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Time Control in Diana Wynne Jones's Fiction: *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci*

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A general overview

Recently, the popularity of the British author Diana Wynne Jones has increased so much that also the literary critic, which until now has been snubbing her production, has begun to examine her works. Maria Nikolajeva, Farah Mendlesohn, Charles Butler and Colin Manlove are only a few examples of scholars who have widely analysed Jones's novels. Maria Nikolajeva has highlighted that one of the main themes in Jones's production is linked with the defamiliarization technique. Moreover, in her essay *Heterotopia as a Reflection of Postmodern Consciousness in the Works of Diana Wynne Jones (2002),* Nikolajeva analyses Jones's novels through the use of the idea of heterotopia. Farah Mendlesohn dedicates an entire book to Diana Wynne Jones and she examines deeply the dynamics and the connection between time and space. Charles Butler has presented an overview of Jones's biography, works and narrative features. Butler's work is really effective because he compares and contrasts Jones's production with the production of other influential authors as Penelope Lively, Alan Garner and Susan Cooper. Colin Manlove retraces all the fundamental steps which set up the history of children's literature and he dedicates a large space to Jones's analysis.

I have decided to focus on Diana Wynne Jones's novels because I believe that she was an incredibly talented author who, thanks to her innovations, has given her contribution to modern children's fantasy. Through my dissertation, I want to demonstrate the complexity of Jones's novels and also how her production has contributed to the renewal of fantasy literature. Specifically, Jones's production is a cornerstone of modern children's fantasy, which has inspired important authors as Philip Pullman, Neil Gaiman and J.K. Rowling.

In my dissertation, I have touched on Jones's biography to highlight how her personal life has influenced her entire production and I have offered an overview of Jones's narrative feature and themes. In the last part of this chapter I have focused on the relation between literary criticism and Jones.

The following chapter addresses the issue of time treatment in the Chrestomanci Series. I have offered a brief explanation of the notion of time and I have focused on the nature of time travel. In particular, I have explained Jones's idea of time traveller, I have presented the common subjects in time travel stories and I have compared and contrasted Jones with other relevant fantasy children's authors. The other main section

of this chapter concentrates on the relation between time and space in two Jones's books. First of all, I have introduced the concept of space and then I have spoken about Jones's geography rewriting.

The third chapter addresses the concept of parallel worlds. Therefore, after having introduced the concept of parallel universes, I have focused on multiverse in Chrestomanci series and I have concluded this section by highlighting traces of heterotopia.

The last chapter of my dissertation focuses again on time, but here time is understood as history. Indeed, I have focused on the rewriting of history in The Chronicles of Chrestomanci and I have analysed the relationship between Diana Wynne Jones and the Anglo-Saxon tradition.

1 Introducing Diana Wynne Jones

1.1 A Summary of Jones's Biography

Diana Wynne Jones was one of the most creative and prolific modern children's fantasy authors who wrote some forty volumes since the 1970s. Jones was born in London in 1934 in a well-educated family who allowed her to get in touch with literature. She was dyslexic and she started to write stories as a training against her disease. She attended St. Anne college in Oxford, where she demonstrated that she was an extraordinary student. The time she spent in Oxford was precious and useful because C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien were both lecturing there and deeply inspired her production. Certainly, she would have been a different author without the influence of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Jones borrowed from Lewis the creation of multiple worlds while her relationship with Tolkien was different because she did not simply want to repeat what he had done with *The Lord of the Rings* (1954).

She married John Burrow and they had three children who encouraged Jones to develop her creativity.

Unfortunately, Diana Wynne Jones died after a long battle with cancer in March 2011.

1.2 An Overview of Wynne Jones's Narrative Features and Themes

Diana Wynne Jones was a clever innovator who rewrote the rules of fantasy during almost three decades and she contributed also to the creation of a new fantasy area: setting her books mainly in cities and towns, she developed what nowadays is commonly known as urban fantasy. Her fantasy is original and forward-looking but without forgetting myth and folktales.

Jones's books are characterized by irony, humour, intelligence and brilliant inventiveness and they are addressed to children as an encouragement to use their mind properly and to help them deal with life. Through her narrative devices she explored time, identity and human nature without sentimentalism. Moreover, many of Wynne Jones's stories are about children with extraordinary capabilities who are going to fulfil their hidden potential and achieve confidence and knowledge. These children are ignorant of their own identity and talents, so they live initially in a setting of neglect and exploitation which is created by their parents who want to deceive them. The place in which these exploitations and deceptions happen is the home, which is characterized as a dangerous place, a fragile refuge which cannot protect the child neither metaphorically, nor physically.

The complex condition of Jones's characters seems to be autobiographical and the book that, more than others, seems to reflect Jones's own childhood, is *A Tale of Time City* (1987).

She highlights some important psychological aspects, typical of human condition, in her analysis of behaviour and in the way she describes children's fears. Moreover, since she has always been fascinated by the reaction of different people to difficult conditions, she find fantasy and magic to be the best way to satisfy her curiosity. Magic and magical events are fundamental in developing her plots and her non-conformism is clear in her idea of magic. She does not define magic only as good or bad: on the contrary, her magic expresses every shade of these ethical principles. Thus, Jones's magic is morally ambiguous and also the users are always fighting against the temptation to treat people as objects of manipulation.

Furthermore, Jones explores the borders between good and evil also in the relationship between children and authority. Thus, in most of her works she deals with rebellion against society, family and the judicial system.

Jones's plots are not easy and their complexity has increased progressively book after book. Another peculiar element which makes Jones's production more complex, is about the reading order of those books which form two of her series. In other words, series books are commonly read following a chronological publishing order that coincides with the development of the story. However, this method is not recommended for Jones's books. In fact, Jones herself suggested to take no notice of publishing succession because it does not correspond to the story development. This original feature belongs to *The Dalemark Quartet* and *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci.*

1.3 Diana Wynne Jones and Literary Criticism

Diana Wynne Jones was a very important author in the background of fantasy literature; however, some critics as Teya Rosenberg, observes that she moves between fantasy and science fiction.

In spite of her brilliance, she was partially excluded in critical discussion of late-century British children's literature. Behind this neglect there were reasons which are unknown also nowadays. Luckily, in the 1990s critics took notice of what they were overlooking and, in recent times, they have started studying her narrative and her attitude towards genre contamination. This new attention is partially due to the great success reached by the Harry Potter books which have encouraged worldwide publishers to invest in school stories about magic. Of course Wynne Jones wrote school stories with magic long before Rowling.

Despite criticism, Jones has been appreciated all over the world and even in Italy, although her production is not yet completely translated into Italian. The Italian publisher which has translated and published the majority of Jones's books is Salani, which focused its attention mostly on *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci*. Additionally, another Italian publisher named Kappa Edizioni has published *Howl's Moving Castle,* which is one of the most important books by Jones. However, the story of *Howl's Moving Castle* was already popular in Italy because of Miyazaki's movie, based on it. The movie was a worldwide success and was nominated for the the 78th Academy Awards for Best Animated Feature.

2 Time and Space Treatment in Chrestomanci Series

2.1 Introducing Time

Time has always been considered one of the most important elements in children's literature, especially in fantasy fiction. The interest about the nature and the treatment of time goes back to the nineteenth century and *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) is the most important example of this study. However, the importance of time reached its apex in the twentieth century, when fantasy was characterized by time slips stories. In that period, time became a very confusing theme which included parallel worlds and the coexistence of past and present. In other words, according to Colin Manlove, this kind of fantasy is more extreme than the preceding and

> worlds exist in parallel rather than in sequence, and the idea of linear influence is less marked, to the point where plots often involve the discovery of why things are as they are, rather than development to something entirely new.[1]

The type of fantasy literature in which there is an alteration of time, is commonly known as time-travel fantasy or time-slip story and it tells stories in which the characters can skip to various ages or to a specific period. Moving in parallel times is an often accidental action and the character skips to another time in multiple ways: crossing an entrance, by an amulet or a magic object, thanks to an helper, through the power of imagination or in a dream.

Time fantasy has a very complex structure because it deals almost always with a parallel time that can anticipate or follow the starting time which represents the main reality. The starting time, in which the protagonist lives, is commonly known as primary time while the parallel time which belongs to another dimension, is commonly known as secondary time.

Another peculiar element which makes time fantasy very intricate, is linked with the flow of both times. The primary time does not flow with the same speed as parallel time; in other words, primary time can be slower or can be faster than parallel time and

[1] Manlove, Colin, *From Alice to Harry Potter: Children's Fantasy in England,* Christchurch, New Zealand, Cybereditions Corporation, 2003.

when the character goes back to the primary time, things have changed.

In science fiction, characters travel mainly toward the future while in fantasy literature characters travel also toward the past. Usually, the traveller in time is a child and the journey into the past expresses a pedagogical and didactic aspect. In fact, stepping back in time, the child can learn customs and traditions of a specific age.

Undoubtedly, one of the fantasy authors who dealt considerably with time was Diana Wynne Jones. Her conception of time and time travel has been deeply inspired by theories of time and, above all, she has used McTaggart's theory as a starting point. John McTaggart was a metaphysician who spoke about the nature of time in his book *The Unreality of Time*, published in 1908. According to him, there are two ways in which an event is located in the temporal order of things. The first way is called A-series or relative time while the second way is called B-series or absolute time. It is a very complex theory, however as Mendlesohn observes, even though

> Jones used B-series concepts of time and the theoretical models of time travel with great facility, it is in her manipulation of A-series time that her work achieved its fullest complexity.[2]

Jones has established her view of time also on Plato's conception of time untouched. Plato defined time in one his most important dialogues called *Timaeus* (360 BC). According to Plato, time exists only in relation to eternity and it is defined as an image which arises only through a perpetual movement.

Jones has combined Plato's point of view with the idea of space-time block, which is none other than an indivisible dimension. In *A tale of Time City* (1987), her combination is clear: the space-time block is a dimension from one can exit and return to. In other words, Vivian, the protagonist, moves from her planet and thus from a primary time, to Time City which is a city that exists outside the time. Jones, to create a dimension like that, has constructed a time circular sequence: the part of primary time flows in one direction, while the part concerning the time of the City, flows on the opposite direction. However, since they are two space-time blocks, it is possible to move from one to another.

As Mendlesohn points out,

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[2] Mendlesohn, Farah, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children's literature and the Fantastic Tradition*, New York, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2005, p. 68

> Jones has woven time narratives into the body of her text: she does not simply write about time travel but uses words to construct the movement.[3]

Necessarily, time travel leads to the creation of alternative temporal worlds and this is one of the most important and brilliant aspects in Jones's production.

[3] *Ibidem,* p.XXX

2.2 The Nature of Time Travel

As has been argued in the previous paragraph, the concept of time fulfills a key role not only in literature but also in physics, science and philosophy. Even though many scholars have studied the nature of time, even nowadays we do not know exactly what time is; thus, our imagination runs wild and the result is time travel.

The fundamental question, at the heart of time travel, concerns the way in which someone moves in time and space.

The first book which deals with this problem is *The Time Machine* (1895) by H.G. Wells; here, Wells describes a four-dimensional time-space category and describes the use of a time machine to travel. However, the answer to this question is linked with Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. According to Einstein, time and space cannot be determined separately from one another, thus time is a fourth dimension on the same footing with height, length and width. He states also that the laps of time between two events is relative because the reference frame of who is observing, moves with a relative speed.

Science-fiction starts from this theory and focuses on time travel in itself, and often a time machine becomes the necessary mode of transportation. On the contrary, in fantasy fiction, the traveller in time does not use a time machine and the travel is not rationally explained through scientific mechanisms.

2.2.1 Time Traveller and Time according to Wynne Jones

According to some critics, Diana Wynne Jones was inclined to mix fantasy features with typical elements of science-fiction; however, Chrestomanci, her most famous time traveller, belongs more to fantasy fiction than to science-fiction.

Chrestomanci is the title of a British Government employee and

> "the job Chrestomanci has is to make sure this world is not run entirely by witches […] It is a big job."[4]

[4] Wynne Jones, Diana, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Charmed Life*, New York, HarperCollins,

It is not an hereditary title and the person who plays the part of Chrestomanci must be an enchanter with nine lives. This kind of person is extremely rare.

Jones shows her creativity and her ability to simplify things in the way in which Chrestomanci moves in time; he does not use a time machine or an amulet to travel: it is enough that someone says his name. Jones does not explain the way in which Chrestomanci crosses different dimensions, he simply appears.

Time plays a key role in Jones's *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci.* However, the idea of time, in this text does not focus on dates. Jones alters time and moves her characters from different dimensions with different times without giving dates. In other words, even if Jones situates precisely her stories in a timeline, she does not explicitly say in which age each story begins.

On the other hand, she offers the reader the possibility to contextualise the periods, through the insertion of precise elements. For instance, in *Conrad's Fate* (2005) many characters use computers and cameras, thus the reader can contextualise the story in a contemporary epoch.

2.2.2 Common Subjects in Time Travel Stories

Both in science-fiction and in fantasy fiction, time-travel stories are central subjects. The first important theme is linked with a logical paradox: in fact, it is not clear if it is possible to go back into the past without altering it. The present cannot exist without the past because it is the result of past events and choices.

In science-fiction and fantasy fiction, almost every time a traveller wonders about the possibility of jumping backward to modify the past and change the present. Frequently, this query represents a psychological aspect of human behaviour because it gives the illusion to avoid regrets. However, as Gertrud Lehnert-Rodiek points out, this psychological aspect is strongly evident in children's literature more than in adult literature. The reason for this is linked with the function of time travel. Time travel usually happens during only a particular phase of childhood: in other words, time travel happens during the period in which the child obtain self awareness. Thus, through time travel, the child can live new experiences which can help him deal with difficult situations.

2001, pp.257-258.

For instance, in some time-travel stories for children, the main character is an orphan who jumps into the past to know his origins and his parents, or to prevent their death. However, in fantasy fiction, it is more common for the main character to jump into the past for a communal good: for instance, the hero must prevent something from happening or must change the result of a battle, to save the future of mankind.

Diana Wynne Jones also dealt with the paradox of travel backward without altering the past; however, her fiction focuses on the consequences, more than the reasons for these changes. In *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci*, Jones always plays with time so this logical paradox is not so uncommon; however, the book in which, more than others, the query about changing the past has a key role, is *Witch Week* (1982).

Witch Week, apparently is not like the other volumes of *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci* because it is a school story set in a world in which using magic is forbidden. Immediately, the reader is surprised because during a lesson, the teacher receives a note that claims "Someone in this class is a witch"[5]. Actually, almost everyone is a witch and at the end of the story, Chrestomanci turns up to make an end of witch hunt.

Anyway, the most interesting thing about the nature of that prohibition, is linked with changes of time and the choice to change or not to change an event into the past. Thus, Chrestomanci explains that:

> A surprisingly small change always alters the new world almost out of recognition. Except in the case of yours, where we all now are. […] There is something badly wrong in this world.[6]

Jones shows all her narrative ability and her creativity: she explains the nature of the query about altering time, using witchcraft. In other words, the prohibition of witchcraft in the world in which *Witch Week* is set, is used as the basis for comparison with the permission to do sorcery in Chrestomanci's world. So, while in *Witch Week* world practicing magic is absolutely forbidden, in Chrestomanci's world it is normal. Indeed, the world in which *Witch Week* is set, is exactly the product of a past event which has suffered a change: thus, this world has been created from Chrestomanci's world which has been split into another one.

> I have often wondered why there is so little witchcraft in my ward's world. I

[5] Wynne Jones, Diana, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Witch Week*, New York, HarperCollins, 2001, p.279

[6] *Ibidem,* p. 498

> see not that it is all in this one. Something – I do not know what- has caused your world to separate from the other one, taking all the witchcraft with it. But instead of breaking off cleanly, it has somehow remained partly joined to the first world, so that it almost *is* that world. I think there has been some kind of accident.[7]

The second important theme discussed both in science-fiction and in fantasy fiction, is linked with the future. As happens to time travellers to the past, also the time travellers to the future may be driven by the desire to change the present. In other words, the future time traveller wonders if it is possible to know what will happen, in order to do or not to do something. However, especially in science-fiction, the time traveller to the future is interested in the possibility of meeting himself/herself in the future. As the time traveller wonders if it is possible to interact with his future version, he also wonders about the consequences of this meeting.

The third important topic shared by science-fiction and fantasy fiction, is linked with objects and time travel. In other words, characters wonder about the possibility or the impossibility to carry something during the time travel: from a world to another, from a time to another. About this topic, a lot has been said and there are many viewpoints. In fantasy literature, especially for children, there are some objects which work as an evidence. That is to say, often the character must bring an object to demonstrate that he has truly travelled into another time or into another dimension.

Usually, the character who travels to the past can bring an object with him into the present, while the opposite is not possible. In other words, the traveller backward cannot bring in the past, something which belongs to the present. This impossibility is a way to protect and prevent a change in the past.

This "rule" must be followed also by the character who travels to the future: also the traveller forward cannot bring anything with him into the present. In this case, the character does not anticipate anything.

This theme is developed also in Jones's *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci*, and obviously the text gives an original interpretation of this "convention". Firstly, Jones deals with this theme in *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988), a novel which explains how Christopher Chant lived before becoming the present Chrestomanci. Here, Jones describes Christopher's unhappy childhood and the progressive acceptance of his

[7] *Ibidem,* p.499

destiny. At the beginning of the book, Christopher is a young boy who wants to please his distant parents and considers his Uncle Ralph as a guide. But, Uncle Ralph is not what he seems and encourages Christopher to make night-trips to other dimensions only for his own purposes. He wants to enlarge his power and in order to do that, he needs Dragon's blood and he asks Christopher to bring it back from other world. Dragon's blood is dangerous and bringing it from other worlds is the only way to obtain it, because in series Twelve, which is a parallel world, it is forbidden by the law. However, this is not the only thing that Christopher takes from a world to another, to satisfy his uncle. During a journey to another related world, Christopher meets the Living Asheth. The Living Asheth is a young girl belonging to Series Ten, who has been chosen from a lot of candidates to become a Goddess and to live in Asheth Temple, surrounded by cats. She is really bored because she can read only the educational books which are stored within the Temple. Since Christopher must bring to his uncle one of Asheth's cats, he agrees to exchange the cat with books to read.

Obviously, even though in Jones's books there is an original interpretation of characters who carry objects from a world to another, also in these books this action provokes consequences. Through dragon's blood, Uncle Ralph tries both to defeat Chrestomanci and to conquer his castle. However, the Living Asheth suffers more the consequences: through the books she learns something about her destiny and she turns against her role to obtain freedom and education like a normal girl.

Diana Wynne Jones keeps developing this theme also in another book belonging to *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci*: *Conrad's Fate* (2005). In this book, Christopher Chant is a teenager who escapes from his mentor, the Chrestomanci Gabriel de Witt, to find his friend Millie, The Living Asheth. He is hiding with a false name in Stallery Mansion and he has been selected as butler-in-training with another boy. Soon they become friends. This other boy is Conrad Tesdinic and he is hiding too with a false name, to accomplish his purpose. Conrad's uncle believes that Conrad is going to die within a year, except if the boy kills the person who, in Stallery Mansion, changes the normal flow of events in the world.

However, things at Stallery are not as ordinary as they appear.

One morning, Christopher and Conrad decide to venture into a forbidden area of Stallery and Conrad decides to bring with him his camera. Unfortunately, the witch who has imprisoned Millie, discovers Conrad and before she can cast a spell

> He does the only thing he can manage. He raises his camera and takes her picture. […] The flash goes off right in her face.[8]

Obviously, the witch is absolutely horrified and scared because she belongs to another world and another time, moreover she does not know that Conrad is not going to hurt anyone.

Through the use of the camera, the text demonstrates yet again, great creativity and it reinterprets a popular subject matter. Moreover, it is interesting that a contemporary and technologically advanced element which works following scientific procedures, operates also in another dimension where magic is predominant. It is interesting also that Conrad's picture even if lacks magic in itself, becomes a magical instrument:

> "I did not mean to kill her", Conrad said.
> "Oh, you did not kill her," Gabriel de Witt, to his astonishment, replied. "You merely trapped her soul. We found her body in a coma in one of those kitchens, while we were exploring the alternate buildings, and we returned it to Seven D, where I am pleased to say that they promptly put it in prison. She was wanted in that world for killing several enchanters in order to obtain their magical powers [..]. We have of course returned the woman's soul to Seven D now, so that she may stand a trial in the proper way".[9]

In this case, bringing an object to another time does not provoke bad or irreparable consequences: on the contrary, it allows the arrest of a dangerous murderer.

