is not fantasy that the child is in danger of getting lost in, but society, where her purity, Carroll believed, would be corrupted with pettiness and bound with rigid, senseless rules of etiquette that would force her into the role of an adult. Carroll, who was never comfortable with adult Victorian society, made the real world, the dangerous one. The child sees truly, for her vision is pure. For, Carroll, Wonderland was Victorian England as he saw it and as he imagined that the child saw it.

Goldthwaite reminds us that Alice, like Carroll, is reprimanded for thinking, though Carroll reprimands himself while Alice is reprimanded by others. Lewis Carroll suffered from

insomnia and during the night he would often be visited by thoughts he did not approve of. Carroll tells us in *Pillow Problems: Thought out During Sleepless Nights*, “There are skeptical thoughts” and “blasphemous thoughts” and “unholy thoughts” all of which “torture with their hateful presence, the fancy that would be pure” (Qtd. in Goldthwaite 155). In the world of the Looking-Glass, the Duchess tells Alice that she has as much right to think “as pigs have to fly” (72). This is reminiscent of Lyra’s Alethiometer in Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*. As a child, Lyra must not think about the answers in order to divine them; she must simply be present to read them off the face of the compass. As soon as one begins thinking or, in Lyra’s case, having other adult feelings and most specifically romantic feelings then one is cut off from this delightful world of innocence. For, it is this innocence and sexlessness that grants Lyra access to Dust, Lyra access to wild beasts, and Alice access to Wonderland.

Just as Eve went against God and followed her own mind, thinking to taste the apple, fantasy writers for children, especially in the Victorian era, so often show the beginning of thought as synonymous with the end of magic, for the magic that is often depicted is magic created by the thoughtless belief of their child characters and not by adult logic. The idea here seems to equate thought with sin and experience, as if one must not think about other worlds, divine or otherwise, only accept them, or else doubt will find a way in. Doubt is not seen here as instructive but as an invasive disease. For Carroll, Goldthwaite notes, “Thinking and faith are mutually exclusive” (156). If one can understand the magic, then, it is no longer considered magic. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice asserts that “One ca’n’t believe impossible things,” and the Queen of Wonderland answers her, “I daresay you haven’t had much practice” (153). The Queen makes no argument for the “impossible things” being possible, but simply wants Alice to believe in them. The belief makes them real, and if this belief cannot make them

physically real, it does not seem to matter. Such impossible things are made possible to the person who believes in them. That is sufficient. The Queen goes on to say, “When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast (153). Belief in Wonderland is depicted here as a skill, something to be honed with practice.

Belief is a currency as well, something to be traded. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, when Alice comes across the lion and the unicorn at war, she marvels at meeting a real unicorn. The unicorn is as surprised to see Alice as she is to see it. Carroll writes, “‘Well, now that we *have* seen each other’ said the Unicorn, ‘if you’ll believe in me, I’ll believe in you. Is that a bargain?’” (175). In order to exist, must you be believed in? Others certainly must acknowledge your existence for you to take an active role in whatever society you find yourself. When Alice refuses to play along, the society around her crumbles.

During the banquet to celebrate Alice’s coronation, Alice gets tired of having to do everything that the Red Queen tells her to do. She is hungry but she has no chance to eat anything as she must be introduced to everything there, and then she cannot eat anything because as the Red Queen tells her, “It isn’t etiquette to cut any one you’ve been introduced to” (Gardner 262). The reality of this world is what is recognized as real. Gardner identifies “to cut” as a pun, writing:

*To cut* is to ignore someone you know. *Brewers Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* distinguishes four kinds of cut: the cut direct (staring at an acquaintance and pretending not to know him or her); the cut indirect (pretending not to see someone); the cut sublime (admiring something, such as the top of a building,

until an acquaintance has walked by); and the cut informal (stooping to adjust a shoelace) (Gardner 262).

Perhaps Carroll is pointing out how everyone, in or out of Wonderland, makes their own world by including who they want to include in their lives and rejecting those they do not want to include. Alice finally gets tired of having no control over things and “As an experiment, she calls out ‘Waiter! Bring back the pudding!’” (Gardner 262). She is not only rejecting social norms, the norms which are only normal because the Queen says that they are so, but she is establishing herself as a creator of norms and as a queen. Carroll writes, “and there it was again in a moment, like a conjuring trick” (Gardner 262). Alice’s experiment is successful. In this moment, she has moved from being a victim of societal traditions and customs to a creator of them. Perhaps this is representative of a shift from childhood to adulthood.

