Re-mapping Adolescence: Psychoanalysis and Narrative in Young Adult Fiction

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Abstract

The start of the new millennium has witnessed literary interest in young adult fiction and a prominent rise in its popularity. My research focuses on the dynamics of adolescent narrative and the representations of the adolescent subject in a number of contemporary mainstream young adult novels with the aim of understanding adolescence as an inscribed literary identity. I take, as my starting point, Julia Kristeva's definition of adolescence as an open, non-biologically limited, psychic structure. This notion, when applied to young adult fiction, suggests that the texts work to construct psychologically-open implied readers, which in diverse ways echo and affirm the desires and expectations of real readers.

While the introduction surveys contemporary critical currents in children and young adult fiction and places my research into context, each of the subsequent chapters examines one or more literary works by a single author. The main literary works discussed in this study include novels by Meg Rosoff, Geraldine McCaughrean, David Almond, J.K. Rowling and Philip Pullman respectively; all of whom have widely appealed to readers of different age groups.

In my analysis I use insights from psychoanalytic and psycho-linguistic theories mainly by Kristeva, Freud, Lacan and Winnicott, and where necessary my argument is supported by narrative analysis, reading theories and feminist criticism.

By engaging with critical and psychoanalytical readings of paradigmatic young adult texts, I aim to explicate the particularities of representing the adolescent economy and the distinctive nature of cotemporary young adult fiction in ways through which it opens its boundaries to adult readers. On another level, my objective is to elucidate the growing complexities and subtleties of contemporary children's literature in general and young adult fiction in particular.

Acknowledgements

Contents

Introduction

The Pleasure of the Adolescent Text

In *The Pleasure of the Text* Roland Barthes remarks that 'what pleasure wants is the site of a loss, the seam, the cut, the deflation, the *dissolve* which seizes the subject in the midst of bliss'[1]. If a reader of a text experiences such pleasure, as Barthes suggests, then this is achievable through reading texts which metaphorically capture the reader in the temporal uncertainty of the narrative. Barthes's account of textual pleasure implicitly steers us towards reading rebellious narratives that defy any straightforward categorisation and are open to various interpretations.

The adolescent text, with its reflection of the volatility and openness of the adolescent subject, bears resemblance, in very particular ways, to the Barthesian text of bliss or *jouissance*. The adolescent text cohabitates differences and 'confusion of tongues': its *body* reconciles both the child and the adult in many aspects of their binary oppositions culturally, ideologically, thematically, and linguistically (*Pleasure* 2-3). Like Barthes's text of bliss, the adolescent text invites the reader's subject to the scene of loss, of *dissolve* between childhood and adulthood. It is possible for some readers to view adolescent fiction as offering a comfortable and undemanding reading in the way Barthesian readers read texts of *plaisir* in contrast to the demanding reading required in texts of *jouissance*. In this thesis the adolescent text will be considered as a text which demands effective

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[1] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976 [1975]), p. 7. (original Italics) Hereafter cited in the text as *Pleasure*.

participation of the reader; induces the reader to go into the opaque space of adolescence where pleasure becomes indescribable *jouissance*. Barthes, however, perceives his text as bounded by two edges: one is conformist and unchangeable represented by the language as we culturally know it and the other is 'the site of its effect', an open edge which is 'ready to assume any contours' (6). Undoubtedly, this is a territory which allows the reader to choose liberally whatever meaning is communicated by the narrative. In contrast, the adolescent text may be regarded as metaphorically creating two unfixed edges overlapping towards the space in between. In other words, the adolescent text plays on the instability of the adolescent implied reader it attempts to construct, so childhood and adulthood imperatives incessantly come into play within the scene of the text. The implied reader is, thus, depicted as confined between the past of childhood and the yet to come adulthood.

Until recently, the adolescent text has been construed as an extension of children's fiction, and rarely as part of adult or mainstream literature; the adolescent (character or reader) is analysed as an older child who is neither a 'real' child nor an adult. Adolescence in this thesis will be seen less as an enclosed stage of biological development than an open condition, a metaphorical openness where the two edges of childhood and adulthood simultaneously ebb and tide towards the adolescent *espace*. While in this perspective adolescence transcends the literal sense of the word, the adolescent texts approached in this study are mainly young adult fiction which commonly intersects with adolescent literature in the general term as well as with fiction labelled as children's literature but has older children or adolescents as main characters. A study of certain