2.2.3 Comparing and Contrasting Diana Wynne Jones with Other Fantasy Children's Novelists

As has been written previously, many fantasy children's novelists have dealt with time- travel stories and each of them, has used a personal approach. Now, I would compare Diana Wynne Jones with some of these novelists.

First of all, I would briefly contrast the conception of time and history, in *A Traveller in Time* (1939) written by Alison Uttley and in Jones's books. Jones's novels are totally different from Uttley's fiction basically because in Jones's stories, time is not

[8] Wynne Jones, Diana, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Conrad's Fate,* New York, HarperCollins, 2008, p.183

[9] *Ibidem,* p.304

static and her characters do not travel only and always into one specific epoch. In *A Traveller in Time,* Penelope goes back only to the sixteenth century and when she comes back to her epoch, she does not remember anything. In this way, Uttley avoids the problem of changing the past which would be in contrast with her static idea of history. Indeed, Uttley conceives history as something which keeps repeating itself and the plot gradually develops a philosophy of history. Moreover, as Gertrud Lehnert-Rodiek points out, the real message of this novel is linked with the simultaneity of time and life; however, the beneficiaries of this message are those who live following traditional values.

In the second instance, I would compare Diana Wynne Jones's novels with *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958) written by Ann Philippa Pearce. *Tom's Midnight Garden* is one of the most important time- slips stories. Pearce, as Jones will do later, makes time travel a natural and a fundamental part of the plot; in other words, both in Pearce and in Jones's novels, time travel is not merely part of the background but it is essential to the progress of the story.

Tom spends some time with his uncle and his aunt in a flat without a garden. He cannot play because he is sick, so he feels lonely and overwhelmed. One night, Tom is lying awake in bed and he hears thirteen tolls, coming from a grandfather clock. Intrigued, Tom decides to go downstairs to check the clock. When he arrives downstairs, he discovers that a garden has appeared. Every night at midnight, he comes back to the garden and he enjoys different seasons and moments of the day which flow without a chronological order. Soon, he meets Hatty and they become friends. However, the time of Tom's world is different from Hatty's because she belongs to another epoch. In other words, Hatty is an adult woman who lives at the top of the house and who dreams of her childhood. Since she has always wanted a playmate, she meets Tom in a parallel time.

The mode of travel across time used by Pearce is, at the same time, similar and different to that used by Jones. It is similar because both Pearce and Jones's characters do not use a time machine to travel; on the other hand it is different because Pearce's characters do not appear when someone calls their name, as Jones's character does.

Indeed, Chrestomanci simply emerges without rational reasons, while Tom travels thanks to the power of wishing and dreaming. Moreover, it is not clear whether Tom has effectively travelled into the past or he has simply dreamed Hatty's dream.

Jones differs from Pearce also in the treatment of moving objects across different times. Jones's characters deal with the consequences of carrying something from a dimension

to another, whereas Pearce's characters simply move objects without worrying about the consequences. Moreover, in Pearce's novel, objects act as a vehicle of memory and a reminder of the past.

Now, I shall compare Diana Wynne Jones's approach to time travel, with that of Susan Cooper. Over the years, many critics have compared Diana Wynne Jones to Susan Cooper because they are both British fantasy children's novelists who began to write in the 1970's.

Cooper's most famous series is *The Dark is Rising Sequence* (1965-1977) and the key book is the second one: *The Dark is Rising*, published in 1972. This series embodies perfectly one of the most common themes in fantasy fiction, which is the opposition and the battle between good and evil. The main character of the second book is Will Stanton, an eleven-year- old boy, who discovers he is an "Old One". He is one of the warriors for the Light, thus he must fight the powers of darkness and evil.

As Lehnert-Rodiek states,

> The powers of evil are able to travel back and forth different periods of history. Thus time becomes, on the one hand, the battle itself and on the other hand, a means of fighting, of persecution and escape.[10]

Cooper and Jones share, more or less, the same conception of time. In *The Dark is Rising,* Cooper shows openly her ideas, making one of her characters say that

> all times co-exist, and the future can sometimes affect the past, even though the past is a road that leads to the future.[11]

Moreover, both Jones and Cooper do not explain explicitly the mechanisms of travel across different times. By contrast, in Cooper's work the query about the possibility of changing history is irrelevant to the development of the story, even though the protagonist wonders about this possibility. Furthermore, Jones and Cooper differ also in the way they conceive time travel. According to Jones's viewpoint, time travel plays a fundamental role in the story, whereas in Cooper's *The Dark is Rising,* time travel serves only to intensify the mystic and magical atmosphere.

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[10] Lehnert-Rodiek, Gertrud, "Fantastic Children's Literature and Travel in Time", *Phaedrus* XIII (1998): 61-72.

[11] Cooper, Susan, *The Dark is Rising,* Harmondswoth, Puffin, 1976, p.65.

Finally, I would compare Diana Wynne Jones with J.R. Rowling, a British fantasy children's novelist who has become famous and has reached a worldwide success with her *Harry Potter* books (1997-2007). This school story is set mainly in the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and it is about the adventure of a young wizard with a yet-to-be announced destiny. Also in *Harry Potter* stories, the reader can easily find several typical themes of fantasy fiction. Indeed, Harry is an orphan who spent his childhood living with a family who does not love him and, through the use of magic, he fulfils his destiny and becomes a hero. Thus, through his skills and the help of his friends, Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley, Harry fights and defeats Lord Voldemort who is responsible of years of terror, destruction and death. Moreover, J.K. Rowling based her entire series on the dichotomy between good and evil, for that purpose she outlines Harry's growth process as one filled with curiosity and doubt about his origins and his true identity.

As is clear, Rowling has been deeply inspired by Jones's *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci:* for instance, both Rowling's series and Jones's series are set in a magical school, witchcraft is regulated by a Ministry and the borders between good or evil are not always so clear. Furthermore, Rowling has been inspired also by Jones's conception of time, thus even though the *Harry Potter* series is not about time travel at all, characters often move across time. The first unconventional shift takes place at the beginning of Harry Potter's adventures, when he is going to leave London to reach Hogwarts castle. Hogwarts castle can be reached by train, the Hogwarts Express, which leaves from Kings's Cross Railway Station at platform 9 ¾. This platform is invisible to normal people and the children must run through the wall to reach a parallel platform.

Like Diana Wynne Jones, even J.K. Rowling deals with the paradox linked to the manipulation of the past by someone who comes from the future. She treats this theme in the third novel of the *Harry Potte*r series, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999). Here, professor McGonagall gives Hermione a Time-Turner, in order to allow her to attend more than one class a time. To come back in time, Hermione must turn the hourglass, depending on the hours she needs to travel back. However, Hermione cannot speak about this object with anyone, including Harry and Ron, because the Time-Turner is very dangerous. If this object should come into possession of the wrong hands, there would be horrible consequences: many wizards, while they were using it, died after they had killed their own version coming from the future.
However, the real meaning which lies behind Time-Tuner, is expressed in the final

chapter of the book during a talk between Harry and Albus Dumbledore:

> "Hasn't your experience with the Time-Turner taught you anything, Harry? The consequences of our actions are always so complicated, so diverse, that predicting the future is a very difficult business indeed.... [12]

[12] Rowling, J.K., *Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban,* London, Bloomsbury, 1999.

2.3 Time-Space Relation in Two Novels by Diana Wynne Jones

As we have seen, time fulfills a fundamental element in Diana Wynne Jones's books. The first important feature of time that has been discussed, is about time travel; however, there is another aspect which is essential in Jones's production. This element is important because it is about the relation between time and space which, in some way, also allows time travel.

All the theories about time, which we have briefly discussed in the previous paragraphs, are fundamental to understanding the time-space relation. Time-space is the dimension in which every event happens. The time-space relation is independent from the observer: an event occurs independently from who is present; thus it demonstrates that time cannot be separated from space. In other words, time and space set up a single entity which is exactly the time-space continuum.

In fantasy literature, there are a lot of novels which underline the impossibility of treating time without treating also space. Later, we will see in detail how the relation between time and space plays an essential role in Diana Wynne Jones's novels. However, now I want to compare in detail this topic in Jones's *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci* and in J.K. Rowlings's *Harry Potte*r series, to demonstrate once again, how Rowling's work has been largely influenced by Jones's works.

In the *Harry Potter* books, the most common means of transportation is called Apparition and it is a sort of magical teleportation. The Apparition spell is almost identical to Chrestomanci's way of moving across different worlds. In each case, how the characters travel is not rationally explained: Chrestomanci simply appears when someone calls his name while the *Harry Potter* characters decide autonomously to disappear from one place and reappear in another. This spell is difficult to cast, and the Ministry of Magic controls the issue of Apparition licences; moreover, this charm can be dangerous because an inexperienced trainee can run the risk of being physically split, between the starting point of the journey and its destination.

Chrestomanci appears and disappears silently, taking by surprise the people near him, whereas Rowling's characters, sometimes are followed by cracking or popping sounds. These sounds depend on the level of traveller's skill. In *Conrad's Fate* (2005), a young Chrestomanci, Christopher Chant, tries to explain to his friend Conrad the nature of travel across time and space:

> Travellers, you see, are some of the few people who are always moving from world to world. […] They go in a sort of spiral around the worlds- that was something I did not know either, and I nearly went mad while they did.[13]

In her fourth book, *The Goblet of Fire* (2000), J.K. Rowling introduces a new type of magical teleportation called Portkey. Even though Portkeys are similar to Apparition spells, there are some differences. First of all, Portkeys are, as Mr. Weasley explains to Harry,

> objects that are used to transport wizards from one spot to another at a prearranged time. […]
> What sort of objects are Portkeys?" said Harry curiously.
> "Well, they can be anything," said Mr. Weasley. "Unobtrusive things, obviously, so Muggles don't go picking them up and playing with them ... stuff they'll just think is litter...." [14]

Moreover, Portkeys differ from Apparition spells because they can be used to transport more than one person at once. However, either Apparition spells and Portkeys cannot be used without the permission of the Department of Magical Transport. With Portkeys, Rowling demonstrates that she has her own idea about time travel and gives an interpretation which differs from Jones's ideas. Portkeys work as a kind of amulet that the wizards must touch in order to travel in time, whereas Chrestomanci does not need to touch anything.

Jones's time-space relation goes hand in hand with the relation between past and present. Even though these two relations play a key role in several Jones's books, in *The Magicians of Caprona* (1980) and *Conrad's Fate* (2005) they are extremely relevant to the development of the plot.

The Magicians of Caprona is a parody of *Romeo and Juliet* (1594-96) in which

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Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Conrad's Fate*, New York, HarperCollins, 2008 p.121

14 Rowling, J.K., *Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire,* London, Bloomsbury, 2000.

there are two rival great magical families, which live in a imaginary and not unified Italy. Caprona is an independent city-state ruled by a Duke. It is probably situated near Pisa, Florence and Siena, and it has begun to decline, losing its power. The nearby states want to take advantage of this situation, and occupy and conquer Caprona. So, the houses of Montana and Petrocchi, which are the two most powerful houses in Caprona, are trying to prevent this. In order to do so, they are looking for the true combination of words of a powerful and solemn spell, known as "The Angel of Caprona". Unfortunately, they fail because they blame each other: the Montanas and Petrocchis have been deadly enemies for generations, but no one remembers the reason of this rivalry.

The situation, and therefore the rivalry, gets worse when two kids, Tonino Montana and Angelica Petrocchi, are kidnapped by a mysterious enchanter. Of course, this kidnapping is not by chance: the enchanter has chosen two kids apparently without magical skills, to damage the strength of Casa Montana and Casa Petrocchi and to distract them from the search for "The Angel of Caprona" words. The mysterious enchanter is none other than the Duchess.

At the end of the story, with the help of Chrestomanci, they find the words, so they can sing together "The Angel of Caprona" and save the city.

Farah Mendlesohn examines the space-time relation in *The Magicians of Caprona* and she states that Jones

> does not set out to manipulate our perception of time, but it is here that we first see Jones experiment with tense and rhetorical structure to create, in effect, a mode of time travel that is facilitated by language rather than by visible machinery or the description of time travel.[15]

From the first two chapters, the text attracts the attention of the reader through the introduction of a specific structure. This structure is none other than a narrative experimentation through the use of rhetorical devices as, for instance, flashbacks. According to Mendlesohn,

> Jones combines the different understandings of the physics of the real time and of time travel with the manipulation of experiential time. It is to the

[15] Mendlesohn, Farah, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children's Literature and the Fantastic Tradition,* New York and London, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2005, p. 68.

> techniques she employs to create a narrative within the mode of telling, and the manipulation of time. This time is about the relationship of experience to time and is simultaneously metaphysical and metaphorical.[16]

This structure, which is frequently related to nonfiction writing, allows the reader to move deftly from a far distant past to the present. For instance, in the first chapter the reader can soon recognise the first elements of a complex narrative:

> The great houses of Petrocchi and Montana go back to the first founding of the State of Caprona, seven hundred years or more ago. And they are bitter rivals. They are not even on speaking term. If a Petrocchi and a Montana meet in one of Caprona's narrow golden-stone streets, they turn their eyes aside and edge the past as if they were both waling past a pig-sty. [17]

This paragraph is defined by Mendlesohn as "general thesis", which informs the reader about something that happened in a distant past. This paragraph prepares the reader both for the following sentence and the following narrative times, thus it functions as a joining link. The next rhetorical element is a summary of a past event. This summary supports and illustrates what the previous paragraph has anticipated. Moreover, it is set in a recent past:

> Sometimes, however, parties of young men and women of the Montanas and the Petrocchis happen to meet when they are strolling on the wide street called the Corso in the evenings. When that happens, other citizens take shelter at once. If they fight with fists and stones, that is bad enough, but if they fight with spells, it can be appalling.[18]

The situation described is supported and completed by three sentences which are all set in a recent and not defined past. The first sentence is an example

> An example of this is when the dashing Rinaldo Montana caused the sky to rain cowpats [...][19]

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[16] *Ibidem,* p.68

[17] Wynne Jones, Diana, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: The Magicians of Caprona,* New York, HarperCollins, 2001, p.6.

[18] *Ibidem*

[19] *Ibidem,* p. 7

In the second sentence, Rinaldo explains why he had cast a spell like that, so this sentence clarifies the previous one. Since Rinaldo refers to a specific past event, which is not contextualized in time, also this sentence follows the previous narrative strategy

> "A Petrocchi insulted me," Rinaldo explained, with his most flashing smile. "And I happened to have a new spell in my pocket."[20]

However, the Petrocchis have a different opinion about the cowpats rain and, in the following sentence, he analyses what has really happened.

> The Petrocchis unkindly claimed that Rinaldo had misquoted his spell in the heat of the battle. Everyone knew that all Rinaldo's spells were love charms.[21]

A past event must be connected also with something in the present, to establish a coherent timeline. Clearly, here, the timeline goes backward to connect what is occurring in the present, between Casa Montana and Casa Petrocchi, and what has happened in the past.

This overlapping, between past and present, is important also to emphasize the themes of rivalry and revenge, in the plot. Talking of revenge, Mendlesohn interprets it as a travel in time because it has been handed down for generations, in the course of time. Vendetta has been present in the tales about past events, which have been modified and embellished, to feed resentment. Furthermore, Mendlesohn points out that the theme of time travel through the vendetta is a vehicle of time travel also for the reader who can shift from a distant past to the present. In other words,

> the reader too has been transported: the internal rhythm that shuttles us through different periods of the past allows Jones to deliver us apparently effortlessly to her present.[22]

Jones makes the reading dynamic and anything but boring, altering the chronological order of the story through digressions. For instance, the first chapter ends

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[20] *Ibidem*

[21] *Ibidem*

[22] Mendlesohn, Farah, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children's Literature and the Fantastic Tradition,* New York and London, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2005, p. 70

in Casa Montana with Old Niccolo who asks Benvenuto, the Casa cat, to become friends with Tonino because he is a very unhappy boy and needs a friend. However, the first pages of the second chapter deceive the reader because the chronological progression of the story is momentarily suspended. Indeed, chapter 2 starts with Tonino who meets Benvenuto, near Piazza Nuova. Tonino is very upset about his lack of magical skills and he entrusts his worries to Benvenuto. The reader learns that Tonino and Benvenuto are actually friends, moreover he/she learns also that Tonino is the only one who understands Benvenuto's language.

Only after they have come back home, the reader discovers that this chapter is none other than a flashback, a chronological jump into an immediate past. The text does not report again the dialogue between Old Niccolo and Benvenuto; on the contrary, there is only an allusion to the moment in which the Cat finds out that Old Niccolo wants to see him. At the end of this second chapter, the reader must pay attention to details because there is another jump in the timeline.

> Tonino continued to be slow at learning spells and not particularly quick at school. Paolo was twice as quick at both. But as the years went by, both of them accepted it. It did not worry them. What worried them far more was their gradual discovery that things were not altogether well in the Casa Montana, nor in Caprona either.[23]

Through these sentences, the reader's attention shifts from Tonino's worries, to Casa Montana's worries about the destiny of Caprona.

In the third chapter, we learn that time has passed and the situation of Caprona has worsened. In her analysis, Mendlesohn points out that the text often inverts the narrative order and, to clarify and supports her statement, she uses as an example Aunt Francesca's long speech followed by a report. Aunt Francesca's speech is expressed in the Present Tense while the following account is expressed in Past Perfect:

> "Everything is going wrong for us," she said. "Money's short, tourists do not come here, and we get weaker every year. Here are Florence, Pisa and Siena all gathering round like vultures […] If this goes on we shan't be a State any more. […] It is all the fault of those degenerate of Petrocchis, I tell You! [..]

[23] Wynne Jones, Diana, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: The Magicians of Caprona,* New York, HarperCollins, 2001, p. 31

> They just keep turning things out in the same old way, and going from bad to worse. You can see they are, or that child would not have been able to turn her father green!".
> […] All the years Paolo and Tonino had been at school, they had grown used to hearing that there had been this concession to Florence; that Pisa had demanded that agreement over fishing rights. [...][24]

Mendlesohn underlines also that

> The new rhetorical rule, if there is one, seems to be that no elaboration is written in the same tense or mode as that which it is elaborating. If one is direct speech, the other is delivered in another manner, so that we are continually keep off guard.[25]

It is interesting also that irony is exhibited in the speaking attitude of characters which reflect their different attitude in solving problems. Often, old characters speak using the immediate present form, whereas children contemplate also the past. These two opposite attitudes reveal that old characters are taking lightly the crises and they do not react concretely as, on the contrary, children do.

In chapter thirteen and fourteen, the rhetorical structure is complicated because time becomes even more unstable: indeed, some scenes are not narrated in the order in which they occur, but they are narrated in reverse. For instance, in the correct timeline, Angelica casts a spell to let her family know that she is inside the ducal palace. However, this scene is narrated only in chapter fourteen and thus in reverse. There is flashback in which the reader learns about Angelica's spell, in chapter thirteen, during a dialogue between Paolo and Renata:

> Renata began to laugh. "Now that *is* Angelica!" she said. "I'd know her spells anywhere.
> […] What is it? A call for help?" Panted Paolo.
> "Must be," gasped Renata. "Angelica's spells -always- mad kind of reasonableness."[26]

[24] *Ibidem,* p. 34-35
[25] Mendlesohn, Farah, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children's Literature and the Fantastic Tradition,* New York and London, Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2005, p. 70
[26] Wynne Jones, Diana, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: The Magicians of Caprona,* New York, HarperCollins, 2001, p. 227-228

The scenes are structured as one parallel to the other, to make the reading more fluid; hence, if the text had been structured with these two following scenes, the necessity to add an extra scene, as a connection, might have arisen. Thus, through this device, the scene about when Paolo and Renata go to the top of the cathedral to see Angelica's spell, is not necessary and thus it is not present.

According to Mendleshon, these two scenes are parallel to each other and not consecutive, thus they tell two different events which are happening in two different places but at the same moment. In other words, it seems that the reader's view is divided in two parts, thus he can observe in the same moment, two different scenes while they are happening. Moreover, they have the same duration and they end at the same time, for this reason they reach the same point in the characters' time lines. This kind of narration characterises these two scenes in a different way: Paolo and Renata's scene is characterised by urgency while Angelica and Tonino's scene is more peaceful.