In Wonderland, Alice continually grows larger and smaller and larger again, trying desperately to make her self fit the world in which she finds herself. However, in the Looking-Glass World, when she orders the pudding returned and takes a bite out of it, despite the fact that it scolds her, she is forcing the world to conform to *her*. In Wonderland, when Alice suddenly grows taller than the trees around her, a pigeon crashes into her and accuses her of being a serpent. As William Empson writes in “The Child as Swain,” “Alice [...] does not at all like being an obvious angel, a head out of contact with its body that has to come down from the sky, and gets mistaken for the Paradisal serpent of the knowledge of good and evil” (349). Alice wishes to be her normal size and is often afraid of such impetuous growth. She fears at one point that if she gets any smaller she will cease to exist (17). Alice compares herself to a candle flame going out. Carroll writes, “And she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle looks like after the candle is blown out, for she could not remember ever having seen such a thing” (12). Though she

is afraid of changing, she is willing to change to fit through doors and see more of Wonderland. She changes size in order to get into the garden at the beginning of the novel, which Carroll describes as “the loveliest garden you ever saw” with “bright flowers” and “cool fountains” (10). Like the Biblical serpent, Alice brings questions and doubts with her into the garden and Wonderland. However, once she finally does figure out how to shrink herself and fit through the door, she finds Wonderland not at all wonderful but full of nonsensical cruelty.

Alice brings reason to Wonderland just as Eve brought knowledge to The Garden of Eden. At the end of *Alice's Adventure's*, she brings about Wonderland's doom by ceasing to believe in the impossibilities that she has seen. Hunt writes, “These books, chameleon-like, suffused with remorseless logic masquerading as nonsense, and nonsense masquerading as logic, are at their core about the relationship between adults and children” (37). Alice is both child and woman, and she is neither. When the pigeon demands of Alice, “*What* are you,” she pauses as if unsure whether to answer girl or woman. When she tells the Pigeon that she eats eggs, it claims of little girls, “They're a kind of serpent” (43). They are potential serpents; at least, they seem to have appeared that way to the shy bachelor Lewis Carroll. If wonderland is a kind of Eden, it is not a very nice one, and Alice is not a very nice Eve.

But, if Wonderland is to be seen as Carroll's commentary on Victorian society then it is Alice who is in trouble not the other way around. Hunt writes, “Each book is a satire-allegory on politics, a commentary on Victorian mores, an empathetic view of the (female) child's position in Victorian society, and a sublimation of Carroll's own desires” (24). Carroll imagines how absurd the customs of adult society must appear to children, especially female children, whose sex he had much more empathy for. Carroll wrote in his diary, “I am fond of children (except boys)” (Gardner xvii). Ruth Jenkins calls Carroll's stories, “[an] aggressively hostile assault on

Victorian England's symbolic order" (81). As Feroza Jussawalla notes in "The Red King's Dream," the Queen of Hearts can be taken as Queen Victoria, the Cheshire Cat as Disraeli, and the White Knight as Tennyson (160). Several characters could be humorous representations of politicians at the time such as William Gladstone as the Mad Hatter or the Unicorn (158). In this case, perhaps Wonderland is the serpent, the adult world as seen from the child/the innocent's point of view. Feroza claims that the books show Alice questioning not only "the politics of the Victorian educational system" but questioning the whole of the society that she was forced to conform to, such as, "her lessons, of being on time, of wearing white gloves, of enduring prim and proper tea parties and endless croquet games" (157). The Child, again, is seen as the innocent, coming at the corrupt adult world with fresh eyes that see clearly the absurdity of the constraints we have put upon ourselves. One problem with this reading, however, is that Alice is not at all a desirable innocent. Hunt refers to Alice as a "lack of character," writing that "Her value seems to exist only in the narrator's fondness for her" (26). Alice's identity is never quite clear. Is she innocence? Is she corrupt? Is she adult, or is she child? She, herself, is never quite sure.

Alice's identity as well as her very existence is called into question again in *Through the Looking-Glass*. Tweedledee tells her "You're only a sort of thing in his [the king's] dream" (145). He claims that if the King wakes, Alice will simply cease to exist, because she only exists in his unconscious. It is interesting that Alice is certain that she must be the dreamer rather than the King, and yet, she chooses to let the King remain asleep, just in case. Apparently, it is better to be safe than sorry. Alice even begins to shed tears at the accusation "You're not real" (145). As long as one is unaware of the fact, does it really matter if we are simply a character in someone else's mind—just so long as we refuse to believe it? Again this equates innocence with

ignorance. As long as we are ignorant of our powerlessness, we can still be happy. The reality of the situation matters less than what Alice believes the reality to be. For Alice, the stakes are no less than existence or nonexistence, and she chooses to remain ignorant rather than potentially discover that she is not really who she thinks she is and that she is not real at all.

Alice gets herself lost over and over again in such endless and unanswerable questions. The asking of such questions, however, leads the reader and Alice into new worlds of wondering. That Alice is dreaming about the Red King when she supposedly only exists inside of his mind while he is dreaming about her, Egoff writes, “This double regress of Alices and Kings, into infinitely more dreamlike levels nested in the skulls of each, is a delicious thought to philosophers concerned with separating reality from illusion” (152). Upon waking from this second dream at the end of *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice continues to wonder whose dream it really was. How does she know that she is now awake? Martin Gardner in *The Annotated Alice* notes that this is an idea of a Bishop Berkeley who stated that everything existed inside of God’s mind, making us merely ideas in another’s Mind (189). Alice asks this question of the kitten that she has been playing with, and indirectly to the child readers as well: who was the dreamer? As Jenkins writes, “Meaning remains arbitrary” (84). *Through the Looking-Glass* ends with a question rather than an answer or moral as much Victorian literature was apt to do.

Instead of believing something and through belief making it real, Alice finds everything that she once believed turned on its head in Wonderland and the land she discovers on the other side of the Looking-Glass. Alice constantly wonders who she is. Is she girl or woman? Is she Alice or Mabel or someone else entirely? They are worlds where time gets stuck, where Queens live backwards, where unicorns are normal and little girls are fabulous monsters, where there are unbirthdays presents, and where you hand around cakes and then cut them into pieces. Alice is no

longer in charge of anything. Even the meaning of words is unstable. Humpty Dumpty claims, “When *I* use a word [...] it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less” (163). Michael Holquist writes in “What is a Boojum? Nonsense and Modernism,” that the issue is not, “as she [Alice] says, to ‘make words mean so many *different* things.’ It is to make a word mean just *one* thing, the thing which its user intends and nothing else” (391). Humpty Dumpty is arguing for the power of the user to force language to conform to him rather than seeing language as a rigid set which a user must patch together (using words) to create meaning.

Despite all of this, Alice never stops questioning the world around her, and her escapade in Wonderland only ends when she denounces it as a fancy. She cries, “You’re nothing but a pack of cards!” (97). At this point she has stopped going along with the story. She has stopped being afraid of the Queen, suggesting that all of the nonsense that came before was only allowed to exist because Alice allowed it to exist through her own belief in it.

Though we discover that both stories were dreams, Alice’s belief was still necessary for each of them to take place, even if they do only take place in Alice’s head. It is also interesting to note that when Alice denounces Wonderland as real it is the only time in the entire story that Alice grows without eating or drinking anything. Perhaps this signifies that it is not magical growth as when she eats the cake or the mushroom but physical growth from girlhood to womanhood and that this is, in fact, what bars her from Wonderland in the future. Empson writes, “Both these [*Alice’s Adventures* and *Through the Looking-Glass*] clearly stand for becoming grown-up and yet in part are a revolt against grown-up behavior” (349). Carroll certainly idealized the child’s state. Carina Garland writes in “Food, Desire, Gender, and Subjectivity in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* Texts,” “It is quite clear that Carroll idealized young girls and wasn’t as fond of women, as manifested in his willing of his female child friends to stay

young and small” (26). Childhood is where Wonderland is created because children, as seen by Carroll, could view the absurd adult world with fresh innocent eyes. Ursula LeGuin, author of *The Earthsea Trilogy*, cites fantasy’s connection with the real world as the reason so many people were and continue to be afraid of it. The child, however, is seen by LeGuin as being gifted with true unclouded vision. She writes:

For fantasy is true, of course. It isn’t factual, but it is true. Children know that.

Adults know it too, and that is precisely why many of them are afraid of fantasy.

They know that its truth challenges even threatens, all that is false all that is phoney, unnecessary, and trivial in the life they have let themselves be forced into living. (Hunt 6-7)

This seems to be how Carroll uses fantasy, as a secret language with which children can play out truths. These truths seem ridiculous to adults because the adults are the ridiculous ones. This is ironic since the author and creator of Wonderland, Carroll, was an adult himself however much he despised being one.