Unlike *The Magicians of Caprona,* in which the relation between time and space is expressed by a rhetorical strategy, in *Conrad's Fate* the relation between time and space is expressed by the plot itself. The entire story is based on Christopher Chant's search for Millie, which is progressively hindered by magical changes of the time-space continuum. Here, the relation between time and space focuses principally on changing the space without altering completely time, thus there are not flashbacks or changes in the chronological order. However, even though time is not completely altered, it suffers some modifications because often these changes open new parallel worlds. This peculiarity, about spacial changes, appears in the first pages of the book, when the co-protagonist Conrad has not left his home yet to reach Stallery Mansion. Here, Conrad is looking for a book when his uncle Alfred rushes into his bookshop ordering him to go outside and see if the landscape is still the same

> I went to the shop door, but as far as I could see, nothing.. Oh! The postbox down the road was now bright blue.
> "You *see*!" said my uncle when I told him. "You see what they're like! All sorts of details will be different now-*valuable* details-but what do *they* care? All *they* think of is money!".[27]

[27] Wynne Jones, Diana, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Conrad's Fate,* New York, HarperCollins, 2008, p.13

Uncle Alfred answers Conrad's questions by accusing people who live in Stallery, which is the Castle in which the Royal family lives, and explains that they change things through the use of a powerful magic. Conrad is still very puzzled and, when he reaches his room, his sister Anthea tries to make things more clear.

> I still did not understand why anyone should want to.
> "It's because if you change to a new set of things that might be going to happen," Anthea explained, looking up from her books, "you change *everything* just a little. This time," she added, ruefully turning the pages of her notes, "they seem to have done a big jump and made a big difference. I have got notes here in two books that do not seem to exist anymore. […]"[28]

It is really interesting that changes do not affect only Stallery Mansion, that is, the place in which these changes come from, but they also affect all the kingdom. Gradually, the reader discovers new details and new features about these changes which, little by little, become more complex and intricate. The text focuses gradually on one particular feature: the perception of these shifts among people. The first example of this progressive perception, appears when Christopher and Conrad are attending a cooking class with Mr. Maxim, the chief cook. In this episode, Christopher and Conrad perceive clearly that things have changed and something is different, while their teacher does not notice anything.

> "There has been a change, Mr. Maxim," I explained. "We were cooking omelets a moment ago. Someone has puled the possibilities, I think."
> […] Mr. Maxim looked at use gloomily. "*My* memory is that I decided yesterday to teach you bacon an eggs," he said. " But I take your word for it. Staff are always telling me things have changed. I never notice"[29]

Among all the people, the staff of Stallery is the one who perceives mainly that things have changed because of the alterations in housekeeping. For instance, all the uniforms suddenly change their colours, objects change their position and even food transforms while people is eating. However, it is ironic that characters are not only upset by the recurring changes in the time-space continuum: they are also confused by the presence

[28] *Ibidem,* p.14
[29] *Ibidem,* p. 130

of a female ghost. Since a woman has been murdered in the library, her soul is entrapped in Stallery. Thus, sometimes the staff does not know if some changes are due to an unknown magical force or to the ghost.

It is interesting that with the increase of frequent changes, also the perception of these changes increase and not only among butlers and housemaids. Even Lady Mary, who is Count Robert's bride-to-be, only after few hours from her arrival to Stallery, perceives that something continues to change

> "Is Count Robert a magic user?" Lady Mary said.
> "I have no idea-I do not think so," I said. *"Please!"*
> "But *someone* here is," she said. "Someone is using magic to change things all the time. Why"
> "To make money," I found myself saying.
> "Who?" Lady Mary asked.
> " […] I *cannot* tell you because I do not *know*!"[30]

These changes arouse Christopher and Conrad's curiosity, so they begin to use their free time to look for Millie but also to look for what is causing the changes. After many unsuccessful researches, they finally reach the place in which the shifts begin: this place is none other than Mr. Amos's wine cellar. They enter the place in secret because only the great butler Mr. Amos can serve wine to the royal family, and it is this restriction that arouses suspicion in Christopher and Conrad. Once inside, they discover that there is an extra room in which there is a console with a lot of screens. Every screen shows one city belonging to the kingdom. Christopher highlights that some controls are more used than others, thus he deduces that they are more important than others. It is interesting that here, there is a mixture of science-fiction elements and fantasy elements because there are technological tools, as screens and console, combined with magic.

> Christopher simply grinned and pressed the used square button firmly down.
> We felt the shift like an earthquake down there. Our feet seemed to jerk sideways under us. All the screens blinked and began to flicker away madly in new configurations. Above the console, the strange patterns wove and writhed into quite different shapes and colours.[31]

[30] *Ibidem,* p. 260
[31] *Ibidem,* p. 208

Christopher and Conrad are interrupted by a voice

> "Amos," it said. "Do you pay attention. I do not think we can afford to make changes at the moment. We may have trouble this end. I told you about the ratty little fellow we caught sneaking around the office. [...]"[32]

Clearly, this character does not see who has activated the console and takes for granted that nobody knows this secret. However, this quotation is important for two reasons: first of all, because it reveals that Mr. Amos does not act alone and secondly, because it underlines that people have started to become very suspicious.

As has been argued previously, *Conrad's Fate* focuses particularly on space, although this does not mean that time has been ignored. In other words, here time has been manipulated as a consequence of space modifications. Indeed, each change, provoked by Mr. Amos, creates, at the same time, undeniable alterations in all the kingdom and it creates also new parallel dimensions. In other words, each change opens a rift in the time-space continuum, originating a new dimension. The new dimension, even though it is the result of Mr. Amos's changes, is not immune to alterations; thus when the butler activates the console, the dimension changes. People can enter voluntarily or accidentally into the new dimension and it is not always easy to exit; for instance, Millie is entrapped in a parallel dimension and she is unable to exit. Christopher is looking for her and perceives her presence without understanding where she is

> " I can *feel* her," he said. "She is *here,* I *know* she is! I felt her when we were coming here across the park, and I *keep* feeling her inside this house. When I get to that queer part beyond that line of paint, it almost feels as if I am *treading* on her! But she is not *there*! I do not understand it, and it is driving me *mad*!"[33]

Finding a way to go back to the beginning reality, is difficult because the people who are entrapped in the parallel dimension, are hindered by changes. This happens because, even though the parallel dimension is set always in places similar to Stallery, the

[32] *Ibidem,* p. 208
[33] *Ibidem,* p. 123

alterations modify reference points. Often, these places are ruined castles with a lot of stairs which confuse characters even more. In other words, when a character begins to settle and begins to plan an itinerary, then a change happens modifying all the landscape. At this point, the character must begin the process again.

Even Christopher and Conrad get lost in a parallel dimension and it is not a pleasant experience. Firstly, they find themselves in a wooden tower, then a shift happens and they find themselves in a dark stone building. It is really interesting that they do not perceive a shift while it is happening; on the contrary, they become aware of the shift only after it is ended, when the landscape has changed. Moreover, although they are in a parallel dimension, they feel the presence of Millie but they do not meet her

> "What about Millie? Is she along there?
> Christopher shook his head impatiently. "No. Here. *Here* is the only place she feels anywhere near at the moment. It looks like as if changes are somehow connected to the way she is not here, but that is all I know. […] And I realized that Millie must be stuck in one of the other probabilities beyond this one. [...][34]

Through this passage, the reader can learn that more realities can coexist. Precisely, different versions of one single reality can coexist without interference: indeed, Christopher and Conrad are entrapped in the same reality as Millie but each dimension has a different time, thus they cannot meet.

It is interesting to underline also that the passage of time is identical in all the dimensions. In other words, even though the parallel dimensions are set in a different time-space continuum, the hours flow exactly as they flow in the beginnings of things; thus if in the beginnings of things it is noon, it is noon also in the parallel dimension.

> Christopher looked at his watch. It was nearly five-thirty. We were going to be late back on duty if another shift did not happen soon.[35]

Speaking of time flow, the reader can observe that there are not allusions to the duration of changes. Indeed, even though these shifts seem to last only for a few seconds, this subject is not mentioned in the text, and lets the reader's imagination flow.

[34] *Ibidem,* p. 148-154
[35] *Ibidem,* p. 155

For this reason, the reader may imagine that a shift lasts more than another, depending on its complexity.

Coming back from the parallel dimension to the starting reality, this is permeated with mystery for two reasons: first of all, it is because the reasons for returning are not clear. Probably, the return is linked and caused by the changes, but there is no clear explanation. Characters, simply, find themselves somewhere in Stallery, often in a different place from which they were when a shift happened. Moreover, they realise that they are back in their contemporary version of Stallery, because they hear the noise of housemaids and butlers who are working

> "I believe we are back." […] People were hurrying and calling things and coming in and out of doors in the distance. We could tell that everyone was getting smartened up for supper and Dinner after that.[36]

Indeed, the parallel dimension is characterized by lack of people, and consecutively the lack of noises made by their activities. In these dimensions, characters can only hear the howling wind or the squeaking of the floor or the creaking of a wooden door. These dimensions seems to be suspended in time and abandoned.

Secondly, coming back seems to be associated to a sensation of infiniteness. That is to say, each change in a parallel dimension induces the character to begin, again, the research of a way to comeback; this can happen endlessly, because no one knows when another change will take place and neither who or what determines their return back. The reader identifies with the protagonists, so readers and characters wonder about the same questions: who decides when I will come back? Will I come back soon? Unfortunately, the text does not provide any answers to these questions.

2.3.1 Introducing Space

As we have seen in the previous chapters, time and space are two single entities which set up another complex entity: the time-space continuum. Time and space are connected: thus speaking of time without mentioning space, and vice versa, is impossible. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines space as

[36] *Ibidem*, p. 160

> a boundless, three-dimensional extent in which objects and events occur and have relative position and direction.[37]

Even though the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* gives a very appropriate definition, describing space only in this way would be reductive. Indeed, philosophers, mathematicians, physics and even psychologists have discussed this topic. The first debate about space, in a mathematical and philosophical context, dates back to Plato's *Timaeus* (360 BC) and to Aristotle's *Physics: Book IV* (IV century BC). Later, even Isaac Newton and Gottfried Leibniz treated this theme and they have formulated two opposite theories. Isaac Newton deals with the concept of space in his masterpiece *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687). Here, Newton formulates the basis of classical mechanics and the law of universal gravitation. In this context, he speaks about space as something absolute which exists irrespective of material bodies. He states also that space is not characterized by dynamic features; thus it has independent properties which do not change when there is an interaction with the matter. On the contrary, Leibniz affirms that space is not an independent entity but rather, the combination of spatial relationships between objects. In other words,

> "[...]I hold space to be something merely relative, as time is, taking space to be an order of coexistences, as time is an order of successions. For space indicates.. an order of things existing at the same time, considered just as *existing together,* without bringing in any details about what they are like. When we see a number of things together, one becomes aware of this order among them."[38]

However, in the 19th and 20th centuries, space became to be considered curved rather than flat. This is a non-Euclidean conception of geometries which is at the basis of Enisten's theory of general relativity.

Space is not only a cornerstone of philosophical and scientific theories. On the contrary, it fulfils a fundamental role also in literature and literary criticism.

> Spatial form is a crucial aspect of the experience and interpretation of

[37] Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Space", [http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/557313/space, accessed august 2014]

[38] Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, "Third Paper: An Answer to Dr. Clarke's Second Replay", [http://www.newtonproject.sussex.ac.uk/view/texts/normalized/THEM00230, accessed august 2014]

literature in all ages and culture.[39]

Space becomes a recurring theme in Twentieth-Century literary criticism and it acquires the label of "literary space". There are many theories and many definitions about literary space, although, often these theories and definitions contradict each other. Only in 1937, the Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin marked a turning point into the critical study of literary space. He was deeply inspired by Einstein's relativity theory and in his essay, *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel* (1937-38), he claims that texts and historical reality are strictly connected. He introduces the concept of"chronotope" which is

> the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationship.[40]

In the *Concluding Remarks*, the final chapter, Bakhtin points out that the reader can enjoy the events narrated in the novel, thanks to the mediations of chronotope. In other words, time condenses itself in certain spaces, creating the literary image. He underlines also that literary space is still less investigated that time. Gradually, Bakhtin's wish has been fulfilled and nowadays, space is an important subject of study. Bakhtin is not the only one who thinks that space has been largely ignored, in favour of studies about time and history. Michel Foucault, in his essay *Questions on Geography* (1980) states that

> Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic.[41]

The time versus space debate is mostly based on modernist and postmodernist views of time and space. According to modernism, the speed of changes and the development of modern industrial society, affect people's life. Modernism aims to represent the world and the place that people occupy in it. The modernist concept of time and space is expressed by the design of modern cities in which motor vehicles and airplanes circulate. In this context, time is oriented toward the progress. Moreover, in a society

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[39] Mitchell, W. J. T., "Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory", *Critical Inquiry,* VI, 3 (spring 1980): 539-567. p.541

[40] Bemong, N., Borghart, P., De Dobbeleer, M., Demoen, K., De Temmerman, K., Keunen, B.,*Bakthin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives,* Gent, Academia Press, 2010 p.3

[41] Foucault, Michel, "Question on Geography", in C. Gordon (ed.) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Brighton, Harvester Press, 1980, p.70

overawed by capitalism which dictates fast rhythms, time acquires more importance than space.

> In modernist culture, it seems that social space was sidelined by more pressing problems of time, and place was regarded as an historical and possibly regressive construct, and therefore a hinderance to progress.[42]

Postmodernism has changed the representation of the past but it has also changed the perception of time and space. Space and time are more fluid, in particular, space is perceived as something homogeneous and it is the product of globalization. Space has become a social category; moreover, even though cities appear homogeneous, often they are internally fragmented by boundaries of race, class, ethnicity and gender. In other words, cities are both homogeneous and heterogeneous because even though they are architecturally consistent, the relationships between people and space are fragmentary. Megalopolis are crowded by people who are looking for a job, these people share a certain space but they do not develop a common identity. While modernism regards space as something static, which contains the occurrence of events, postmodernism regards space as something combined with time which affects and is affected by events. Summing up,

> in comparing modern and postmodern approaches to space and time, it seems as though modernist culture was more concerned with the individual experience of "private" time, and escape from "public" time. In postmodern culture the emphasis is more on the spatial component of spatio-temporal relations. In the postmodern novel, this change of emphasis entails a different organisation of the novel's chronotope, and this has considerable impact of worlds as representations of multiple time-space.[43]

In 1980, he contemporary scholar Ruth Ronen wrote an essay, entitled *Space in fiction* in which she described space as

> The domain of settings and surroundings of events, characters and objects in literary narrative, along with other domain (story, character, time and

[42] Smethurst, Paul, *The Postmodern Chronotope: Reading Space and Time in Contemporary Fiction,* Amsterdam, Editions Rodopi B.V, 2000, p. 37.

[43] *Ibidem,* p. 39

ideology), constitutes a fictional universe.[44]

She focuses on the relationship between various categories of space-constructs and their manifestations; for this purpose, she begins her essay with the assumption that space is a semantic construct. In other words, she assumes that the literary text employs linguistic structures which make space. She adds also that the parts which compose the fictional space, are not identifiable with specific textual expression. Then, Ronen contrasts the frame with the setting:

> Frames are fictional places and locations which provide a *topological determination* to events and states in the story. […] A setting is distinguished from frames in general in being formed by a set of fictional places which are the *topological focus* of the story. A setting is zero point where the *actual* story-events and story-states are localized.[45]

In the last part of her essay, she states that the relations of similarity or opposition between the frames, establish a principle of equivalence which settles fictional spaces. Moreover, fictional spatial constructs are interrelated, that is to say, each spatial construct is always characterised by the connection with another spatial construct.
In the same year, 1980, W. J. T. Mitchell also wrote an essay which focuses on the issue of spatial form in literature. This essay is entitled "*Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory"*. He begins by observing that it is impossible to speak of time without speaking of space, because the spatial form is the perceptual basis for the notion of time. According to him

> Space is the body of time, the form or image that gives us an intuition of something that is not directly perceivable but which permeate all that we apprehend. Time is the soul of space, the invisible entity which animates the field of our experience.[46]

To support his thesis, he takes as example the temporal language which is contaminated with spatial imaginary. In other words,

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[44] Ronen, Ruth, "Space in fiction" *Poetics today,* VII, 3 (1986): p. 421-438
[45] I*bidem,* p. 423
[46] Mitchell, W. J. T., "Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory", *Critical Inquiry,* VI, 3 (spring 1980): : 539-567. p: 545.

> in literature, our sense of continuity, sequence and linear progression is not non-spatial because it is temporal.[47]

In the 19th century, space becomes also psychologists' subject of study: exactly, they begin to analyse how people perceive space. Thanks to these studies, psychologists have identified a lot of phobias: for instance, they have identified the fear of open space, commonly known as agoraphobia, or the fear of enclosed space, commonly known as claustrophobia. Sigmund Freud also deals with space, in his book *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1920), in which he interprets the dreams. He refers to space as landscape and he states that there is a connection between space and sexual symbols. According to him, mountains and cliffs represent the male organs whereas the females genitals are symbolized by gardens. More precisely, fruit represents the breasts. Female virginity is represented too by natural elements, such as blossoms and flowers. It is really interesting that Freud's theory can be employed also in literature and, specifically, in the analysis of *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci.* For instance, Andy Sawyer's essay, *Diana Wynne Jones's Other Garden* (2005), analyses the hidden meaning of the garden. He states that in *Charmed Life* (1977) the "Other Garden", with his multi-seasonal vegetation, stands for imaginative fertility. However, this garden is also a means of active escape, a way out from reality: indeed both Cat in *Charmed life* and Christopher Chant in *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988) have to accept their role of nine-lived enchanters, and they have to accept that they have duties apart from their will.

2.3.2 Time Versus Space: Geography Rewriting in *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci*

Even though the French scholar Paul Vidal de la Blache (1845-1918) is considered the "father" of geography, its origin is very ancient. The history and the development of this discipline are connected with the history of human society; however, geography has been considered a real science only in recent times. When we think about geography, the first concept that occurs to us is space. Indeed the spatial analysis defines the nature of geography and it is fundamental in geographical research.

[47] *Ibidem,* p.542

Over the years, the concept of geographical space has changed a lot. For this reason, the idea that geographical space originates from the balance between the concept of absolute space and the concept of relative space, may be considered slightly old fashioned. According to this viewpoint, geographical space is a relational concept. Absolute space is an empty space which represents the lack of objects and it is represented by a topographical coordinate system, whereas the relative space is considered as an active space which affects the things that it contains. Thus, relative space seems like an environment.

Nowadays, the academic debate about geographical space focuses on the differences between space and place which are considered two fundamental geographic concepts. These two terms are more complex than they appear at a glance. The term space indicates the dimension in which phenomena are spread and it is determined by Euclidean distance. According to some scholars, space is both the vehicle and the result of social relationships. For instance, the social difference between ethnical groups is represented also by the spatial distance among them; for this reason space is involved in social exclusion. The term "place", actually, is more specific. It can be considered in various ways: first of all it can be considered as a location, thus it can be identified by a network of coordinates which shows a determined position. Secondly, it can be considered as a locale which is established by a specific setting of social relationships. Thirdly, the term place is arranged with the concept of locality. Also this association suggests the idea of a particular area or region in which there are social and economic processes. Often, these processes are specific to that particular area or, sometimes, they are influenced by the habits which are predominant in the region. The Chinese geographer Yi – Fu Tuan emphasises the cultural and humanistic approaches of geography and deals with the concept of "sense of place". He begins his analysis by observing that even though only human beings have a sense of place, it is possible to say that even place has spirit or personality. People's sense of place is displayed when people employ their moral and aesthetic judgement to locations. Tuan states also that in this context, the word sense can have a visual or aesthetic meaning but it can signify also the verb "to know". For this reason, he argues that it is possible to have a sense of place in the profound meaning of the word, thus it is possible to know a place subconsciously, without the aid of the eyes. He concludes his analysis by saying that

> yet it is possible to be fully aware of our attachment to place only when we

> have left it and we can *see* it as a whole from distance.[48]

After World War II, the geography of the world has unavoidably changed and these spatial changes have deeply affected culture, politics and daily life. That mood has had serious repercussions also on children's literature and the themes of belonging and identity have become urgent and preponderant. Starting from 1945, many fantasy authors have written about an England which brings back the Empire and the power of Britain. This "unreal" view of the British nation and its people, is full of nostalgia and sentimentalism. According to Leonard Lutwack, this escape into nostalgia is a reaction to a modern discomfort called "placelessness" which is

> the disappearance of familiar places and the proliferation of a more limited set of uniform places.[49]

Also Diana Wynne Jones wondered about the theme of nostalgia. Thus, she completely reversed the principles of an ideal image of Great Britain, to demonstrate that this nostalgic view is not useful to show the reality of the nation. Moreover, Jones's texts explore the complex concept of Englishness, focusing on the consequences of English life both for the insider and the outsider. In short, Englishness is a way of being based on a set of moral values, beliefs and attitudes which are belonging only to England and to the people who are identified as English.

The scholar Karen Sands-O'Connor observes that contemporary England has become a dangerous place for children and it does not hold anymore a high moral ground.

The two texts that, more than others, criticize England and the modern world, are *Charmed Life* (1977) and *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988). In these two texts, our world is just one of the twelve different series of worlds and is not oriented on magic whereas it is oriented to science. In the *The Lives of Christopher Chant,* Christopher travels accidentally to our world and, even though he spends only few minutes here, he is absolutely horrified by technology and industrial development. According to Christopher, this is a frightening world unsuitable for children. On the contrary, in *Charmed Life,* a character belonging to our world travels to Chrestomanci's world

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[48] Tuan, Yi-Fu, "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective", in S. Gale and G. Olsson (eds) *Philosophy in Geography,* Dordrecht, Holland, D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979, pp. 387 - 422.

[49] Lutwack, Leonard, *The Role of Place in Literature,* Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1984, p.183.

because of an identity exchange. At the beginning of the travel, Janet Chant does not appreciate Chrestomanci's world, whereas at the end of the story she has changed her mind. This change of attitude is due to the discovery that her real parents, who belong to our world, have not noticed that she has been replaced with another girl. Clearly, these texts do not offer a completely idealized view of the past, but they suggest that the past may be considered a place safer and more welcoming for children.

Jones's books do not only deal with the humanistic concept of geography in relation to nostalgia but they also deal with the geographical concept of place as a location, as a locale and as a locality. These contemporary geographic concepts are the focus of *Conrad's Fate* (2005) which is one of Jones's most recent books. Obviously, this book demonstrates that Jones's books are updated under every aspect. In other words, starting from the first book, the reader can recognise an update of themes and scientific concepts. It is also interesting that *Conrad's Fate* changes radically the geography of the world. This revolution is a brilliant expedient because there is not only an addition of cities but there is also a morphological change of mountains and borders.

> Christopher astounded me by asking, "By the way, what or where is this Ludwich that the Countess is so peeved with the Count for vanishing to?"
> I stared at him. How could he not know? "It's the capital city, of course! Down in the Sussex Plains, beside the Little Rhine. Everyone knows that!"[50]

It is striking and brilliant that the feeling of disorientation is also perceived by one of the protagonists of the book. This choice has a double strong effect on the reader: in addition to be puzzled by a geographical change, he/she is confused also by Christopher's reaction and by his utmost disorientation. The explanation of Christopher's confusion is quite simple: he feels so puzzled because he comes from another world with a different geography. Christopher is really astonished to learn that Stallchester is just above the English Alps, so he asks Conrad

> "what other Alps are there, then-as a matter of interest?"
> "French, Italian, Austrian," I said. "Those Alps sort of run together. The English Alps are divided by Frisia." Christopher looked quite bewildered. He did not seem to know any geography at all. "Frisia is the country on the

[50] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Conrad's Fate*, New York, HarperCollins, 2008, p.94.

> English border," I explained. "The whole of Europe is quite flat between Ludwich and Mosskva, and the Alps make a sort of half-moon round the south of that. The English Alps are to the north of the plains."[51]

Clearly this "condition" is not one-way, thus it is funny when some pages later also Conrad needs some explanations:

> "Millie only lives with us n the holidays because the people she came from insisted on her going to boarding school. Her latest school is in Switzerland-"
> "Where is that?" I asked.
> "You do not have it in Seven," Christopher said. "It is in the Alps, squashed in among France, Germany and Italy-"
> "I do not know of a Germany either," I said.
> " The Teutonic States, then?" Christopher guessed.
> "Oh, you mean the *Slavo*- Teutonic States!" I said.[52]

This is a defamiliarization technique which entails the introduction of an unfamiliar world through the eyes of a character. This unfamiliar perspective prompts the reader's cognitive activity because he/she has to make an effort to identify the familiar world.

[51] *Ibidem,* p.95.
[52] *Ibidem,* p.119.

3 Splitting Worlds

3.1 Introducing Parallel Universes

As we have seen before, the discovery of relativity and quantum physics has led on to a new conception of physics. Between 1950s and 1960s, physicists wanted to unify their knowledge and explain rationally the new findings; thus they began to wonder about the existence of other worlds which exist side-by-side to our world, as parallel ghosts. The new physics conceives parallel universes as

> regions of space and time containing matter, galaxies, stars, planets and living beings. In other words, a parallel universe is similar and possibly even a duplicate of our own universe. [53]

Some physicists think that parallel universes are the result of a space-time distortion, due to gravity. In other words, they think that parallel worlds are duplications of what already exists. Moreover, the parallel beings exist simultaneously to us, even if we do not perceive them. This idea of duplication of us "out there" has been adopted by science-fiction and it has begun a key-element of this genre.

In 1953 Albert Einstein and his associate at Princeton University, Nathan Rosen, lay the foundations for the parallel universe theory by stating that black holes are "tubes" which connect a universe to another possible universe. Only few years later, in 1957, the theory of parallel universes was conceived by Hugh Everett III, a graduate student at Princeton University. He argued that if two alternatives can interfere with each other then, in some way, they both exist simultaneously. In other words, every time that anything gets in contact with anything else, the universe splits and creates a new universe. Each world is equally real but they cannot communicate with one another. The starting universe and the complementary universe are connected, thus the existence of a single universe depends on the existence of its parallel universe.

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Wolf, Fred Alan, *Parallel Universes: The Search for Other Worlds*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1988, p. 20-21.

Stephen Hawking is a cosmological physicist from Cambridge University, who has tried to synthesize the general relativity theory and quantum physics. He deals with the concept of parallel universes and he states that irrespective of the number of the universes, the majority of them is similar to our world. In other words, he points out that the structure of parallel worlds and also the forms of life who inhabit these universes, are analogous to the world in which we live. In Jones's novels, multiple worlds are the result of a mixture of imagination and scientific modern theories: she summarizes Hawking's theory by observing that the split between two worlds is possible only if they have different "fate-lines". On the other hand, the split worlds follow natural laws which are similar to those belonging to our world, with the exception of the presence and the use of magic. Moreover, these parallel worlds are similar to our worlds because of the presence of humans.

David Deutsch, professor at Oxford University, also works on the concept of parallel worlds:

> Deutsch does not try to hide behind words or philosophical cop-outs but acknowledges that yes, parallel versions of our world are just as real as our own, including copies in which he himself exists but is doing different things at this moment.[54]

This can happen because when the ghost photon meets our photon, the two realities interfere with each other.

Parallel universes is an extremely fascinating theme not only for physicists, but also for fantasy novelists. This theme has acquired great importance, as it has become a key-element and an emblem of fantasy fiction. Unlike physicists, fantasy authors do not focus on the creation of these other worlds; they do not try to explain rationally their existence, but they accept them. In fantasy fiction, parallel universes are so integrated in the story, that their presence seems plausible. Even if this theme is ancient and common also in folklore and oral tradition, in fantasy fiction, the distinction between one world and the other worlds was formalized only in the 1940s.

Generally, the parallel worlds are connected to our world and accessed by the use of a magical gate or a magical passageway which allows the explorations of the

[54] Bruce, Colin, *Schrödinger's rabbits: the many worlds of quantum,* Washington, Joseph Henry Press, 2005, p. 176.

complex secondary space. Conventionally, this passageway or the door between other worlds is called "portal".

> In a larger sense that has consistently escaped critical attention, a portal signifies a nexus point and instance of magical agency, the place where one world not only physically borders but also e*ngages* another.[55]

However, portals are not simple concrete doorways but they include in itself

> all those living things, places, and magical objects that act as agents for a hero(ine) to travel between worlds and/or to access higher planes of consciousness.[56]

Portals make the development of the concept of the "in-between" both physically and psychologically possible: indeed, portals denote the passage from a world to another, from our time to another time, from reality to imagination. Portal is a magical agent with a double function, as it offers the reader both a way out from routine and real world, and a way into another world full of magic.

> The portal connotes a myriad of power associations and imbalances, centralizing and making transparent the ways in which literary fantasy attacks real-world problems.[57]

It is really interesting that portals have also a metaphorical function: indeed, they mark the transition between two fundamental steps in human life. These steps are childhood and adulthood. Portal is the tool which makes this transition possible, because only through the exploration of new worlds, the protagonist, who commonly is a child, can explore, improve him/herself and grow up.

Over the years, portals and parallel worlds, due to their abundance of cultural meanings, have become irreplaceable elements in fantasy fiction; moreover, the existence of other worlds has become a criterion of categorisation. That is to say, fantasy fiction can be classified:

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[55] Campbell, Lori M., *Portals of Power: Magical Agency and Transformation in Literary Fantasy,* Jefferson, North Carolina and London, McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010, p. 6.

[56] *Ibidem,* p.6

[57] *Ibidem,* p.6

> […] between fantasy set in "this" world, where there is a tension between the "normal" and the fantastic elements, and "other" worlds in which the fantastic is the norm. In "this" world, magic may just happen to exist […]; there may be intrusions of magic into this world from a different plane […] or a different world […]; or the transportation of characters into another, parallel world.[58]

It is really interesting to note that seldom if ever, the location of places is described in detail. In other words, places are rarely mapped, and this stresses, in this way, the breach between the real world and the unreal one. For instance, in some novels, the geography is vague also because the place is not a place in itself, but it is only a space where things happen.

Certainly, the creation of other worlds has suffered, over the years, many changes which are linked with the transformations suffered by society. Indeed, eighteenth century fiction gave priority to the realism of the novel, as reflection of that period commonly known as the age of reason and pragmatism; whereas the nineteenth century was dominated by fantasy novel used as a sublimation, or a political tool. The books which mainly represent nineteenth century fantasy novel, are Lewis Carroll's "Alice" books. The first Alice's book is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* commonly known only as *Alice in Wonderland*, which was published in 1865; while the second one is *Through the Looking-Glass* which was published in 1871.

> This is fantasy locked on to the real world; each book is a satire-allegory on politics, a commentary on Victorian mores, an emphatic view of the (female) child's position in Victorian society, and a sublimation of Carroll's own desires.[59]

Even though *Alice in Wonderland* is addressed to children, it is an adult fantasy novel. This book speaks about a young girl, Alice, who lives incredible adventures during a dream. During her dream, she enters in many other strange worlds in which

> everything is uneven, and the strangest things keep appearing. In *Alice* we move from a talking White Rabbit, down a well, through a pool of tears, and

[58] Hunt, Peter and Lenz, Millicent, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction,* London and New York, Continuum, 2001, p. 11.

[59] *Ibidem,* p. 24.

> into a garden where we encounter a Mad Hatter's tea party, a game of croquet played with living things, and a trial of the Knave of Hearts.[60]

Moreover, it is really interesting that

> The alternative worlds that Alice enters are grotesque parodies of Alice's "normal" world, existing, perhaps, only in her mind.[61]

However, in the twentieth century, fantasy novel begins to focus mainly on alternative worlds. The first important novel that marks this trend is *The Wizard of Oz*, which is perhaps the most famous American fantasy book. *The Wizard of Oz* was written by Frank Baum, it was published in 1900 and it was the first book of Oz series. All the sequels have in the title the word Oz, which is the name of an imaginary land; for this reason it can be said that this series is deeply linked with the imaginary world. The novel is about Dorothy Gale, a young girl who lives in a farm in Kansas with her aunt, her uncle and her dog Toto. One day, a cyclone strikes violently on her farm and she is swept away. She turns up at Land of Oz where she meets a Scarecrow which desires to have a brain, a Cowardly Lion which wants to achieve courage, and a Tin Woodman which wishes a heart. Moreover, Dorothy gets in touch also with some strange creatures as, for instance, winged monkeys. In spite of the appearances, *The Wizard of Oz* is a very complex novel which represents an allegory of United States of America. It is really interesting that even though Baum has created a new world, Oz is a reflection of American culture. In other words, Baum designs a world which is an utopian view of America:

> there is no country so beautiful as the land of Oz. There are no people so happy and content and prosperous as the Oz people. [...][62]

Undoubtedly, J. R. R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis are considered the "fathers of parallel worlds." In other worlds, they are two important authors who have given to the twentieth century the best of fantasy fiction, and a concrete contribution to the creation

[60] Manlove, Colin, *From Alice to Harry Potter: Children's Fantasy in England,* Christchurch, Cyberedition Corporation, 2003, p. 22-23.
[61] Hunt, Peter and Lenz, Millicent, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction,* London and New York, Continuum, 2001, p. 25.
[62] Baum, Frank, L. *The Magic of Oz ,* New York, Ballantine Books, 1993 p. 35.

of parallel worlds. Even though J. R. R. Tolkien is considered a cornerstone in the creation of parallel universes, it is fundamental to specify that he created just one fantastic world. For this reason, when critics refer to Tolkien's world, they do not speak about a cosmos made by several worlds, which are achievable through a travel in time. They speak about a "Secondary world" which is none other than an alternative and totally fantastic world, endowed with its geography and its rules. This term was coined exactly by J. R. R. Tolkien, during a lecture presented at St. Andrews University and it defines simply an alternative reality which has nothing to do with our reality and in which the impossible is possible. Tolkien's world rejects modernity and it appears as a medieval world, lacking technology. He sets his masterpieces *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of The Rings* (1954-55) in the Middle-Earth world which is

> a complex creation, carefully worked out many years, and based on language as much as geography.[63]

Many scholar agree that Middle-Earth is a fictional world which re-creates and represents both England and its symbols. Tom Shippey, in his book, *The Road to Middle-Earth* (2003), observes that

> historically the Shire is like/unlike England, the hobbits like/unlike English people. Hobbits live in the Shire as the English live in England, but like the English they come form somewhere else [...][64]

Shippey stresses also the importance of language in the creation of this secondary world: indeed, he observes that a lot of the places which shape Middle-Earth, are named with real names. Peter Hunt also underlines the truthfulness of names, and he observes that the Shire represents home concretised as rural England. However, Tolkien's Middle-Earth is a coherent world in which everything has its own reason for being. Colin Manlove observes that, since Tolkien's world is based on nature, it is not surprising that trees have a key role and they symbolize the time. Time is the real cornerstone and

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[63] Hunt, Peter and Lenz, Millicent, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction,* London and New York, Continuum, 2001, p. 33.

[64] Shippey, Tom, *The Road to Middle-Earth (Revised and Expanded),* Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2003, p. 102.

> is constantly being rooted in the past. Every action is keyed to a precise time of day, year or season, and to the history that preceded it. Every character has a genealogy and a race history going far back into the past.[65]

It is really interesting that even though Tolkien and Lewis are considered, to the same degree, the "fathers of parallel worlds," they have created these worlds with two different approaches. Indeed, while Tolkien has built a coherent world, Lewis has, at least initially, created a disjointed world by mixing talking animals from fairytales and magical creatures from legends and religious allegorical figures. Lewis's enchanted world, called Narnia, is the place where the adventures of the Pevensie family happen and, last but not least, is the core of *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56). In other words, Narnia is important to the text as a character is. Narnia is a small, valley country which was created by Aslan, a lion which represents God. This country lies on the eastern edge of Narnia and is up north to Archenland. However,

> The Land of Talking Beasts is more than simply a geographical area sketched on the map of imagination. It is also a place drawn out of the experiences, influences, and interests of the author. […] While aspects of Narnia may be drawn from features of our own world, they are imbued with a greater sense of wonder and emotional power. They are certainly a few spots in our world that resemble Narnia, but there is also much in the construction of the country beyond the wardrobe [...].[66]

Even though only Earth, Narnia, the Wood between the Worlds, Aslan's country and Charn (which is the White Witch's home world), are named in the *Chronicles,* Lewis's vision of cosmology is more ample and considers infinite worlds. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) is perhaps the most popular British portal fantasy book and here, the portal is a wardrobe.

> The wardrobe introduces a concept that will be emphasized frequently in the Narnia books: the inside is bigger than the outside. From the outside, the wardrobe appears very ordinary. It is a known quantity, even to the children.

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[65] Manlove, Colin, *The Fantasy Literature of England,* Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London, Macmillan Press Ltd, 2008, p. 55.

[66] Hardy, Elizabeth Baird, *Milton, Spencer and The Chronicles of Narnia: literary sources for C.S. Lewis novels,* Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007 p.108.

> However, inside, Lucy finds much more than she expects to. […] Lewis makes a beautiful transition between England and Narnia. […] Something that is quite common and small when looked at may be extraordinary and large when experiences. Even an ordinary wardrobe might contain the world of Narnia. [67]

Summing up, Tolkien and Lewis have inaugurated a new kind of fantasy literature in which parallel worlds have a key role. It is really interesting, that the authors who suffered more their influence are Alan Garner, Susan Cooper and Diana Wynne Jones, who attended Oxford in the early 1950s. Indeed, in the 1950s Tolkien and Lewis were both writing and lecturing there; thus, they spread their own ideas. Garner, Cooper and Jones must have absorbed Tolkien and Lewis's teaching, so that some correspondences can be found in their works. For instance, in Jones's *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1977),

> Christopher Chant's travels to other worlds are structured as a walk around a corner to a location that is the centre of things, a place between the worlds reminiscent of *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), Jones's favourite of the Narnia books.[68]

Garner, Cooper and Jones are not the only authors who have drawn inspiration from Tolkien and Lewis's works: indeed, also the American author Ursula K. Le Guin creates a secondary world in her *Earthsea* trilogy (1967-72).

> Earthsea is a fully-fledged secondary world, with its own history, languages and, traditions, but this is a very different world to the medieval "British" or even "European" flavour of Tolkien's Middle-earth, and the similar landscapes of much other fantasy. Earthsea is an archipelago of islands […].[69]

One of the main theme of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, is the conventional Christian theology which separates clearly good from evil. In the *Earthsea* trilogy, there is a new interpretation of this theme: indeed, there is not a physical evil enemy to fight. In other

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[67] Karkainen, Paul A., *Narnia: Unlocking the Wardrobe,* Grand Rapids, MI, Fleming H. Revell, 2007 p. 10-11.

[68] Mendlesohn, Farah, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children's Literature and the Fantastic Tradition,* New York, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2005, p. 80-81.

[69] Lee, Stuart D., *A companion to J.R.R. Tolkien*, Oxford, John Wiley and Sons, Ltd, 2014, p. 289.

words, the battle is moral and internal. Also Philip Pullman gets beyond the light versus dark dispute and tries to put upside down Lewis's ideas. However, it is ironic that the first volume of *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000) begins with a child who is hiding in a wardrobe. The series speaks about two children, Lyra Belacqua and Will Parry, who move between parallel universes. Obviously, this series hides a more deep purpose: the examination of existential questions. According to Millicent Lenz,

> the subject of *His Dark Materials* is nothing less than the story of how human beings, at this critical time in history, might evolve towards a higher level of consciousness. The trilogy speaks to the existential state of humanity at the beginning of the new millennium.[70]

Colin Manlove makes clear that

> the trilogy as a whole can be seen as a gradual enlarging of consciousness as it moves further out into more worlds.[71]

Here, parallel universes are not secondary elements, whereas they are the essence and the heart of the whole trilogy. In other words, the trilogy is based on parallel universes and, without them, it could not exist. Talking of this, Colin Manlove observes that the whole trilogy is based on the constant inquiry about the way in which the universe works; moreover, he notices that the reality built by Pullman is complex as our reality is. In short,

> this is a fantasy world in which being portrayed as more real than nothingness, and as growing more so throughout the narrative.[72]

The first book of *His Dark Materials, Northern Lights* (1995), focuses on Lyra, a girl who lives incredible adventures trying to find her friend who has been kidnapped. Here, the reader enters in an unfamiliar world, parallel to our own, which is a weird version of Oxford. In that world there are daemons, witches and strange objects. It seems the

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[70] Hunt, Peter and Lenz, Millicent, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction,* London and New York, Continuum, 2001, p.123.

[71] Manlove, Colin, *From Alice to Harry Potter: Children's Fantasy in England,* Christchurch, Cyberedition Corporation, 2003, p. 184.