## Chapter Five: L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

### The Debilitating Power of Disbelief

Frank L. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* takes belief in a darker direction than the texts discussed in previous chapters, illustrating the harmful effects such power can have upon characters, especially children or child-like characters. In Oz, belief, or lack of, can cripple. This is shown in the self-images held by the Tin Woodsman, the Scarecrow, and the Lion and their dissatisfaction with themselves. Though he claimed to be writing a fairytale "in which the wonderment and joy are retained and the heartaches and nightmares are left out," the magic that Baum presents has logical explanations behind it (Baum, Introduction). The magic is not magic, as Baum reveals magic to be mere illusion, spells to be mind games, and potions to be drugs or alcohol. The power of Dorothy and her friends' belief is not projected onto reality; rather their belief changes their inner reality. It changes them and how they present themselves to the world. C.D. Meyers writes in "If Only I Had an Essence! Existentialism and The Wizard of Oz," "This recognition [or lack of] confers value [or lack of] onto the action of the Scarecrow and the Tin Man" (8). Though set in Oz in an Emerald City, the magic possessed by the characters is natural rather than supernatural, existing in ordinary human beings as courage, poise, and self-confidence. In this chapter, I will look at the desires of each of the four main characters to discover how those desires are secured by belief (or not) by the novel's end.

In *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy begins her journey along the yellow brick road by replacing her old, worn out shoes with the wicked witch's beautiful and highly practical silver shoes. Baum writes, "She took off her old leather shoes and tried on the silver ones, which fitted her as well as if they had been made for her" (30). Like wishes, they seem to fit whoever puts

them on. Things are clearly not what they seem in the Land of Oz where magic is hidden in ordinary objects such as shoes and broomsticks.

Though Kansas appears grey and lifeless and her relatives hard and unsmiling, Dorothy's constant desire is to return home, repeated like a mantra throughout the novel. As Laura Barrett notes in "From Wonderland to Wasteland," "She [Dorothy] is escaping one of the most dismal sites on earth" to a place full of magnificence and color (2). The drabness of home, though, does not matter to Dorothy and not once does she consider staying in Oz, even after she becomes its savior. Dorothy gets home in the end by simply wishing she were there. It is her desire that propels her. This power to return home is hers all along, though she is unaware of it. Glinda tells Dorothy, "If you had known of their [the shoes'] power you could have gone back to your Aunt Em the very first day you came to this country" (233-234). Knowledge and awareness are everything in the Land of Oz, for, without them, it does not matter how much power you have. Summarizing William R. Leach in *Freud in Oz*, Kenneth Kidd refers to "*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as an exercise in positive thinking, as 'an optimistic secular therapeutic text'" (99). Indeed, the message seems to be: believe in something hard enough and it will be yours.

Belief is not easy to come by in Oz. The characters cannot simply believe that they are wise, kind, and courageous, for they have no faith in themselves. They need proof, making the wizard, the middle man, necessary by believing him to be. Barrett writes, "The Scarecrow, the Woodman, and the Lion accept symbols for the virtues they desire, virtues, moreover, that each already has in abundance (10). In each case, it is a physical object that helps them believe they have possession of their heart's desire. Kidd links this need for material confirmation with the growing consumerism of American culture in the late 1800's and early 1900's (99). The Wizard mixes bran, pins, and needles together and puts them in the Scarecrow's head to serve as his

brain, the Tin Woodsman gets a heart cut out of silk, and the Lion gets spirits to drink out of a gold dish (184-87). Barrett writes, “These characters' inability to perceive their intelligence, compassion, and courage in the absence of outward signs is an indication of the rising significance of representations” (10-11). They need an outward symbol as validation for what they already possess inside of themselves.

The Wizard has given them a placebo. It is their belief in themselves that does the real work. As the painter Laurel Hart says in “The Power of Suggestion,” “‘Suggestion is more powerful than the completed statement.’ This idea became the catchphrase of my watercolors, and continues to be the vehicle that delivers my content in a much more powerful way than if I said too much in a painting” (54). As with a descriptive passage, a writer can never write the physical reality of a scene, can never name all the flowers in a garden and where each shadow falls and if she tried, the imagery would be lost. However, just a few words, if they are the right words, can inspire the imagination of the reader to invent a whole world complete with color and sound, sunlight and shadow. Hart writes, “The viewer’s eye will subconsciously fill in the missing spaces” (55). This is true of a painting, a piece of literature, or of information received in reality through observation. In “Placebo Effect,” Greg Gregory notes how the power of suggestion can be used to control, writing about drug dealers mixing sugar-water with hard drugs so that buyers get hooked but the dealers themselves do not lose as much money on selling the real thing. Likewise, the Wizard uses the gullibility of the people of Oz to trick them into believing he is all powerful. He uses the power to force them to build his own dream city and to govern it however he wishes. Ranjit Dighe in “The Fable of the Allegory: The Wizard of Oz in Economics” compares the Wizard to a politician, someone whose profession is making people believe in him.

Baum himself had a great interest in appearance and illusion. Throughout his lifetime he worked as an editor, an actor, a film producer, a creator of window displays, and a travelling salesman (Introduction xii). Baum has often been compared to his Wizard who uses magician's tricks to make people think that he has real magic. Susan Wolstenholme writes in the introduction to the *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, "[Baum] turned the window into the stage of a theatre and at the same time an advertising tool [...] Fond of gimmickry and technological tricks, Baum used store windows as little stages for consumer tableaux with moving figures and lights" (Introduction xv). This is exactly what Baum did with his fantasy city of Oz. The entire city is a ruse. The Emerald City is only emerald because people are forced to wear emerald tinted glasses before passing through the city gates. The Wizard is not sorry, however, for this piece of trickery because in his mind he has made people proud of their city. He has used nefarious means to reach what he views as a good end.

The Wizard has power because the people of Oz believe that he does. The Wizard tells us, "It was easy to make the Scarecrow and the Lion and the Woodman happy, because they imagined I could do anything" (188). They create the Wizard through their belief in him. As Barrett writes, "Baum was enchanted by technology, considering it akin to magic" (4). The Wizard's technology and slight of hand, his ability to defy gravity with a hot air balloon, make enlarged projections of himself, and amplify his voice, all make belief in him easier because the simple people of Oz cannot explain what he does. They do not understand the technology that the Wizard uses. Their belief is not the innocent kind we have seen attributed to children and childhood in the other novels that we have looked at. It is not the kind of innocence that gives the characters access to other worlds, it is an innocence built entirely upon ignorance and lack of

knowledge of this world. The Wizard himself offers no explanations, preferring to keep the people in the dark and play God.

Each of the characters that Dorothy befriends along the Yellow Brick Road already possesses his heart's desire. As J.D. Stahl writes in *Crosscurrents of Children's Literature*, "they [the Scarecrow and Tin Woodsman] both obviously think and feel but need greater self-awareness and confidence, just as the lion they meet later simply needs to believe in his own courage" (447). Even Dorothy possesses the thing that can take her home, the silver shoes, though she does not know of their power. Though she manages to destroy two wicked witches, she needs an adult to tell her that her wish to return home to Kansas is possible. Baum writes that Dorothy thinks of herself as "an innocent, harmless little girl" (20). In other words, even after arriving in Oz unscathed by the cyclone, Dorothy believes herself helpless, equating the innocence of childhood with weakness and helplessness. She remains unable to help herself until Glinda gives her the knowledge that she needs. As Dorothy shows us, knowledge is not power, however, through their belief in it, the people of Oz make it power. They shape their reality, and it does not matter if it is true, their collective beliefs make it true. Each of the characters, the Cowardly Lion, the Tin Woodman, and the Scarecrow, need an adult to tell them that they have their heart's desire before they will believe it.

The Scarecrow knows that he has only a head full of straw rather than a brain. He is intelligent enough to know what a brain is for, but he never stops to wonder how he knows this—without having a brain to know it with. Not only can he form thoughts and put them into words that the other characters understand, he is often the one who comes up with solutions to the various problems that the small band encounters along their way. When the Tin Woodman's mouth rusts closed and he begins waving his arms wildly in a panic, Dorothy and the Lion are

dumbfounded, but the Scarecrow quickly deduces that he must want the oil can (56). When the travelers come to a ditch in the middle of the road, none of the others know how they might cross it, but the Scarecrow, by the powers of elimination, solves the problem. At such an impasse, they all “sat down to consider what they should do, and after serious thought the Scarecrow [has the solution]” (62). He does this twice: the first time, he suggests jumping over the ditch, and the second time, he suggests that the Tin Woodman cut down a tree in order to make a bridge (60, 62). Likewise, when they come upon a river, the Scarecrow suggests that they build a raft in order to cross it (66). When Dorothy falls asleep in the poppy field, the Scarecrow says, “Let us make a chair with our hands and carry her” (77). Though continually proclaiming his own brainlessness, he comes up with more solutions to more problems than any other character in the novel.