[72] *Ibidem*, 180.

combination of civilisation and barbarism. On the contrary,

> the setting of *The Subtle Knife* (1997) is projected to be in "the universe we know [...]".[73]

The reader perceives Will's Oxford as more familiar because this kind of Oxford shares some features with his/her world. For instance, the reader does not need to know what is a computer or a car because these objects exist also in his/her world. Moreover, it is really interesting that the main character, Will, is able to cut windows into other worlds. Manlove analyses the whole trilogy and observes that *The Subtle Knife,* even though is epic, exciting and ambitious, is not as deep as *Northern Light*; furthermore

> there is far more explanation of cosmos here: we are constantly being informed of the make-up of the multiverse, whereas in the previous books it had to be guessed and wondered at through hints.[74]

The '90s is undoubtedly the decade in which the parallel world theme reaches, in fantasy fiction for children, a huge popularity. Indeed, as well as Pullman, also Neil Gaiman in 1996 sets his novel, *Neverwhere,* in a parallel world. *Neverwhere* is a urban fantasy which speaks about the adventures of Richard Mayhew, a young businessman which moves from Scotland to London. The story begins in a Scottish pub to celebrate Richard's move. Even though the party goes on and everybody seem to be happy, Richard goes out and sits on the pavement. The reader feels immediately that Richard is a person in transition and a little detached from reality. This same sense of transition and unrest lasts also after three years, when Richard, who has settled permanently in London, seems more an observer than an active participant of his own life. Even though Richard is a young man and not an adolescent, his characterisation reminds the reader of Diana Wynne Jones's characters; moreover, how Jones stands out has inspired Gaiman. Gaiman and Jones were close friends and they were linked with a reciprocal high regard; moreover, on many occasions, Gaiman has remarked how he appreciates Jones's production, specifically, *The Chronicle of Chrestomanci*. Undoubtedly, being Jones's friend was a huge privilege, also because it allowed Gaiman to analyse deeply her

[73] Hunt, Peter and Lenz, Millicent, *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction,* London and New York, Continuum, 2001, 127.

[74] Manlove, Colin, *From Alice to Harry Potter: Children's Fantasy in England,* Christchurch, Cyberedition Corporation, 2003, p. 183.

narrative techniques and it is evident that Gaiman has borrowed her irony and humour to investigate identity and human nature without sentimentalism.

One night, Richard is going to an important dinner with his girlfriend Jessica, when he realizes that, near the gutter, there is a girl who is bleeding. Even though Jessica refuses to help the girl by saying she is only a homeless and she will be fine, Richard decides to help the girl, and nothing will be the same. Indeed, the following morning Richard finds out that no one can see him and his life does not exist anymore. London is not the same Richard knows, he has turned up into London Below. In *Neverwhere*, the parallel world is a gloomy, cruel and invisible side of London; indeed, there are two different Londons which coexist even though there is a very deep gap between them. The London that everybody knows is called London Above and is described as a safe and stable place in which life flows predictably and people seem to be happy, whereas London Below is the invisible side of the city and gathers together the marginalized part of the society. It is a mysterious, chaotic,

> place of pure madness. It was built of lost fragments of London Above: alleys and roads, and corridors and sewers that had fallen through the cracks over the millennia and entered the world of the lost and the forgotten.[75]

Obviously, the London Above ignores that there is another version of the city, totally unsafe and dark, while the people who inhabit the London Below are aware that another London exists.

London Below is shaped on the real London and it is a place full of tunnels and clefts; more precisely, this side of London is made by everything that in London Above has become old- fashioned. For this reason, it is really interesting that its old- fashioned appearance, which might recall a sense of immobility, contrasts with its dynamism.

Through the characterisation of these two Londons and the people who inhabit them, Gaiman explores the postmodern concept of geography and the consequent feeling of invisibility. It is really interesting that, even though the London Above is described as a good place to live in and apparently people are satisfied, is full of bitterness and, definitively, is not so much better than the London Below. That is to say, the cynicism which characterises the London Above puts it on the same level of London Below and, in this way, the clear difference between good and evil is brought into question.

[75] Gaiman, Neil, *Neverwhere*, Chatham, Headline Review, 2005, p. 308.

Summing up, both Jones and Gaiman have analysed the dichotomy of good and evil by marking that nothing is totally good or totally evil.
Another important aspect which characterises the London Below is linked with the anthropomorphization of places. That is to say,

> in London Below frequently applies names and meanings that are in direct contradiction to that of London Above. The Angel Islington, for example, turns out to be far from good, while the everyman Richard Mayhew ultimately becomes a great warrior. This strategy is also extended to locations that are not overtly personified, such as Harrods, which hosts the low-class floating market, or Knightsbridge more generally. Far from being the upper-class (and therefore safe) space it holds in London Above this is "NIGHT'S BRIDGE"; a crossing shrouded in the darkness of night, and the most dangerous place in London Below.[76]

Also the characters take part in the characterisation of these two Londons: for example, Richard's girlfriend, Jessica, which embodies the London Above, represents perfectly the indifference and the impossibility to perceive the existence of London Below. Specifically, she demonstrates "her nature" by remaining totally indifferent to the suffering of the girl on the pavement and by adding that she is somebody else's problem. On the other hand, the girl rescued by Richard represents the London Below. The girl is called Door and she belongs to an aristocratic and powerful family of "openers" in London Below. That is to say, like her parents Portico and Portia, Door has the ability to create and to open a door in a wall or in a solid surface. For this reason, the role of Door is also linked with Richard's descent to London Below: in other words, Door represents the tool which allows Richard to become part of London Below. As we can easily observe, the characters who belong to London Below, express their essence also through their name.
It is really striking that, when Richard finally gets back to his old life in London Above, he examines the people around him with a new awareness and he wonders about their origin. However, even though everything seems to be normal, he is not happy. The reason of his unhappiness is due to his transitional nature which prevents him from

[76] Round, Julia, "London's Calling: Alternate Worlds and the City as Superhero in Contemporary British-American Comics," *International Journal of Comic Art*, X, 1, (2008): 27-28.

feeling part of that side of London. In the last scene of the novel, Richard abandons his normal life to become a London Below inhabitant.

Also Harry Potter's world can be considered as a sort of parallel world. Indeed, in the *Harry Potter* series (1997-2007), the reader does not enter a remote world, on the contrary, he/she enters in a little magical world which is placed within our mundane world. Potter's world and our world are divided only by the platform 9 ¾ of King's Cross Station. It is a proper world, with magical schools, villages, sports and a ministry who regulates the use of magic. Even though Potter's world is not a far away world, it is fascinating that it is represented as old fashioned and immersed in a medieval atmosphere. Furthermore, even for the Muggle-educated wizards, there is a lack of interest in using modern technology.

Our "Muggle" world is represented and described through the wizards' eyes and the interaction between these two worlds is as much limited as possible. It is very striking that when Harry is in our Muggle world he is unhappy, while when he is in Hogwarts is happy. Moreover, even though Arthur Weasley thinks that the Muggle world is extremely fascinating, the majority of wizards do not share this view. This juxtaposition allows the treatment of an important issue linked to ethnicity; indeed even though it is not uncommon that a Muggle and a wizard get married and have a baby, crossing in this way the bloodlines, there are some fanatic wizards who disapprove of such marriages, in favour of the purity of breeding.

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry seems a parallel world inside a parallel world. Indeed, in each book of the series, Hogwarts is presented as a microcosm with a proper geography, a proper hierarchy, a proper law code and even a proper sport competition. According to Colin Manlove,

> the books are a child's ideal world-a world of friends and fun, of strange games and adventures, of a turning year governed by the odd rituals and festivals of a country boarding school, of a life untroubled by the future.[77]

Since the term "multiverse" has been coined, speaking of parallel universes has become a little bit old-fashioned. This term was invented by Terry Pratchett, the English author of *Discworld* (1983-2013), a popular comic fantasy series, set in a fictional world. This is a flat world, sustained by four elephants, who in turn, are standing on a

[77] Manlove, Colin, *From Alice to Harry Potter: Children's Fantasy in England,* Christchurch, Cyberedition Corporation, 2003, p 187-188.

giant turtle. In *Equal Rite*s (1987), the third volume of the series, Pratchett offers his idea of multiverse made by

> lots of worlds, all nearly the same and all sort of occupying the same place but all separated by a thickness of a shadow, so that everything that ever could happen would have somewhere to happen *in*.[78]

The existence of parallel universes is really common and widespread also in another form of storytelling: the comics. Doubtless, comics are considered a form of storytelling, since they have been recognised as multimodal narratives, who mix together different semiotic modes as images and words. The most relevant feature which comics and fantasy books share, is their serial nature and the tendency to develop spin-off series. Generally, these spin-off series focus on minor characters. In some cases, due to narrative needs, the main story and its spin-off come together. Thus,

> multiple plotlines and huge character casts whose individual stories are explored separately lead to the diverging and converging plot patterns and fragile continuity of mainstream comics. In the superhero comic, this has led to the emergence of the multiverse.[79]

Multiverse is also the answer to another issue linked with the serial nature of comics. Since a lot of famous comics have been published for decades, the turnover between authors is inevitable and provokes, in this way, the raise of some incongruities. These incongruities are incorporated into the plot and are collocated in parallel worlds, becoming in this way legitimate narrative devices. For instance,

> as DC Comics continued to set its stories in numerous, noncongruent storyworlds, individual development of the superheroes and irrevocable events became possible, because in this way series would not have to end.[80]

DC Comics presented, for the first time, the concept of multiverse in 1965 with the

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78 Pratchett, Terry, *Equal Rites (Discworld Novel 3),*London, Transworld Publishers, 2012, p.203.

79 Kukkonen, Karin, *Contemporary Comics Storytelling,* USA, The Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, 2013, p. 187.

80 Kukkonen, Karin, "Navigating Infinite Earths: Readers, Mental Models, and the Multiverse of Superherocomics" in Hatfield, c., Heer, J., Worcester, K., (ed.), *The Superhero Reader,* USA, University Press of Mississippi, 2013 p. 162.

publication of *The Flash #123*. It is really interesting also that

> although the migration across narrative worlds is possible, each of these superheroes versions is anchored in his or her storyworld. Therefore superhero comics need to provide a way for readers to keep the character versions distinct and to relate each version to its own storyworld.[81]

Also Marvel Comics, the DC Comics "rival", sets a lot of stories in a multiverse. Marvel multiverse is a subsection of Omniverse and it is composed of alternate universes which share a common hierarchy and an analogous nature. Inside Marvel multiverse, there is Earth-616 which is the main reality in which most of Marvel stories are set.

[81] Ibidem, p. 162.

3.2 Multiverse in Jones's *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci*

Certainly, one of the elements which distinguishes Jones's plots is the bifurcation of time and space which provokes world splittings. Thus, the multiverse is considered both the basis of Chrestomanci's universe and the main theme of the whole Chrestomanci series. Chrestomanci's multiverse is limitless and it is originated from the division of an important occurrence; in other words, a relevant event, as for instance a battle, can end in multiple different ways, and each possibility originates a new world. As Gwendolen Chant explains to his brother, Eric (Cat) Chant,

> there are hundreds of other worlds only some are nicer than other, they are formed when there is a big event in History like a battle or an earthquake when the result can be two or more quite different things. Both those things happen but they cannot exist together so the world splits into two worlds which start to go different after that.[82]

It is really funny that in almost every story of the series, there is a character who ignores not only that there are a lot of other worlds, but also how they have been created. This is really useful, because it is a device which allows to underline the importance of multiverse and it explains it to the reader, and to stress worlds' peculiarities. Indeed, even though these worlds are different, they share one important feature: people speak the same languages. For this reason, parallel worlds are known by the name of Related Worlds.

> " […] how many worlds do you think make up the Related Worlds?"
> "Twelve," said Christopher, because he remembered that Tacroy sometimes called the Anywheres the Related Worlds.
> "Very good!" said Flavian, "Though, actually, there are more than that, because each world is really a set of worlds, which we call a Series. The only

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Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Charmed life,* New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p.125.

> one which is just a single world is Eleven.[83]

As the reader can learn from Flavian, who is Christopher's teacher, the structure of Chrestomanci's multiverse is really complex. A world is not a single entity, but it is composed of several realities or worlds. These worlds are called Series and they are enumerated according to a retrogressive order:

> "Why are they numbered back to front?" Christopher asked.
> "Because we *think* One was the original world of the twelve," Flavian said. "Anyway it was the Great Mages of One who first discovered the other worlds, and they did numbering."[84]

Certainly, as Flavian explains, also the Series are the result of different possibilities; thus, they have been originated in the same way Related Worlds did. As we have seen, each Related World has been split in many dimensions, except for Series Eleven. Indeed even though it is known as Series Eleven, it is not properly a Series since it is made by only one world. This Series is totally controlled by magic and it does not enjoy a good reputation among the other Related Worlds: indeed, the people who live there, are considered almost savages. Moreover, Series Eleven is described as a place in which the dichotomy between good and evil is unclear.

> "[...] The Dright puts someone in another world from time to time when he wants to study it. This time he decided he wanted to study good and evil […]. They do not go by right and wrong in Eleven. They do not consider themselves human-Or no, I suppose they think they are the only real people, and they study the rest of you like something in a zoo when the Dright happens to feel interested."[85]

The Dright is the ruler of Series Eleven. He is an authoritarian figure who appears as a kind of God with white curly hair and a crisp beard. His face does not disclose any expression, however he emanates both power and ancient knowledge. The weird, unpleasant, and dangerous nature of Series Eleven is underlined also by a very young

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[83] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci:The Lives of Christopher Chant,* New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 422.
[84] *Ibidem*, p. 423.
[85] *Ibidem,* p. 561.

Christopher. Indeed, even though, initially, Christopher does not know anything about Related Worlds and Series Eleven, he unconsciously avoids that world:

> […] there was one place that did not want to go to it. It was quite near, but he always found himself avoiding it. He set off sliding, scrambling, edging across bulging wet rock, and climbing up or down, until he found another valley and another path.[86]

Undoubtedly, the Twelve Series fulfills an important role in each Chrestomanci's book because it is Chrestomanci's world of origin and for this reason, it acts as a basis for comparison in the analysis of all the other Related Worlds. However, Twelve Series acts also as starting and returning point of Chrestomanci's travels; in other words, he leaves from here and, after every mission, he returns here. Analysing Chrestomanci's books, by starting from *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988), the reader can find out about Christopher's story and he/she learns that when Chrestomanci was a child, he travelled to other worlds, through the realm of dreams. At the beginning of the book, Christopher's night journeys are his secrets and he visits and explores the other worlds, driven only by his innocent curiosity. Thus, also his report of what he has seen is totally innocent:

> the Anywheres were mostly quite different from London. They were hotter or colder, with strange trees and stranger houses. Sometimes the people in them looked ordinary, sometimes their skin was bluish or reddish and their eyes were peculiar [...][87]

In *Conrad's Fate* (2005), Christopher is already a teenager who has been educated; thus, his perception of other worlds is objective and no more naïve. Talking with Conrad, he explains that he does not belong to Series Seven, while he comes from another different universe called Series Twelve. Series Seven is described as a modern world in which science and technology are advanced; for instance, old typewriters have been replaced by new computers. However, the contemporary appearance, given by technological progress, contrasts with some features which are typical of pre-modern epochs. For instance, in Series Seven, the servants have to clean the boots and the compulsory

[86] *Ibidem,* p. 271-272.
[87] *Ibidem,* p. 272.

schooling is up only to twelve years. In the last part of the book, while Millie is talking with Conrad and she explains why she is so hungry, the reader discovers that each world has its own currency:

> "I had nothing to buy food with, you see," she explained. "And the witch only did breakfast. The last breakfast was days ago."
> "Did you run away from school without any money, then? I asked.
> "Pretty well," Millie said. "Money from Series Twelve would not work in Series Seven, so I only took what was in my pocket. [...]"[88]

In *The Magician's of Caprona* (1980) and in *Witch Week* (1982), Chrestomanci is not the main character: indeed, in each story, he appears because people have invoked him to obtain help. In *The Magicians of Caprona*, Chrestomanci makes clear that, even though he is an employee of the British Government who normally does not intervene in non-British issues, this time he makes an exception. He can interfere because one member of the family, Elizabeth, is English and she expresses clearly the desire to be helped. In this case, Chrestomanci does not cross different galaxies to reach a different world, while he simply travels across the states which make Series Twelve. It is really interesting that Caprona seems to be set in 16th century Italy.
Also in *Witch Week,* Chrestomanci intervenes to help people in danger. In this case, he has been invoked by two girls which live in another world. It is really funny that when Chrestomanci "lands," he does not know where he has been summoned, for this reason he tries to discover in which Series he stands. Most of the time, the people who have called him, ignore that their world is not the only one and this happens also in this case:

> "Would one of you tell me where are now?" he said.
> […] "I mean," the man said patiently, "do you happen to know *which* world, galaxy, unless I know which this one is, I shall not find it very easy to help you."
> […] You are not really from another world, are you?" he said.
> "I am precisely that," said the man. "Another world full of people just like you, running side by side with this one. There are myriads of them. So which one *is* this one?"[89]

[88] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Conrad's Fate*, New York, HarperCollins, 2008, p. 243.
[89] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Witch Week*, New York, HarperCollins, 2007,

Chrestomanci is a little confused: he struggles to understand in which world he has been summoned and everything seems strange to him. The strangest thing is linked with the wide presence of witches in a place where witchcraft is illegal. Since Chrestomanci comes from an old-fashioned world, he is really fascinated by everything is modern. He examines trucks and cars, and he is pleasantly surprised to discover that the stockings are made with a strange fabric called nylon. However, pretty soon Chrestomanci realizes that there is something wrong with this Series, and he observes that this world should not exist because it has been created erroneously. Thus, he proposes to

> "[...] put your world back into the other one, where it really belongs."
> "What would happen to us if you did?" asked Charles.
> "Nothing much. You would simply melt quietly into the people you really are in that world," said Chrestomanci.[90]

In *Charmed Life* (1977), the reader learns in detail Chrestomanci's cosmology; however, the plot does not focus on Chrestomanci's travels to other Related Worlds. Indeed, here, Chrestomanci acts mostly as Cat's mentor and, Gwendolen and Janet, two inexperienced girls, are those who travel. Gwendolen is Cat's sister and she is an ambitious, unscrupulous, and sly girl who wants to improve her social position. In doing so, she answers in no one and she does not hesitate to hurt his brother. One day, she decides she wants to go to another world, so she replaces herself with Janet. Janet is another Gwendolen who comes from another world and she has only the appearance of Gwendolen. Indeed, she has a completely different personality and she is not unscrupulous and mean as Gwendolen. Since this is the first book of the series which has been published, this replacement is very important because it introduces some key-elements which will be recurring also in the following books. In this way, the reader learns that in Chrestomanci's multiverse, people have an alter ego. In other words,

> it was very uncommon for people not to have at least one exact double in a world of the same series-usually people had a whole string of doubles, all along the set.[91]

p. 471-472.

[90] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Witch Week*, New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 501.

[91] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Charmed life,* New York, HarperCollins,

In some way, all these souls are connected to one another; thus, Gwendolen's behaviour has had some consequences. That is to say, by altering her position, she has changed also the position of the other Gewndolens.

> I took a look at once to see what had happened to Gwendolen and the seven other girls. Gwendolen was in her element. And Jennifer, who came after Romillia, ia as though as Gwendolen and has always wished she was an orphan; whereas Queen Caroline, whom Gwendolen displaced, was as miserable as Romillia, and had run away three times already. And it was the same with the other five.[92]

The person who fulfils the role of Chrestomanci is special and he is the only one who does not have one or more doubles. This happens because

> the lives that would have been spread out over a whole set of worlds get concentrated in one person. And so do all the talents that those other eight people might have had.[93]

In other words, Chrestomanci does not have doubles because he has nine lives. Obviously, this kind of person is extremely rare. In *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, there are two people with nine lives: this happens because Gabriel de Witt is the Chrestomanci in office and Christopher Chant is his student. In *Charmed Life,* the situation is similar because Christopher Chant has become the Chrestomanci in office and Cat is his student. Losing a life is really easy and in *Charmed Life*, Gwendolen confesses that she has stolen many Cat's lives. She has also used one of Cat's lives, to reach her new world.

Farah Mendlesohn examines Chrestomanci's multiverse by adopting an approach which focuses on portals. As I have briefly outlined, portals mark metaphorically also the moral growth of characters who cross them. Mendlesohn observes that

> although Jones accepts the theme of moral growth, her writing of the elements

2007, p. 161.

[92] *Ibidem,* p. 255.

[93] *Ibidem,* p. 206.