The Wizard tells the Scarecrow, after he has repeatedly asked him for brains, “You don’t need them. You are learning something every day” (162). Meyers writes, “He thinks, mistakenly, that intelligence is something that one *already* possesses, before making any choices” (8). Like a baby, he must start from the beginning, gaining more and more knowledge with each day that he is alive. Baum writes, “A baby has brains, but it doesn’t know much. Experience is the only thing that brings knowledge, and the longer you are on earth the more experience you are sure to get” (162). The Scarecrow knows this. He has already admitted to Dorothy whenever she asks him for a story at the beginning of the novel, “My life has been so short that I really know nothing whatever. I was only made day before yesterday” (34). Obviously, the Scarecrow is aware that the longer he is alive, the more he will know since he gives his youth as an excuse for his limited collection of stories. The Scarecrow ends up telling Dorothy the story of how he was created. He possessed a consciousness even before the two farmers painted his ears or his eyes,

his nose or his mouth, because he was aware whenever they were being painted onto his cloth head. He tells Dorothy that he was soon placed on a pole in the middle of a cornfield which he admits was very lonely. Still, he was happy, saying, “Many crows and other birds flew into the cornfield, but as soon as they saw me they flew away again, thinking I was a Munchkin; and this pleased me and made me feel that I was quite an important person” (35). His self-image is entirely dependent upon what others think of him and how they react to him. He only becomes unhappy when a crow points out that he has no brains and so can never be a real man, and, as he tells Dorothy, “It is such an uncomfortable feeling to know one is a fool” (36). He is most foolish in his gullibility, for even in his explanation of his own feelings, he uses the word “know.”

The Scarecrow stubbornly insists that he will be miserable unless he has brains, so the Wizard finally gives him something else and tells the Scarecrow that they are brains. If the Scarecrow is viewed as a child, indeed, a baby in terms of how long he has been alive, then the child’s self-image is portrayed as being nothing and having no substance until it is given some by an adult. As Joshua Bellin writes in, “I Don’t Know How It Works: The Wizard of Oz and the Technology of Alienation,” “The Wizard of Oz ‘gives the people what they want’ in terms of technological spectacle and splendor” (2). However, nothing that he gives any of the characters is real in a physical sense; it is all dazzling illusion.

The novel itself, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, like all novels, is an illusion, for it cannot portray reality. Yet, if the author has done a decent job of presenting her made-up world, the reader sets aside the known reality and believes the imaginary for the time it takes her to get to the end of the book. Wolstenholme writes, “Like theatre, writing too depends on the power to catch the imagination and to make the audience-reader believe in what you have created. Writing is both showmanship and salesmanship” (Introduction xvi). It is belief that gives a story its

power just as it is belief that brings Baum's characters happiness. Tison Pugh advances this idea in, "There Lived in the Land of Oz Two Queerly Made Men," by stating, "If writing is an act of world making, writing about the child is doubly so: not only do writers control the terms of the worlds they present, they also invent, over and over again, the very idea of inventing humanity" (22). Both this idea of the story and the way in which the child-like characters in Oz are portrayed seem to give the adult an eerie amount of control over both the child reader and the child character. For the child, Dorothy, though obviously capable of much on her own, needs an adult to tell her of her power before she can use it to grant her own dear wish.

Unlike the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodsman was once human, so he presumably knows what he is missing by not having a heart or a brain. Ironically, when the Tin Woodman is telling the story of how he lost his heart, he does not say that he stopped loving the Munchkin girl for whose sake he lost his flesh and blood body. He says, "I had now no heart, so that I lost all my love for the Munchkin girl" (47). This seems to imply that it is the knowledge of his missing heart that stops his loving the girl rather than the physical absence of the heart organ. Had he not known that he had lost his heart perhaps he would have gone on loving her. It is his awareness of his deficiency that gives it such power over him.

Even without a heart, the Tin Woodman is arguably the most sensitive character in the book. When the Lion offers to go into the forest to kill a deer for Dorothy's supper, the Tin Woodman begs him not to, and when he steps on a beetle in the road and kills it, tears run down his tin face so that his mouth rusts together (58,55). After the beetle incident, the Tin Woodman keeps his eyes on the road and is careful not to step on any more bugs. Baum writes, "The Tin Woodman knew very well he had no heart, and therefore he took great care never to be cruel or unkind to anything" (56). Again, the fact that he is aware, that he *knew* he was missing a heart is

the only reason that he believes he is lacking the things associated with a heart: the ability to love, feel sympathy, and kindness. He tells Dorothy and the others, “You people with hearts [...] have something to guide you, and need never do wrong; but I have no heart, and so I must be very careful. When Oz gives me a heart, of course, I needn’t mind so much” (56). The irony here is that the careless ones are those with hearts to guide them. The Tin Woodman, however, does not succumb to this cowardly loophole, and as Pugh notes, “He [the Tin Woodman] is known as the most loving man in Oz” even after the first book in which the Wizard gives him his heart-substitute (32). Before gaining the physical representation of his heart though, it is impossible to tell if he is so caring and loving because he knows he has no heart and feels no sympathy and so is trying to make up for it, or if it is because he really does have the emotional capacity to feel even without the symbolic organ.

The Cowardly Lion also “knows” he is a coward and tells his friends over and over again about how terrified he is. However, even when things scare him, which they often do, he never lets that fear paralyze him. As Mark Twain once said, “Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear - not absence of fear. Except a creature be part coward, it is not a compliment to say it is brave” (Directory). The emotions that the Lion feels are normal for any living creature. He tells Dorothy that his poor heart begins to beat fast whenever he is in danger, but this is true of most things in possession of a beating heart. He says, “I haven’t the courage to keep tramping forever, without getting anywhere at all” (144). Who would? This does not make him cowardly; it makes him human, or Lion, rather. Throughout the novel, he offers to go hunting for Dorothy, agrees to leap over a ditch (a ditch deep enough to kill him if he were to fall) with the others riding on his back, and turns to face the terrible Kalidahs, who outnumber him and are much larger than he is, all to save his friends (60, 64). He admits that most of the other animals in the forest are more

afraid of him than he is of them, but he says, “That doesn’t make me any braver, and as long as I know myself to be a coward I shall be unhappy” (55). There is that pesky word, “know,” again. What he thinks he knows, the Cowardly Lion has made into his reality. What he needs is a dose of confidence, not courage.

Knowledge of something helps to determine how powerful it is, whether it is a trait like courage, cleverness, kindness or whether it is a spell. Even the good Witch of the North’s kiss can be called into question. She never tells Dorothy that her kiss will protect her, thus implying that it is a magical kiss. She says, “No one will dare injure a person kissed by the Witch of the North” (17). The kiss leaves a mark, so anyone who comes near Dorothy cannot help but know that she has been kissed by the witch. Dorothy’s safety and the kiss’s power both seem to be predicated on the other person’s knowledge of the kiss. She is perceived to be cared for and protected by a powerful adult figure, and therefore, she is.

Each of the four main characters allows their reality to be created by other people. As Meyers writes, “Existence *always* proceeds essence [...] I am always having to create myself” (5). The Tin Woodman is not happy until he is told that he has a heart. The Scarecrow is fiercely determined to remain miserable until he is told by the Wizard that he has brains, and it is the same with the Cowardly Lion and his courage. In quoting the French existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, Meyers writes, “The coward makes himself cowardly ... the hero makes himself heroic [...] There’s always a possibility for the coward not to be a coward anymore and for the hero to stop being heroic” (5). It does no good for them to tell each other. They need an adult figure, a figure of authority to tell them. Paradoxically, it is the adult wizard who is the only charlatan. He has no supernatural power, yet they treat him as a god. Meyers writes, “For the strong or creative individual (a.k.a., the *Übermensch* ) the death of God [or Wizard] is an opportunity to create new

life-affirming values celebrating the concrete individual” (3). In other words, recognizing that you have control over your own individuality enables you to shape yourself to your liking. The Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion, however are not strong; they are weak because they believe they are weak.

Fantasy literature for children is often critiqued for creating unreal expectations of the world. Upon reading about Oz and Dorothy, might a child believe that she could find her way to that wonderful city by running into the first tornado she sees? C.S. Lewis writes in *Of Other Worlds*:

It [imaginative fantasy] is accused of giving children a false impression of the world they live in. But I think no literature that children could read gives them less of a false impression. I think what professes to be realistic stories for children are far more likely to deceive them (28).

However unreal or fantastical the story may be, the characters’ belief in their dreams enables them to achieve what they most hope for: adventure, flight, a heart, a brain, courage, a home. This, perhaps, is the message that parents should be worried about. Jerry Biberman notes in “Lessons from Oz: balance and wholeness in organizations,” the book can be seen as “a metaphor for personal spiritual growth” (3). The power of suggestion is paramount in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* just as it is in everyday life.

## Concluding Thoughts

As we have seen, the innocence of children in fantasy fiction is often partnered with an extraordinary power of belief, a power that enables the child to do the impossible. The assumption guiding these major works of children's fantasy is that adults cannot believe as well as children because adults' minds are burdened with so many more facts and figures. However, the child's perceived innocence is an attribute placed upon the child by adults, just as the power of belief is bestowed upon child characters by adult authors. Though ascribing an innocence that is both otherworldly and inhuman to children is a romantic concept that continued to grow throughout the Victorian era, it did not begin or end with any one era. As we have seen, this idea of innocence having unexplainable powers is still reflected in children's literature today. Child characters continue to be marked as being isolated from adult characters. Within such stories, the imagination acts as a magic wand. An idea is imagined by a child, and suddenly, it is a part of reality. This power can only be used by children or by adults who have retained a portion of their childhood innocence or, as J. M. Barrie would say, by "women who have no children" and perhaps, though less common, by "some mothers also" (25).