> of transition and exploration frequently express a cohesive critique of the form's narrative.[94]

Usually, in portal fantasy novels, the reader is convinced that the protagonist is always right and what is seen by him/her is true. Jones's novels, through the use of irony, question this assumption as it destabilizes, in this way, the structure of portal fantasy novels. For this reason, in Jones's books, portals are necessary to wonder about the nature of portal fantasy in itself.

The innovations which are present in all Jones's books, appear also in the lack of passive acceptance of what is seen and explained by the protagonist; in other words, the reader is almost forced to wonder about the truthfulness of what is told by the main character. Another important element of innovation, is linked with the character's free will: indeed, most of Jones's characters do not accept time travel passively, on the contrary, they cross the portal voluntarily. The only exception, which stands out, is represented by Janet, who does not change voluntarily Series. In this case, Janet is firstly forced to accept Gwendolen's choice but, at the end of the book, she admits that she prefers to live with her new family. Janet changes her mind because she has discovered that her parents have not noticed the replacement.

> "I can sand you back," said Chrestomanci. "It is not quite so easy with Gwendolen's world missing from the series, but do not think it can not be done."
>
> "No, no. That is all right when I am used to it. I was hoping to come back here-but it is rather a wrench. You see-" […] "You see, Mum and Dad have not noticed the difference."[95]

Initially, it has been really hard to adapt for Janet also because she ends up in a world totally different from her own, which looks like our contemporary world. For instance, in Gwendolen's world, technology is not as advanced as in Janet's world.

> "Do not have cars at all?" Janet asked. "Everyone has cars in my world."
>
> "Rich people do," said Cat. "Chrestomanci sent his to meet us off the train."

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[94] Mendlesohn, Farah, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children's Literature and the Fantastic Tradition,* New York, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2005. p.80

[95] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Charmed life,* New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 254.

> "And you have electric light," said Janet. "But everything else is old-fashioned compared with my world. I suppose people can get what they want by witchcraft. Do you have factories, or long-playing records, or high-rise buildings, or television, or airplanes at all?"
> "I do not know what airplanes are," said Cat. He had no idea what most of the other things were either [...][96]

Mendlesohn stresses also that Janet is not the only one who suffers the change: also Cat (Eric) is upset. Cat is the only one who knows that Gwendolen has replaced herself and, to keep the secret, is compelled to help Janet. Indeed, as we have seen before, Janet comes from a different epoch in which customs and traditions are totally different; thus, she completely relies on Cat's advice. For this reason, the texts shifts in Cat's perspective and it shows both Cat's worries, and his awareness to be necessary also in doing simple things.

> "Cat, what does Gwendolen *wear*?
> Cat thought all girls knew what girls wore. "The usual things-petticoats, stocking, dress, boots-you know."
> "No, I do not," said Janet. "I always wear trousers"
> Cat felt his problems mounting up.[97]

Mendlesohn continues her analysis by adding also that there is one more peculiar feature, linked with the awareness of travelling between worlds: it is exactly the reaction to these travels, which changes from one character to another. Jones's characters have complex personalities, thus it is obvious that they have complex and different reactions to travelling. In other words, we can say that in Jones's novels, characters' personalities depend on the way they perceive the journeys. For instance, in *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988), the reader gets in touch with a young, inexperienced and naïve Christopher who

> thought everyone had the kind of drams he had, too. He did not think they were worth mentioning.[98]

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[96] Ibidem, p.143.
[97] *Ibidem,* p.129-130.
[98] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: The Lives of Christopher Chant,* New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 270.

It is really interesting that, even in adulthood Christopher remains so pure. That is to say, even when he grows up and becomes the new Chrestomanci, he is still kindhearted and trusts people. Perhaps, his besetting sin is to trust people's honesty.
The relationship between the portal and its user is not unilateral: this relation does not influence only a user's nature but it influences also the way in which the portal is structured. Indeed, each portal belongs only to one character and is moulded on the person's world view. For instance, Christopher perceives The Place Between, which is the place that he reaches in his dreams, as a wonderful world with

> a valley […] with green grass. The sun is setting and it is making the stream down the middle look pink[99]

whereas Tacroy, who is Christopher's friend, perceives it as an imperceptibly pink haze. Mendlesohn remarks also that portals in Jones's books are humans' creations and

> act as signifiers, rather than facilitators, in the text.[100]

Moreover, the second key element of portal fantasy novel is linked to the way in which the rhetoric of fantasy is influenced by the "explorative mode". In other words,

> the portal quest fantasy is essentially a tale of exploration in a strange new land. Its mimetic form is the travelogue, and just as with a travelogue it is a form that relies intensely on the assumption that what the reader is told about the configuration of the world is true.[101]

Mendlesohn focuses now on landscape and she observes that in Jones's novels, the landscape depends on characters' interests. That is to say, characters' penchants shape the description of landscape. The best example can be found in *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, where Christopher perceives and describes the landscape as wonderful and new, as the place in which he desires to find himself when he is away from home. It is curious that in this place, he meets the silly ladies who are none other

[99] *Ibidem*, p. 299.
[100] Mendlesohn, Farah, *Diana Wynne Jones: Children's Literature and the Fantastic Tradition,* New York, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2005, p. 82.
[101] *Ibidem,* p. 83.

than mermaids. Here, mermaids embody perfectly the role of temptresses, which literary tradition gave to them; moreover, they mark the beginning of Christopher's sexual maturation. Christopher is fascinated because the silly ladies are naked and, by watching them, he can experience something that in his world he is not allowed to see. It is really meaningful that when mermaids speak with Christopher, they use a typical babytalk.
Christopher's adventures into Related Worlds, do not last for a long time; about that, Mendlesohn supposes that if the character remains in the other world for too long, the adventures might lose their extraordinary features and there might not be anything else to describe. She reasons also about the term "new" in relation to what Christopher perceives during his journeys, and she observes that

> "new" is what is new to the traveller, not to the people left behind.[102]

The term "new", is also put in relation to the traveller's capability of change. Indeed, in traditional fantasy novel,the main character is bearer of innovations, while the realm of fantasy is situated into an invariable past, marking in this way, an imperialist tendency. In other words, the traveller which is commonly contemporary to us, shows to the otherworld people how to improve their society, through modern devices. In this way, he/she acts as an herald of change. In *Charmed life,* Janet acts as the herald of change when, during a dinner, suggests how to fix Chrestomanci's allergy of silver.

> "The really difficult thing is mealtimes," said Millie. "He cannot do a thing with a knife and a fork in his hands-and Gwendolen would do awful things during dinner."
> "How stupid!" said Janet. "Why in earth do you not use stainless steel cutlery?"
> Millie and Chrestomanci looked at one another. "I never thought of it!" said Millie. [103]

Here, the atmosphere is funny, without a didactic purpose: Janet speaks with simplicity by saying something which, at her eyes, is totally normal. Janet does not take an outclass attitude and Millie, Chrestomanci, and the other people who are at the dinner,

[102] *Ibidem,* p. 85.
[103] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Charmed life,* New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 263.

appreciate the advise because they understand her sincerity. Looking like an innocent consideration, the imperialist perspective is mocked.

Also the scholar Karina Hill, analyses *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci* by emphasizing the role of the gateway. She observes that, in Jones's novels, there is not only one kind of gate because each gate differs in appearance, direction and use. Moreover, each gates is shaped by the customs of the place in which it is situated. As it is clear in *Charmed Life,* the gateway is almost often described quite literally: the entrance to Elsewhere is in the centre of a beautiful and flowered garden permeated by magic. There is also a gush of clear water at the roots of an apple tree.

> The ruins were two sides of a broken archway. There was a slab of stone which must have fallen from the top of the arch lying nearby at the foot of the three. There was no other sign of a gate.[104]

In this description there are two powerful symbols: the apple tree and the water. Indeed, in folklore and literary tradition, the apple tree is associated, apart from Adam and Eve's Original Sin, to health and immortality and it is also a symbol of rebirth, beauty, magic and youth. Also the clear water is a powerful symbol of rebirth and purity.

Hill continues her analysis and compares the gate of *Charmed Life* with the gate of *Witch Week*. The emblematic name of this gateway, Portway Oaks, shows how many features, proper of fantasy literary tradition, have been adopted to create it. Portway Oaks looks like a tribute to the most classical realm of fairy tale because it is described as a ring made beech trees, lower down the forest. Hill observes that

> this is, apparently, an extremely restrictive gate, as it does not actually allow entry out to another parallel world but provides the means of entry for a particular person although it can be activated by anyone knowing the secret to operating it.[105]

Hill affirms that portals have also an important function, linked to the character's increase of knowledge. In *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci*, knowledge means power, thus, through the boost of knowledge, the character obtains a self-empowerment. In

[104] *Ibidem,* p. 223-224.

[105] Hill Karina, "Dragons and Quantum Foams: Mythic Archetypes and Modern Physics in Selected Works by Diana Wynne Jones" in Teya Rosenberg et al (ed.), *Diana Wynne Jones: An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*, New York, Peter Lang, 2002, p. 42.

each book of the series, there is a character who is firstly ignorant and then, he/she fixes his/her problems by achieving the necessary knowledge to control magic. For instance, in *Witch Week*, Nan and Estelle do not know anything about Portway Oaks and its functioning, moreover they cast the spell without knowing what will happen. Indeed, they do what is written in the piece of paper, which the old lady gave them. The girls, once arrived at Portway Oaks, pronounce three time the word "Chrestomanci" and suddenly, a man appears, leaving astonished the girls. In *Charmed Life*, while Gwendolen is partially educated, her brother Cat does not know anything about magic and he thinks he is magic-less. Gwendolen knows enough magical theory to steal both magic and lives to her brother Cat. She knows also the geography of Related Worlds and she uses Cat's life to reach another world. Cat reminds his mentor Christopher/Chrestomanci when he was young. Indeed, they share both a naïve attitude and the same nonchalance in using magic. Like Christopher, who has travelled across universes without education, using his own intuition, also Cat compensates for his ignorance using his intuition to activate the gate, in the enchanted garden.

3.3 Traces of Heterotopia in *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci*

The term "Heterotopia" is used by postmodern literary critics to describe the feature of uncertainty which is proper of spatial and temporal conditions in postmodern fiction; however, the origin of this concept must be attributed to Michel Foucault. In 1967, the scholar Michel Foucault affirmed that the main subject of study of his contemporary scholars, was space rather than time. This is because the feeling of anxiety perceived in his period,

> has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than time. Time probably appears to us as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out is pace.[106]

He also added that space is none other than a reconsideration of modernist spatialisation, in which there is the control of public and social space. However, these spaces are unreal because they do not embody the real needs of the society. The unreal spaces are the utopias. He coined the term "Heterotopia," to describe

> the "real" places produced by society as part of its continuous coming into being.[107]

On the other hand, Foucault did not propose heterotopia as a general model for urban social spaces, but he focused on particular social spaces in which the spatial dynamics are independent from history. That is to say, these spaces have an ambiguous spatiality because this spatiality is correlated to the identity formation in a background of resistance acts. It is interesting also that both the spaces which are totally controlled, and the spaces of total freedom, are considered spaces of social order. Foucault borrowed the therm heterotopia from the study of anatomy: indeed, since in anatomy

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Foucault, Michel, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" [http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf, accessed November 2014]

107 Smethurst, Paul, *The Postmodern Chronotope: Reading Space and Time in Contemporary Fiction,* Amsterdam, Editions Rodopi B.V, 2000, p. 41.

heterotopia expresses an extra part of the body, Foucault's heterotopia expresses places of Otherness

> whose existence sets up unsettling juxtaposition of incommensurate "objects" which challenge the way we think, especially the way our thinking is ordered. Heterotopia have a shock effect that derives from their different mode of ordering.[108]

Summing up, Foucault proposes the term heterotopia to describe a specific and useful model to understand the changes and the feeling of anxiety which are proper of postmodern society. Heterotopia is defined by simultaneity, unlikeness, unity and dissimilarity. That is to say, heterotopia is marked through the apposition of things, which normally do not match, and by the consequent confusion which has been created by these representations.

> It is not the relationship within a space that is the source of this heterotopic relationship […] it is how this relationship is seen form outside, from the standpoint of another perspective, that allows a space to be seen as heterotopic.[109]

Over the years, this concept has been debated by many scholars who think that heterotopia can be considered as a useful category. Indeed, in literary criticism, heterotopia is considered a functional concept which forces the reader to go beyond the utopia/dystopia categorisation. Heterotopia reorients the conception of place, human relations and the dynamics of power. Ralph Pordzik examines the concept of heterotopia starting from Foucault's point of view, and he observes that

> postmodern heterotopia thwarts all efforts on the side of the reader to create a coherent illusion of the story, meaning and representation in the text. In de-totalizing and de-temporalizing space it creates, dissent and discontinuity dictate the course of action, effectively putting into practice in the realm of the literary text the "pluriverse" of concepts, fictions and discourses that

[108] Hetherington, Kevin, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and social ordering,* London and New York, Taylor and Francis E-Library, 2003, p. 42.
[109] *Ibidem,* p. 43.

> constitutes postmodernism's revisionist agenda.[110]

Heterotopia is the postmodern tool, like dialogism, heteroglossia, multifocalization, and indeterminacy, which subvert some fundamental principles proper of classic literature; furthermore it accepts the existence of multiple realities and multiple truths. For this reason, it is not strange that

> it questions the very existence of a perceptible reality outside the author's mind and, as a consequence, the possibility of mediating this reality to the reader by means of language.[111]

However, heterotopia acts also by removing the boundaries between fiction and reality and, in this way, the reader perceives a deep liminality. Maria Nikolajeva analyses heterotopia by considering it as a myriad of conflicting worlds; moreover, she underlines that, its conflicting essence, is expressed by the etymology of the term itself. Indeed, heterotopia originates from Greek and it is composed by "hetero" which highlights the difference between the worlds, and "topia" which means place. As we have discussed, heterotopic space is complex, unstable and unpredictable; thus, through its unreliability, it undermines conventional children's fiction which is simple, stable and reassuring. Postmodern children's fiction becomes, in this way, darker and less predictable, by offering the reader an unclear division between good and evil. Undoubtedly, all Jones's production is characterized by the presence of heterotopia, which reveals itself in the text, both explicitly and implicitly. Nikolajeva observes that, differently from the majority of fantasy novels, in Jones's books, literary space is constructed following one unique feature. This feature is none other than the choice to start the stories in Otherworlds. Our world seems mysterious and strange and it is presented through the point of view of an ordinary character; in this way, the reader's curiosity is stimulated. Furthermore, the mystery which envelops our world has a powerful cognitive effect, which pushes the reader to take a look into it as an outsider. The reader can, at the same time, investigate the particular features which mark our

[110] Lacey, Lauren J., "Heterotopian possibilities in Science Fiction by Stephen Baxter, Terry Pratchett, Samuel Delany and Ursula K. Le Guin" in Susan M. Bernardo et al (ed.), *Environments in Science Fiction: Essays on Alternative Space*, Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland and Company, Inc., 2014, p. 12.

[111] Nikolajeva, Maria, "Heterotopia as a Reflection of Postmodern Consciousness in the Works of Diana Wynne Jones", in Teya Rosenberg et al (ed.), *Diana Wynne Jones: An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*, New York, Peter Lang, 2002, p. 25.

world, and bring into question our values and our behaviours. This technique is commonly labelled by literary critics as defamiliarization technique. Exactly, this technique consists in

> presenting familiar setting and events as if they were unfamiliar, for instance, bringing in a visitor from another world to our own, so that we experience it through their perception, the familiar as if it were new and surprising. Yet novice readers may lack knowledge to decide whether the possible world is close or far away from our reality, and this, again, stimulates cognitive activity. A fantasy text prompts readers to pay attention since there may be unfamiliar facts about the possibles world that are of consequence.[112]

Nikolajeva highlights also that the defamiliarization technique allows Jones's readers to wonder about existential queries. For instance, the reader wonders about the nature of reality and the nature of truth. This kind of questions expresses clearly the postmodern point of view. In *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci,* there are a lot of characters who are split physically, emotionally or mentally, between two worlds. They live, in this way, a liminal existence which can be analysed as

> a reflection of a contemporary young person's split of mind. An adolescent exists in marginal, unstable zone between childhood and adulthood; Jones's adolescent characters struggle with their sense of root-lessness and splitness.[113]

Summing up, Jones's multiverse represents the character's rift and it offers a twisted portrayal of the reality in which he/she lives. Additionally, in the Chronicles of Chrestomanci, the two most representative queries of postmodernism are taken to extremes: the character's division between several worlds, leads the reader to wonder about what is real and if a parallel reality may be considered as a more real than another. As we have seen, magic is a key element in Jones's fiction and it is also the feature which distinguishes our boring world from Otherworlds. Furthermore, in Chrestomanci's world, the magic metaphor revels all its postmodern core because of its

[112] Nikolajeva, Maria, *Reading for Learning: Cognitive Criticism and Children's Literature,* Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2014, p. 49.

[113] Nikolajeva, Maria, "Heterotopia as a Reflection of Postmodern Consciousness in the Works of Diana Wynne Jones", in Teya Rosenberg et al (ed.), *Diana Wynne Jones: An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*, New York, Peter Lang, 2002, p. 27.

instability and unpredictability. In other words, these worlds bring into question the laws which regulate nature and they upset, in this way, the positivistic nineteenth century perception of universe, as something constant.

Our world can be associated metaphorically to the adult's world, and the character's rift is none other than the result of the child's facing with the adult's world. Nikolajeva validates this interpretation by saying that it has been developed by contemporary mythical criticism which sustains that all fiction is a "mindscape". In other words, fiction is not the representation of external reality, on the contrary, it is the manifestation of internal and intimate life. This interpretation may be applied specifically to fantasy fiction, because the majority of the events narrated are not directly linked with the kind of life that the reader knows. In this sense,

> heterotopia then becomes a reflection of the adolescent's chaotic worldview. Defamiliarization indicates the emotions of young people faced with a new unfamiliar, and disturbing phase in their lives. The uncontrolled and uncontrollable magic is yet another component of the instability of the young protagonists' psyches.[114]

Jones's characters experience a maturity path also through the questioning of authority: indeed, the young protagonists discover and measure themselves against Chrestomanci, a government official who controls the use of magic among all the parallel worlds. However, a trace of defamiliarization is evident also in another protagonist's discovery: indeed, in the Live of Christopher Chant, the protagonist discovers his magical skills which destabilize his life.

It is really interesting that parents, even though they represent a kind of authority, are defamiliarised and they reveal also all the features proper of heterotopia. For instance, Christopher's uncle, who tries to substitute Christopher's father, is powerful and his use of magic is uncontrolled; moreover he is ambiguous and he lacks morality. Nikolajeva reinforces her argument and she affirms that the character's split mind is a consequence of heterotopia, it is a mechanism of defence which works because the adolescent is reluctant to accept the failure of adult's authority. Indeed, adolescence is a complicated step in human life in which stability is fundamental; furthermore, during this period, it is fundamental that the child can count on parental guidance.

[114] *Ibidem,* p. 27.

At the end of her analysis, Nikolajeva, takes stock of what she has examined and she concludes by affirming that

> heterotopia is used in Jones's works as a reflection of the contemporary adolescent's ruptured and confused worldview. By placing life's most dramatic conflicts in Otherworlds, the author defamiliarizes them, which both enhances and detaches their impact. As a postmodern concept, heterotopia conveys the feelings of young people born and raised in a complex and ambiguous world, in which they are deprived of the guidance and support of any parental figures.[115]

[115] *Ibidem,* p.38.

4 Time, History and Folkloric Tradition: an indissoluble link

4.1 Jones's History Rewriting

As we have observed in the previous chapter, multiverse in Jones's *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci* can be analysed as a temporal heterotopia in which there are some possible "time zones" which coexist, in order to confuse the relationships among history and temporal narrative structures. That it is to say, the structure of Chrestomanci's multiverse allows the reader to get in touch with alternative histories; specifically, it allows the reader to explore and to take part in another version of an important historical event.

In an interview conducted by Charles Butler on March 2001, Diana Wynne Jones explained why she had chosen to change some big historical events. She added also that the rewriting of history was a direct consequence of the multiplication of worlds. When she started to write *Charmed Life* in 1977, the idea of parallel worlds was pretty new. However she grasped all the narrative potentialities and she created her multiverse and her history. At the basis of her choices, there is the desire to explore the "if-worlds":

> it is fascinating to think "What if?" There have been a lot of programs about World War II on television latterly, and they are full of "What if?" moments. If only somebody had taken the risk this or that action we would have lost that war. There are about six times when it was clear we were hanging on by our fingernails; and somebody just had to come along and stamp, but they never did. That always fascinating me, the pivotal thing that will make another, alternative stream of history.[116]

Recently, history has obtained a new interest and it has become the focus of a subgenre called "alternative or alternate history". Contrary to what it might be thought, the rewriting of history is a complex and a very fascinating theme which has

> appeared in a multiplicity of cultural forms: novels, short stories, films,

[116] Butler, Charles, "Interview with Diana Wynne Jones" in Teya Rosenberg et al (ed.), *Diana Wynne Jones: An Exciting and Exacting Wisdom*, New York, Peter Lang, 2002, p.166

> televisions programs, comic books, historical monographs and essays, and internet web sites. […] In short, as shown by this flurry of activity, alternate history has become a veritable phenomenon in contemporary Western culture.[117]

Alternate history does not spare either children's literature and it is very interesting because the treatment of history in children's fiction has always been a little bit controversial. Alternate history, in a way, combines learning with fun: even though it proposes a different version of a past event, it helps the young reader approach real history. Alternative history is

> defined precisely by its divergence from historical consensus. […] By "alternative histories," we refer to texts that show, not what happened in the past but what *might* have happened had circumstances differed in one or more respects.[118]

Even though alternative history is proper of science-fiction and fantasy, it is considered also among historians; between historians, the alternative realities are known as "counterfactuals." Even though alternative realities are considered useless in studying history, they are considered as some kinds of vehicles of memory:

> speculative accounts about the past are driven by many of the same psychological forces that determine how the past takes shape in remembrance. […] The desire to avoid guilt, the question for vindication-these and other related sentiments all influence how alternate histories represents how the past might have been, just how they influence how people remember hoe it "really" was.[119]

The science-fiction scholar Karen Hellekson, who is considered an authority in the study of alternate realities, observes that alternative realities affect the nature of time and linearity, by transforming the world and our perception of reality. In other words,

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[117] Rosenfeld, Gavriel, "Why Do We Ask "What If?": Reflections on the Function of the Alternate History," *History and Theory*, XLI, 4, (2002): 90-103, p. 90-91.

[118] Butler, Catherine, *Reading History in Children's Books*, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Macmillan, 2012, p.107-8.

[119] Rosenfeld, Gavriel, "Why Do We Ask "What If?": Reflections on the Function of the Alternate History," *History and Theory*, XLI, 4, (2002): 90-103, p. 93.

alternative history transforms the past and, in this way, there are modifications also in the present and future. Alternative realities inquire the nature of history also in relation to causality; furthermore, they invites the reader to wonder why and how our world has become like that.

Alternative histories, are commonly divided into some classifications. William Joseph Collins, distinguishes between four different categories which are settled on subject's point of view. That is to say, his categorization focuses on the relationship between alternative histories, according to the reader's point of view. On the contrary, Karen Hellekson's division focuses on the moment of the break: that it is to say, she focuses on the breaking point between world of alternative history and our world. These two different categorisation can be schematised:

Collins's categories:	Hellekson's categories:
⎡ "Pure uchronia" deals only with alternative history's world, without any reference to other realities;	⎡ "Nexus story" which involves the time-travel stories and the battle stories, and it occurs at the precise moment of the break.
⎡ "Plural uchronia" which, as the name suggests, combines the alternative reality with reader's reality.	⎡ True alternate history," which happens long time after the moment of the break and it consists of alternate histories with different physical laws.
⎡ "Infinite presents" or the story of parallel worlds	⎡ "Parallel words story" which implies that there was no break- that all events that could have occurred did occur.[120]
⎡ "time-travel alteration" which is about travellers who come back into the past, to change it.	

Unfortunately, these concepts are only partially useful in children's literature because the general situation is, most of the time, more unclear and mixed.

[120] Hellekson, Karen, *The Alternate History: Refiguring Historical Time,* Kent, Ohio, The Kent State University Press, 2001, p. 5.

One of the first authors who has dealt with the theme of alternative history in a fantasy novel for children, is undoubtedly Joan Aiken. Aiken has managed this topic, insomuch as it has been the main theme of her *The Wolves Chronicles*. The series is composed by eleven books; it started in 1962 with the publication of *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, and it ended with *The Witch of Clatteringshaws* which was published in 2005, after Aiken's death. The books are about the adventures of two children, Simon and Dido, and they are set in 1832, some time after the ascension to the throne of King James III.

Precisely, the entire series is set in a fictional 19th century, in which the Glorious Revolution has never happened. Aiken decided to subvert history with a double didactic purpose: indeed, Aiken's history alteration is a way to reminds children that there is a connection with the past. That is to say, according to Aiken, children must understand and remember what people owe to the past. Furthermore, Aiken rewrites historical events to create

> such an interest into the past, that the child reader will begin to explore their own history and in so doing, both begin to preserve that past and use the knowledge there acquired to inform their future decisions.[121]

Summing up, the knowledge of the past is useful to try to prefent future mistakes and the rewriting of history stimulates the young reader's curiosity. Aiken's purpose is partially shared also by Diana Wynne Jones who, through her novels, encouraged children to be inquiring and to use their mind properly. Both in Aiken and in Jones's novels, the interconnection between fiction and reality invites the reader to wonder about the nature of events: what is the real truth? What has been created from the author's imagination?

In the 70s also Penelope Lively, another influential children's author, has dealt with the alternate history theme. Charles Butler, in his book *Four British Fantasists*, examines in depth this theme: he starts from Diana Wynne Jones's idea of history as something retrospective, and he uses it to compare and contrast Penelope Lively's idea of history. He observes that even though the concept of alternative history plays a relevant role also in Lively's production, the alternative worlds are only hypothesized and are not concrete as they are in Jones's books. In *A Stitch in Time* (1976), specifically

[121] Dams, Isobel, "History Run Wild: The Alternate World of Joan Aiken's *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* series," *Children's Literature in Education*, XXXVI, 2, (2005): 99-109.

in the chapter “The Day that Was Almost Entirely Different”, Lively deals with the theme of contingency. Lively's alternate history does not provide a different version of an historical event, on the contrary, it refers to events linked with characters' life. At the beginning of this chapter, the main character Maria is speaking with her friend Martin about a tapestry made in 1865, which was sewed by a girl who was eleven years old. Maria is really impressed because she is eleven years old too and she wonders about the destiny of that girl. Martin, pragmatically, affirms that she has grown up, got married and now has children, but Maria has a different opinion. Indeed, she confides to her friend that she thinks the girl is still there, but Martin's reaction is not what Maria has expected. Martin says that believing that she is still there would mean that she is a ghost, and he breaks off the discussion by saying that it is nonsense. In the second part of the chapter, Maria wonders, once more, about the “what if?” theme. Indeed, during an outing with Martin's family, something which might have happened but it did not happen, deeply upsets Maria. Maria and Martin are watching a joust performance, when James, who is Martin's little brother, crosses the performance area to reach his mother. Luckily, the knights avoid the child who is unharmed. Maria is really shocked

> and rather appalled at the speed with which the tragic *other* possibility- the accident that did not happen- loses its grip on people's mind. For Maria, the vivid imagination of what nearly happened gives it as much emotional reality as the physical fact that everyone is going home happily and safely in the car [...][122]

Through Maria's eyes, Penelope Lively investigates and highlights the implications of “what if?” theme. Maria has an extraordinary sensibility which prevents her from forgetting what did not occur; thus she keeps wondering

> “Why does one thing happen and not another?” Maria asks her father later that day, still haunted by the ghostly might-have-been.[123]

Recently, this theme has been explicitly treated by Philip Pullman in his *Northern Lights* (1995). Pullman's narrative method is really useful for the reader, who

[122] Butler, Charles, *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children's Fantasies of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones and Susan Cooper,* Oxford, Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006, p.70.
[123] Lively, Penelope, *A Stitch in Time,* London, Mammoth, 1994, p.68.

gets in touch with Hellekson's theory of nexus stories. That is to say, by inserting a useful example, Pullman allows the reader to understand clearly how history bifurcates. Lord Asriel, who is one of the main characters, explains to his niece Lyra that each world is the result of a possibility:

> take the example of tossing a coin: it can come down heads or tails, and we do not know before it lands which way it is going to fall. It if comes down heads, that means the possibility of its coming down tails has collapsed. Until that moment the two possibilities were equal. But on another world, it does come down tails. And when that happens, the two worlds split apart. I am using the example of tossing a coin to make it clearer. […] one moment several things are possible, the next moment only one happens, and the rest do not exist. Except that other worlds have sprung into being, on which they did happen.[124]

Even though the text does not say anything precisely about the period in which the bifurcation has happened, it seems that the fracture has occurred in the 16th century. Indeed, Calvin rather than setting up the Genevan theocracy, has become Pope by causing in this way, the nonoccurrence of Reformation.

Catherine Butler examines Pullman's novel, and she observes that it can be considered as Hellekson's true alternative history because Lyra's adventures happen long time after the historical bifurcation. Butler analyses *Northern Lights* also by adopting Collin's theory and she describes the novel as a plural uchronia, because the characters are conscious that there are many other worlds. On the other hand, Butler highlights that if a scholar chooses to adopt this theory, he/she will have some problems. The first issue is linked with the differences between worlds. Indeed, the interconection of differences between our world and Lyra's world is so essential that explaining it through the nonoccurrence of the Reformation, is not enough. Another fundamental difference is linked with daemons: in Lyra's world, every person has the concrete manifestation of his/her souls in animal form. Furthermore, it is not strange that the text makes references also to Adam and Eve's daemons.

> For this to be an alternative world in the sense that Lord Asriel describes, the nexus event must have occurred at the point far earlier in history, or more likely pre-history. In that case, however, the problem of explaining how

[124] Pullman, Philip, *Northern Lights,* London, Scholastic, 2005 p. 376-7.

> Lyra's world and our world remain nevertheless so eerily similar in so many respects appears insurmountable.[125]

Summing up,

> the nexus event of Lyra's world is either too recent to account for the differences between it and our own, or else too far in the past to account for the similarities.[126]

Butler carries on with her examination, and she wonders about the accuracy of science-fiction perspective in the analysis of alternative history, since *Northern Lights* is considered a fantasy book. To this purpose, she analyses many aspects of the text, and she observes that it is really difficult to interpret the novel univocally because the generic features, proper of fantasy and science-fiction, are mixed. For instance, the example of tossing a coin made by Lord Asriel, that we have analysed before, is science-fictional; on the other hand, daemons can be considered proper of fantasy literature. The reader understands soon that Lyra's world do not represent only the "what if?" question, but it is a gloomy satire of our world and Christian religion. Indeed, the novel builds a world in which the hegemony of Christian religion is total, a world in which no other religions exist. On the other hand, this choice, in the eyes of alternative history perspective, is an incongruity.

As we have discovered, Diana Wynne Jones is not the only author who changes some important historical events; however, through her use of alternate history, she has left a fundamental mark on contemporary children's literature. The reader gets in touch for the first time, with alternative history, at the middle of *Charmed Life*, during Mr. Saunders's class. Janet has just replaced Gwendolen when Mr. Saunders asks her some questions about history.

> "What do you mean, Henry the Fifth?" barked Mr. Saunders. "Richard the Second was on the throne until after Agincourt. What was his greatest magical achievement?"
> "Defeating the French," Janet guessed. Mr. Saunders looked so exasperated

[125] Butler, Catherine, *Reading History in Children's Books*, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Macmillan, 2012, p. 110.
[126] *Ibidem,* p. 112.

> the she babbled, “Well, I think it was. [...]”
> “Who,” said Mr. Saunders, “do you imagine won the Battle of Agincourt?”
> “The English,” said Janet. This of course was true for her world, but the panic-stricken look on her face as she said it suggested that she suspected the opposite was true in this world. Which, of course, it was.
> Mr. Saunders put his hands to his head. “No, no, no! The *French*! Do not know *anything*, girl?![127]

This quotation is really relevant because it highlights, once again, how the Related Worlds are different from one another. Janet comes from our world and she shares our version of history, whereas Cat and Mr. Saunders, who have lived since forever in Series Eleven, have a different knowledge of historical events. Summing up, each parallel world has its own history and the rewriting of past events can be considered as a structural basis of Jones's multiverse since it offers the possibility to explore different histories in different worlds. The differences between worlds, and therefore the different histories, are so fundamental that they accompany the reader for all the series; for this reason, it is not weird that also Flavian who is Christopher Chant's teacher, reaffirms the links between worlds and histories. Indeed, during a class, he explains to Christopher the origin of Related Worlds.

> “Take Series Seven, which is a mountain Series. In prehistory, the earth's crust must have buckled many more times than it did here. Or Series Five, where all the land became islands, none of them larger than France. Now these are the same right across the Series, but the course of history in each world is different. It is history that makes the difference.. [...]”[128]

However, the book in which this theme is really fundamental to develop the story, is *Witch Week*. As we have observed previously, this book is set in a world which should not exist because it has been created erroneously. In this world, even though witchcraft is illegal and punishable, there are a lot of witches and wizards. For this reason, some children, who have been accused of practicing witchcraft, are forced to leave the school and escape. They need help, so they evoke Chrestomanci.

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[127] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Charmed Life*, New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p.135.
[128] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: The Lives of Christopher Chant,* New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p.422.

This is the best background for an alternate history, because in a world which should not exist, every historical event can be modified, deleted or added and it is possible also to create new historical characters. To this end, it is really interesting to highlight how Jones's fictional characters are so plausible, and seem to be thoroughly real. The reader gets in touch with an invented historical character, very soon, exactly in chapter four, when Nan Pilgrim consults an encyclopedia to discover something more about his ancestress Dulcinea Wilkes. Dulcinea Wilkes is so plausible because her description is combined with a lot of complementary information: for instance, Nan's encyclopedia says that Dulcinea was a very famous witch, born in Steeple in 1760, known also as the Archwitch. She used to fly, with her broomstick, around both the Houses of Parliament and St. Paul's and she was arrested and burned. Her capture and her death were considered as symbols of Witchcraft fight and defeat.

History, or better, alternative history, fulfills a key role in the second part of the book when Chrestomanci tries to help the children. First of all, Chrestomanci tries to figure out in which Series he has been summoned, in which world he stands; for this purpose

> […] he asked about things from history. Before long, everyone was giving him answers, and feeling a little superior, because it was really remarkable the number of things that Chrestomanci seemed not to know. He had heard about Hitler, though he asked Brian to refresh his memory about him, but he had only the haziest notion about Gandhi or Einstein, and he had never heard of Walt Disney or reggae. Nor had he heard of Dulcinea Wilkes.[129]

Chrestomanci is more and more disoriented because none of children's information is useful to reconstruct the historical background and, consequently, to establish in which Series they are. Chrestomanci keeps on looking for useful information, so he goes to the Larwood House, the school attended by the children, and he pretends to be the inquisitor. The inquisitor is the officer in charge of discovering who, among the students, has used magic. Here, Chrestomanci speaks to Mr. Wentworth, the headmaster, and he explains that there are more than one world. To clarify the concept, he uses the Battle of Waterloo as an example

> "[...] In our world, Napoleon lost it, but another world at once split off from

[129] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Witch Week*, New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 474-475.

> ours, in which Napoleon won the battle."
> "Exactly," said Chrestomanci. "I find that world a rather trying one. Everyone speaks French there and winced at my accent. The only place they speak English there, oddly enough, is in India, where they are ver British and eat treacle pudding after their curry."[130]

Pretending to be the inquisitor allows Chrestomanci to interview the students and, in this way, he can obtain more precise information which can help him to establish where he is. For instance, Chrestomanci asks Nan to name and to explain something about a character out of history, but culturally important. Nan speaks about Christopher Columbus and she becomes astonished when Chrestomanci seems not to know who Columbus is. However, the most relevant and funniest example of history rewriting is explained during a collective "conversation" in 6B, when Chrestomanci's attention is captured by Estelle, who names Guy Fawkes.

> "Can you tell me about Guy Fawkes?"
> "[…] Guy Fawkes?" she said. "They put him on a bonfire for blowing up the Houses of Parliament."
> "Blowing them *up*?" said Chrestomanci. "But Guy Fawkes never managed to blow up Parliament in any world I ever heard of!"[131]

Chrestomanci looks so puzzled that Mr. Wentworth steps in and he explains that

> "In 1605, Guy Fawkes was smuggled into the Parliament cellars with some kegs of gunpowder, in order to blow up the government and the king. But he seems to have made a mistake. The gunpowder blow up in the night and destroyed both Houses, without killing anyone. Guy Fawkes got out unhurt, but they caught him almost at once."[132]

Contrary to Dulcinea Wilkes, Guy Fawkes is a real historical character and Mr. Wentworth's description about him, is partially true. Guy Fawkes was actually, a member of a group of English Catholics who wanted to kill King James I, in order to restore a Catholic king and to re-establish, in this way, the "true religion." However,

[130] *Ibidem*, p.498.
[131] *Ibidem,* p. 525.
[132] *Ibidem,* p. 526.

even though Fawkes is considered as the most important conspirator, he was simply an executor; the group of conspirators was composed also by Robert Catesby, Thomas Percy, Thomas Winter, John Wright and Robert Keyes. Fawkes was truly responsible for the explosive but he did not make a mistake: indeed, on 5th November 1605, while he was patrolling the 36 barrels of gunpowder, he was discovered and arrested. Summing up, the plot did not fail because of Fawkes's error but because an anonymous letter apprised the authorities of the conspiracy.

4.1.1 Diana Wynne Jones and the Folkloric Tradition

As we have analysed, in Jones's *The Chronicle of Chrestomanci*, history plays a very important role. However, even though Jones changes some crucial events, by creating in this way an alternative history, she does not forget that folklore and cultural tradition are indissolubly connected to history. This relationships is so strong because both folklore and history are vehicles of inheritance. The term folklore was coined in 1846 by William Thoms to define the combination of legends, popular beliefs, music, fairy tales, myths and oral history. Both history and folklore tell something about the past, but folklore expresses events which are strictly related to common people, whereas history speaks about the big events which have left a significative mark in the life of human people. Obviously, the most important difference between history and folklore is linked to the truthfulness: indeed, history explains objectively what has happened whereas folkloristic narration, even though a lot of myths, common beliefs and legends can be based on something real, is basically fictional. In other words, this fictional feature can be due to the oral tradition which can twist the reality. For instance, an event can suffer modifications because of sentimentalism, or because the storyteller is victim of superstition. Summing up, history and folklore are vehicles of inheritance because they transmit, to the new generations, cultural material.

Jones believed that mythology and folktales are important cultural references which an author must pass on to the new generations. She also thought that her task was to spread the best of British literature and the English language in the most amusing way. She clarified this belief during a interview by taking food as an example. Indeed, as happens with Japanese food, which is beautifully and perfectly presented, the author must present mythology or elements of British literature, in the best way. Only in this

way, the people, who get in touch for the first time with these elements, will be pleasantly impressed. In another interview Jones said that she used myths and folktales also because

> […] there are times when everyday life echoes or embodies traditional stories. […] For one thing, the immense and meaningful *weight* of all myths and most folktales could drag a more fragile, modern story out of shape: for another, I do not find I *use* these things. They present themselves, either for inclusion or as underlay, when the need arises […][133]

Jones added also that the intensity of these folktales is due to their intuitive characteristic, which invites the reader to go beyond the surface. In *Eight Days of Luke* (1975), Jones re-interprets Norse mythology and Loki appears as a modern boy called Luke. Jones has explained that she used

> the days of the week, which have the names of the deities hidden in them and yet presented to us on a daily basis, to try to express how the ancient and chthonic things are in fact nearly always presented to everyone.[134]

Ten years later, Jones wrote *Fire and Hemlock* (1985) which is a sort of rewriting of two famous ballads: Thomas the Rhymer and Tam Lin. Butler has compared this book with *Eight Days of Luke,* and he observed that both novels, even though they were written in two different decades, have similar problems of exposition. Furthermore, he observed that in both books, the relationship between Mundane and Magic is not well balanced.

The *Chronicles of Chrestomanci* is not a rewriting of a ballad and it does not speak about Norse deities; however, there are folkloristic elements and references to the tradition. In the Chrestomanci series, the common denominator is the figure of Chrestomanci who, as we have observed before, is an employee of the British Government, in charge of controlling and regulating the use of magic. Chrestomanci is a potent enchanter and has nine lives. Chrestomanci's nine lives are, undoubtedly, an important reference to folkloric tradition. The number nine has a key role in Christian

[133] Jones, Diana Wynne, "The Profession of Science Fiction: Answers to Some Questions," originally published in *Foundation*, LXX, 1997, [http://www.leemac.freeserve.co.uk/questions.htm, accessed December 2014].