The imagination is one of humankind's most extraordinary facilities. It enables men, women, and children to imagine the world, as well as themselves, differently from how it is. Only then does anyone have a chance of improving the reality of their current situation. Many of the child characters that we have seen do not have to work for such change. By virtue of their age or the incalculable youth of their spirit, they perform the godlike act of creation without the work and sweat required by mortals. Lyra, before she falls in love in *The Amber Spyglass*, is able to divine the answer to any question (285). She simply holds the images, representing the infinite

variety of possible answers, loosely in her mind's eye without thinking about them and magically the right answer appears.

In the fantastical tales we have looked at, it is the innocence that is equated with children and childhood that gives these characters such extraordinary power. In Barrie's classic, we see happy thoughts lifting children off their nursery floor and belief, declared out loud and accompanied by copious clapping, bring a wounded fairy back from the brink of death. Through their ignorance of the world and society, child characters are depicted as being more willing to believe in things that grownups would not. Remember, Alice only has access to Wonderland and the land on the other side of the looking-glass so long as she believes in them and plays by their rules. Knowledge becomes the enemy, or at the very least, it is traded for innocence, making the child and adult a separate species. Philip Pullman diverges from this tradition, writing that the grace of childhood and knowledge of adulthood can coexist, but it takes a lifetime of work. The grace of childhood alone, on the other hand, is depicted as being instantaneous.

The child reader enters into this act of creation by reading the book, by imagining it, and by allowing the story to become his or her reality. Logic is set aside for belief. This act of creation does not belong solely to children. All ages enjoy reading, and all ages participate in creating pictures in their minds out of the words that they read. J. R. R. Tolkien, who invented one of the most fully-developed fantastical worlds in the history of fantasy fiction, that of Middle Earth, writes:

How powerful, how stimulating to the very faculty that produced it, was the invention of the adjective: no spell or incantation in Faerie is more potent [...] We may put a deadly green upon a man's face and produce a horror; we may make the rare and terrible blue moon to shine; or we may cause woods to spring with

silver leaves and rams to wear fleeces of gold, and put hot fire into the belly of the cold worm. But in such ‘fantasy,’ as it is called, new form is made; faerie begins; Man becomes a sub-creator” (8).

I would add that man and woman are not only sub-creators of such marvels but of themselves as well. We all have constructed identities, those we have created for ourselves and those others have saddled us with. The Scarecrow is not a fool or a wise man, only sometimes he acts foolishly and other times, wisely. No label, no name can hold the essence of a person.

An identity or story created through words can never be stable, for words are slippery things, or perhaps it is reality that is the slippery one, making it impossible for words to cement any one moment for other eyes to read and other minds to grasp. Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory* writes, “Words and meanings have a life of their own and constantly override and obscure the supposed simplicities and clarity of external reality” (107). Words create their own reality, and through a reader’s belief in them, he or she makes them real. Words can never accurately reflect any one reality just as the imagination of each child produces a different mental image. In Harry Potter’s Defense Against the Dark Arts class each child projects a different fear onto the Boggart and imagines a different way to make it humorous, illustrating the infinite possibilities of the human imagination.

In reality, we all create our own inner worlds. What we believe affects both our view of ourselves and of the outside world. As we saw with the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion, what we believe about ourselves does not necessarily have to be true but such belief still has the power to make us joyful or despairing, content or unhappy. We see Harry and his fellow Hogwarts students visualizing strange creatures such as Patronuses and Boggarts, and whether or not these imaginings are aspects of the person’s soul or not, they are projected onto

the physical world. Given a form, they battle fear in the form of the transformed Boggart and depression and hopelessness in the form of the Dementor. Harry's ability to imagine and imagine well saves his life more than once. Dorothy's rather stubborn belief that "No matter how dreary and gray our homes are, we people of flesh and blood would rather live there than in any other country, be it ever so beautiful" gets her home in the end (43). When Alice is tired of the Looking-Glass World and the red queen, she declares "I'll shake you into a kitten, that I will!" and she does (204). The worlds of Peter and Wendy, Harry, Lyra, Dorothy, and Alice are each altered to fit what their child character believes they should be simply because they believe it.

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