[134] *Ibidem*

tradition because it represents the divine perfection from the Father; that is to say, since it is the result of the triplication of number three, which expresses Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it represents the absolute completeness. Furthermore, it is considered the number of mystery and in the Bible there is the reference to the nine choirs of Angels. The role of this number, in Christian tradition, is really complex because it can be interpreted in more than one way. For instance, nine is associated to life because the human pregnancy lasts nine months, and, in the same context, it is also associated to suffering because the birth happens with mother's pain. The number nine is not relevant only to Christian tradition, effectively it has a key role also in Norse mythology, in which it symbolizes unselfishness and obligation to others.

> Nine is the number of worlds encompassed by the cosmic tree Yggdrasil, the number of nights during which Odin hangs himself on the World Tree in a Shamanistic myth related in *Havamal*, and the number of steps taken by Thor before he dies after slaying in the mighty Midgard Serpent.[135]

In the decimal numbering system, nine is the last single number of the series and, for this reason, it represents also the end of something or the death.
More simply, in Jones's series, Chrestomanci's nine lives symbolizes the popular belief that cats have nine lives. This belief dates back to the Ancient Egyptians who venerated cats as deities and associated them to the Mother Goddess, Isis. Moreover, Ancient Egyptians used to represent Ra, who was the sun god, as a cat in the act of killing the Serpent of Darkness. Cats are incredibly agile animals and, since they survived to falls, Ancient Egyptians deduced that they have more than one life. However, this popular certainty was reinforced, in Europe, during the Middle Ages when the existence of witches began to spread and their nine lives where connected to witchcraft. From then on, the folkloric tradition considered black cats and witches indissolubly linked. Black cats are commonly defined as "familiars" which means that they personified demons who performed witchcraft, in return for blood; moreover, many legends say that they were given to witches directly by the devil or they were inherited by other witches. Black cats were considered witches' best partners due to their ability to move shiftily into the dark and due to their nine lives. Indeed, folktales and storybooks spread the rumour that a witch can take on the shape of her familiar for nine times. This belief was

[135] Strmiska, Michael, *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives,* Santa Barbara, California, ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2005, p. 145.

mentioned also in *Beware of the cat,* a gothic horror book published in 1584.

The close relationship between witchcraft and cats is a recurring element in the whole Chrestomanci series. Jones's cats are not handsome and tame, often they are choleric; moreover, they are not considered as simply pets, but they are tools of magic and knowledge. Even though cats are not the main characters, they are present in almost every book of the series. That is to say, even though the adventures narrated do not concern cats directly, they fulfill the important role of magical helper. The reader's awareness of their hidden importance, little by little, increases thanks to some clues disseminated throughout the text.

In *Charmed Life* (1977), the first clue is Eric Chant's nickname, known by everybody as Cat. Furthermore, it is really interesting that Cat, who is a nine lives enchanters, stores unconsciously one of his lives exactly in a cat. At the beginning of the book, Cat does not know anything about his nature and his power, whereas his unscrupulous sister, Gwendolen, is aware of his nature and she uses Cat's magic. Gwendolen has put also Cat's lives in a book of matches and, in this way, she is responsible for some of Cat's deaths.

> " […] He lost one being born an another being drowned. And I used one to put in the book of matches. […] Then that toad tied up in silver there would not give me magic lessons and took my witchcraft away, so I had to fetch another of Cat's lives in the night. […] Oh, I nearly forgot! I put his fourth life into that violin he kept playing, to turn it into a cat -Fiddle- remember, Mr. Nostrum?"
> […] "You are a foolish girl! Someone took that cat away. We can not kill him at all!"[136]

Also in *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988), there is a close relationship between the main characters and cats. The first time that Christopher gets in touch with a magic cat, is at The Temple of Asheth in Series Ten, during a night journey with Tacroy, on behalf of Christopher's Uncle. Indeed, Uncle Ralph wants to obtain one of the cats belonging to the Temple, so he persuades his nephew to bring a cat. Obviously, Uncle Ralph does not reveal his real wicked purpose, and he deceives Christopher by saying that, in this way, they are making an experiment. Christopher passes through a wall and he sees a lot

[136] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Charmed Life*, New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 238.

of cats which are running away, because of the noise he has made. He decides to follow a white cat, the slowest one, and he finds himself face to face with the Living Asheth. They chat for a while, then the Living Asheth gives a cat to Christopher in return for books to read. The cat, with yellow eyes and ginger fur, is named Throgmorten. The following morning, Christopher realizes that Uncle Ralph's purpose is not making an experiments but he wants to use its magical properties, so Christopher decides to free the cat. Some time later, when he is already living in Chrestomanci's castle, Christopher recognizes Throgmorten's meow and Flavian, his teacher, explains that nobody knows how the cat has reached Series Eleven.

> "Careful!" said Flavian, prudently backing behind Christopher. "It is an Asheth Temple cat. It is safest not to go near it."
> [...[How did it get there?" Christopher said, letting Throgmorten politely investigate his hand.
> "Nobody knows-at least not how it wandered in here from Series Ten," Flavian said. "Mordecai found it in London, brave man, and he brought it here in a basket. He recognized it by its aura, and he said if *he* could, then most wizards do too, and they would kill it for its magical properties. Most of us think that would not be much loss, but Gabriel agreed with Mordecai."[137]

Since Christopher has brought Throgmorten in Series Eleven, they seem to be connected. It is not acoincidence that Throgmorten and Christopher meet again: indeed Mordecai is none other than Tacroy and he knows exactly how the cat has changed its world. However, Christopher and Throgmorten become friends and the cat, at the end of the book, will be a very useful helper to defeat Uncle Ralph.
In *The Magicians of Caprona* (1980), the cat Benvenuto is not a secondary character but it is has a key role in the development of the story. Benvenuto is Casa Montana's boss cat, it is really intelligent and magical. Each component of the family respects the cat and its nature is expressed also by its names, which in Italian means welcome.

> He was not a handsome cat. His head was unusually wide and blunt, with gray gnarled patches on it left over from many, many fights. Those fights had pulled his ears down over his eyes, so that Benvenuto always looked as if he

[137] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: The Lives of Christopher Chant,* New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 426.

> were wearing a ragged brown cap. A hundred bites had left those ears notched like holly leaves. Just over his nose, giving his face a leering, lopsided look, were three white patches.[138]

Benvenuto, like all the cats in this book, can cast spells and it can interact with some members of the family. Specifically, Benvenuto has a special connection with Old Niccolo and Tonino who understand its language. When Tonino is kidnapped, Benvenuto does all that it can, to help the family to find and rescue the boy. More precisely, Benvenuto allys with Victoria, the white cat belonging to Casa Petrocchi; moreover, when it discovers that Tonino and Angelica Petrocchi are imprisoned in Duke's castle, goes inside and tries to help the children by storing in its mouth a message to deliver. At the end of the book, when the Duchess is defeated and she has lost her human shape in favour of a rat shape, the two cats obtain their revenge.

Besides the references to the nine lives of cats and the relationship between witchcraft and cats, in *Charmed Life*, Jones played with another folkloric belief, linked with superstition. Indeed, approximately at the middle of the book, the reader discovers that Eric Chant is left-handed but he is accustomed to use the right hand because

> "They-they punish me if I do," Cat faltered, very shaken and very perplexed to find Mr. Saunders was angry for such a peculiar reason.
> "Then they deserve to be tied up in knots and roasted!" roared Mr Saunders, "whoever *they* are! You are doing yourself untold harm by obeying them, boy! If I catch you writing with your right hand again, You will be in very serious trouble!"[139]

It is really funny that in a world in which magic is normal, there are people who believe that being left-handed is a sign of witchcraft and connection to the evil forces. Indeed, in popular culture, being a left-handed person was considered the incontrovertible evidence of a connection to Satan. This belief started presumably during the Middle Ages, when the fear for witchcraft spread quickly and left-handed people were persecuted. The origin of this belief is partially due to the etymology of the word sinister. Indeed in the Latin of late 15th century, sinister signified the left side of

[138] Jones, Diana, Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: The Magicians of Caprona,* New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 15.
[139] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Charmed Life*, New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 56.

something but also indicated an evil omen. Over the centuries, the English word sinister has lost its first meaning in favour of the second one. That is to say, nowadays, sinister means something which suggests the evil or troubles.

All the series demonstrates a grass-roots great coherence, indeed the theme of time is present wherever and whenever. In other words, time is not conceived only under a time travel perspective or as the responsible of a splitting worlds, but it is also treated through the integration of popular believes. Witchcraft is not only well integrated into the plot, on the contrary, is one of the fundamental ideas of the whole series. In Chrestomanci series there is a witch's reshaping and wands and broomsticks fall into disuse. It is very curious that the only reference to broomsticks appears in *Witch Week*, which is the only book of the series, to be set in world in which magic is forbidden. Moreover, it is paradoxical that even if the story seems to be set in the contemporaneity, the attitude towards witchcraft is absolutely old. In other words, magic is considered an evil practice and witches are hunted, as happened many centuries ago. Obviously, not all the characters reject magic, there is someone who appreciates witchcraft and nourishes the desire to practice magic freely. For instance, Charles Morgan, who when he was a child helped a witch to escape, knows his own nature and knows he is a witch. Apparently, he dislikes magic but privately he casts spells. One night, when he is alone, he burns his fingers as a warning. In other words, he burns his finger because if someone discovers his nature and he is captured, then he will remember the pain that he had felt. Another character who does not reject magic is Nan Pilgrim. Nan descends from Dulcinea Wilkes, the famous Archwitch who was burned and became the symbol of the fight against witches. Nan is proud to descend from Dulcinea but she fears to admit it and to discover that she is a witch too. She hides her identity and true name, which is Dulcinea as her ancestor, because she wants to protect herself from unfair accusations; however she is derided and accused by her mates.

> "We can prove you are a witch anyway, if you will not," Theresa said kindly.
> "Yes, everyone knows that witches do not drown," said Delia. "You can put them right under water and they stay alive".
> […] "You know perfectly well," Nan said, "that I am not a witch, and I cannot fly on this broomstick. It is just an excuse to be nasty!"[140]

[140] Jones, Diana Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: Witch Week*, New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 393.

Here, Delia, to accuse Nan, uses another common stereotype which was considered an evidence during the trials. Also King James VI, in his book *Daemonologie* (1599), referred to the impossibility to drown for a witch and explained the origin of this belief. He said that water, which is vehicle of Baptism, rejects all witches because they are sinners and it proves, in this way, their guilt.

It is really interesting that here, there is the combination of two important themes: one is linked to folkloric beliefs and the other is linked to the desire to be accepted. Butler has examined in depth this theme and he has proposed an interpretation which raises the issue of the racial difference

> [...] *Witch Week* is a fantasy about the necessity of acknowledging one's whole nature and the dangers of repression. The hysterical anti-witch laws of the *Witch Week* world are clearly aimed at demonizing an unacknowledged facet of many of its citizens, and making what many fear to be a deeply unsettling potential within themselves into an external taboo.[141]

Jones reinforces her relationship with tradition, by making a reference also to Halloween, which is considered the most powerful night of the year. Halloween is the most important festivity for the Anglo-Saxons, and it is celebrated on October 31st which is the last day of Celtic calendar. It is said, exactly, that this festivity hails from the ancient festival of Samhain in which people lighted bonfire to honour the souls of the dead and to keep them away from the living people.

Besides witchcraft, cats, superstition and beliefs, Jones fosters her relationship with English tradition by proposing an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* (1594-96), in her *The Magicians of Caprona* (1980). Indeed, the novel speaks about two great Italian families, Montana and Petrocchi, which are trying to prevent the decline of Caprona, their city. As in *Romeo and Juliet*, the Montanas and the Petrocchis have been deadly enemies for generations and, any time is a good time to fight, threatening in this way the precarious peace of Caprona. Exactly as happens in Shakespeare's tragedy, two members of these two families, Rosa Montana and Marco Petrocchi, fall in love. Initially, they are forced to keep their relationship secret because neither family would accept their love. Obviously, as Lady Capulets wants Juliet to marry Paris, also Rosa

[141] Butler, Charles, *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children's Fantasies of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones and Susan Cooper,* Oxford, Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006, p. 139.

suffers her family pressures in order to marry someone they approve of. Rosa is an independent girl who, unlike to Juliet, does not want to marry someone who she does not love, only to please her family. To live their relationship openly, Rosa and Marco decide to meet each family, by pretending to be someone else.

> […] Rosa contrived a family first. She pretended to be English. She became very friendly with the English girl at the Art Gallery […]. Jane Smith thought it was a great joke to pretend to Rosa's sister. […] They used the pear-tree spell-which they work together-in both Casas, to Jane's amusements. But the Petrocchis, though they liked the pear-tree, were not kind to Rosa at first.[142]

Marco is welcomed by Rosa's family with curiosity and, when he presents himself as Marco Andretti, makes a good impression on the Montanas. It is really curious that Antonio Montana asks Marco if he will agree to change his surname, to Montana, after the weeding. This is a clear reference to the famous Shakespeare's scene two of act two, in which Juliet asks Romeo to repudiate his name in favour of their love. On the other hand, the book is full of references to Shakespeare's tragedy, disseminated through all the text. For instance, Jones sets her novel in Caprona, a city ruled by a Duke, whose name echoes Verona. This is not the only names which sound like one of Shakespeare's tragedy: indeed the name of Benvenuto, the cat of casa Montana, is similar to Benvolio, the nephew of Montague.

As I said before, this is an adaptation to the original *Romeo and Juliet*, even though, Jones's story ends happily with the marriage between Marco and Rosa and consequently, with peace between the two families.

> […] the wedding was held just after Christmas […] in casa Petrocchi. Jane Smith helped Rosa make her dress and was a bridesmaid for her, together with Renata, Angelica and one of Marco's cousins.[143]

In an interview, Jones explained that her books always have a happy ending because, since they are conceived as tools to deal with difficult themes, she wants to mark that there is always hope.

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[142] Jones, Diana, Wynne, *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci: The Magicians of Caprona,* New York, HarperCollins, 2007, p. 266.

[143] *Ibidem,* p. 266-267.

Another important element which highlights the relationship between Diana Wynne Jones and the literary tradition, is the strong presence of intertextuality. The reader can find the two most obvious examples in *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, in which there is the reference to books for girls and also to *The Arabian Nights* (1706). Indeed, as we have observed before, Christopher exchanges one of Goddess's cats with books. These books are books for girls which are about the adventures of a young girl called Millie, and are defined by literary critics as school stories. School stories became very popular in the first half of twentieth century and a schools story is none other than

> […] a story in which most of the action centres on a school, usually a single-sex boarding school. [...] A school story offers a setting in which young people are thrown together and in which relationships between older and younger children, between members of the peer group and between children and adults can be explored. […] The boys' story and the girls' story have developed in parallel, but separately, because they have reflected educational development in the real world.[144]

School stories are typical of British literature for children because they reflect the differences of classes in British school system.

Christopher buys Millie's book for the Goddess, and with the rest of the money, he buys *The Arabian Nights* for himself. The *Arabian Nights*, also known as "*One Thousand and One Night*," is a collection of Oriental tales, legends and myths published in England in 1706. Since its publication, this book has raised, in Britain, a great interest towards Oriental culture and also nowadays is highly appreciated. This book is so important for English literature because it has inspired influential authors as Defoe and Kipling. In *The Lives of Christopher Chant*, this book becomes a good companion to Christopher. Moreover, it stimulates his fantasy and absorbs completely his attention. However, *The Arabian Nights* has so inspired Jones, who read it during her childhood, that its stories have become the basis for *Castle in Air* (1990), another Jones's book.

[144] Ray, Sheila, "School Stories," in Peter Hunt (.ed), *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature,* Oxon, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2004. p. 467.

5 Conclusion

In the course of my dissertation I focused on the complexity of themes and rhetorical devices which lay behind *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci*. Specifically, I examined each aspect linked with time and its modifications.

I touched on Diana Wynne Jones's biography to highlight that her background and her experiences have deeply influenced her career. I read some interviews, and I discovered that her childhood was marked by frequent moves due to the war. Probably, Jones was a little traumatized by all these moves which had an effect also on her characters. That is to say, since some of Jones's characters are orphans and some others have a difficult relationship with their parents, their main purpose is the search for stability. Basically, they are desperately looking for a normal family, capable of love and protection. For this reason, their home does not represent a safe refuge and it does not reassure the child. In other words, Jones's children must protect themselves metaphorically and physically because both their parents and their home cannot do this. Jones was a brilliant student and her passion for literature allowed her to get in contact with some important authors, as Carroll and Ransome. Without a doubt, the feature of Jones's biography, which is more useful to understand some of her narrative choices, is her attendance of Tolkien and Lewis classes at Oxford. As we have observed, Tolkien and Lewis have deeply inspired Jones, who created Chrestomanci's world, by taking the cue from her mentors.

I investigated the different conceptions of time in literature, recalling also the origin of time, and I realised that speaking of time without mentioning time travels would be a terrible mistake. The fundamental question, at the basis of time travel, concerns the way in which someone moves in time and space. The answer to this question is linked with Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. This theory has, undoubtedly, deeply inspired more science-fiction authors, who used it as a starting point, than fantasy authors. Thus, if we compare these two kinds of literature, we can observe that in science-fiction the main focus is on time travel , whereas fantasy fiction does not explain, rationally and scientifically, the mechanisms of time travel. Although, Diana Wynne Jones was a versatile author, who ranged from science-fiction to fantasy fiction by mixing the typical features of these two genres, her most popular time traveller embodies only elements belonging to fantasy fiction.

Even though fantasy fiction and science-fiction, have two different approaches to speak about time travel, they share some common themes and the most important one, is about the logical paradox. All the implications connected to the repercussions of the alteration of past and future, are largely treated by Jones in her *Witch Week* (1982) and in *The Lives of Christopher Chant* (1988).

I have became aware that is impossible speaking of time without speaking of space because of the indissoluble relationship that exists among them. This relationship is called time-space continuum. Farah Mendleshon has analysed in details this relationship in two Jones's novels: *The Magicians of Caprona* (1980) and *Conrad's Fate* (2005). She has observed that, in *The Magicians of Caprona,* the construction of time travel is possible thanks to some experiments with tenses and rhetorical structures; moreover, she has observed also that the time-space relationship goes hand-in-hand with the past-present relationship. In *Conrad's Fate*, the time-space relationship concentrates almost only on spatial changes without using flashbacks or other rhetoric devices, to modify the time. Obviously, space is a really complex entity and many philosophers, mathematicians, physics and psychologists have tried to define it. However, these definitions have suffered many changes and nowadays, space is associated with place because, together, they establish the basis of modern geography. *Conrad's fate* is really a modern novel which brings into question the geography of the world, through morphological changes of mountains and borders.

The discovery of relativity and quantum physics led on to a new conception of physics, which wonders about the existence of other worlds. This query has become a very important theme also in fantasy literature, and J.R.R Tolkien and C. S. Lewis have created the two most influential parallel worlds. These two prestigious authors, who are considered pioneers of modern fantasy fiction, deeply influenced some authors as Garner, Copper, Le Guin, Pullman and, obviously, Diana Wynne Jones. Indeed, Jones has created a limitless multiverse, originating from the division of important historical events, which is the main theme of *The Chronicles of Chrestomanci.* Jones's multiverse offers a lot of possible subjects of discussion and Maria Nikolajeva proposes an analysis of multiverse following an heterotopic approach.

It is really interesting that Jones's multiverse allows the reader to get in touch with alternative histories, exploring and living another version of a key historical event. The reader is amused when, in *Charmed Life*, he or she reads that the French have won the Battle of Agincourt or when in Witch Week, he or she learns that Guy Fawkes has

blowen up the Houses of Parliament. Jones does not play only with history, by altering past events, but she uses also myths, legends and popular beliefs. That is to say, in all the Chrestomanci books, there is a reference to a certain belief or a certain tradition, typical of English culture, which marks Jones's relationship to her roots.

Summing up, through this dissertation, I want to demonstrate that Diana Wynne Jones was a talented author who gave an important contribution to modern children's fantasy. Specifically, she rewrote the rules of fantasy by creating a new fantasy area called urban fantasy, and she inspired important authors as Philip Pullman, Neil Gaiman and J. K. Rowling. Moreover, even though the Chrestomanci's books apparently are simple and cheerful, they hide a multitude of important topics, and time is one of them.

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