narrative characteristics in adolescent and children's literature will show how specific underlying features help to determine the reader's response and attitude to the text, for the very construction of a psychologically open implied reader often fulfils potential readers' requirements for new experimental readings. How these views can account for adult readers' interest in contemporary young adult and children's fiction will be a further line of argument in the present study. Not only are adolescent narratives challenging to the reader, but they also allow the adult reader to break momentarily out of his or her subject position and assume an adolescent identity: an identity in metamorphosis able to regenerate and negotiate its own being. Because this challenge is initiated by the act of reading adolescent narratives, it should be explained in terms of the interrelationships between the text and the reader. The text itself presents adolescence as a subversive feature in which young characters are involved. With themes so symptomatic of the open structure of adolescence, the adolescent text offers various ways in which adult and young readers can engage. It is crucial then that both textual and paratextual effects on the reader should be examined. Therefore, young adult and children's fiction touching on themes of adolescence will be considered within various parameters of literary production such as narrative, structure, semiotic inferences and ideological context, all of which are valuable components in the dynamics of a reader's response to a particular text.

While it would be an overstatement to assume that all adolescent fiction offers the adult reader the possibility of effectively engaging with the adolescence of the text and hence rejuvenating a younger or other identity, my argument pertains most strongly to recent young adult and children's fiction which has had

a demonstrable appeal to adult readers (i.e. where there is proven evidence that the text has attracted a substantial adult readership). There has been historical precedence for young adult fiction which has significantly influenced both adult and adolescent readers during the past century. William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1954) offered powerful narrative for adult readers as well as to younger audience. George Orwell's classic *Animal Farm* (1945) was another unsettling example of reading for both adults and young adults. In spite of the absence of a clear definition of adolescence and adolescent culture before the twentieth century, precursors of young adult or adolescent fiction appeared a long while earlier. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the publication of a number of books that appealed to both young adult readers. Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883) in Britain and Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* (1876) and its sequel *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) in America were prime examples of fiction in which adolescent readers, especially male, found expression of their interests at that time.[2] Adult classics such as Jane Austen's and the Brontës's novels were closer to the taste of young adult female readers. In fact the second half of the nineteenth century marked 'a new "emancipated" phase in children's literature'.[3] It is 1865 in particular, the year that witnessed the publication of Lewis Carroll's *Alice Adventures in the Wonderland*, which signalled a significant departure from the stereotypical formulations of childhood and adolescence that prevailed earlier. The *Alice* books derive their significance,

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[2] Julia Eccleshare, 'Teenage Fiction: Realism, Romances, Contemporary Problem Novels' in Peter Hunt ed. *International Companion Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature*, ed. Peter Hunt. Vol.1 (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), pp., 542-55 (p 543).
[3] Susan Ang, *The Widening World of Children's Literature* (London: McMillan, 2000), p. 15.

as Susan Ang comments, from the fact that 'they betray in many ways a strong resistance to the fixity or stasis of form and classification, thereby displaying a quality of anti-authoritarianism important to the undermining of closure' (107-08). It is within these new parameters of representations that Carroll's books can be viewed as an early launch of mental explorations of adolescence.

Although adventure classics such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) have remained a popular genre among both children and adult readers, the new wave of children's literature has made its lasting impressions. The enduring popularity of Carroll's books followed by a later theatrical success of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* in 1904 drew an increasing interest to creative fantasy genres which became very popular in the twentieth century. J. R. R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) was written as a sequel to his children's fantasy *The Hobbit* (1937) but it developed into an adult epic fantasy that a decade later started to appeal to an audience of children and adolescent.

The notion of adolescents or teenagers as a distinctive group with its own tastes and demands was only recognised in the second half of the twentieth century, when '"teenage" became a separate fashionable entity, and so did its fiction.'[4] From 1950s on, fiction addressed to young adult readers grew in numbers. With the rise of psychological and social research in the second half of the twentieth century, more attention has been drawn to young adults and their fiction. Adolescent fiction has become more engaged with the experiences of teenagers who themselves have become less satisfied with classics that previously

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[4] Eccleshare, 'Teenage Fiction', p. 544.

appealed to them. The didactic tone prevailing in earlier children's fiction has lost its influence and a new child and adolescent centred fiction has started to emerge. This change may have appeared more noticeably in the depiction of adults as defective humans with their own flows rather than ideal always-right sort of people as well as in shifts from third to first person narratives maintained and focalised by young characters. The first wave of teenage fiction appearing after the fifties was concerned with the complex emotions experienced by adolescents and themes such as the first romantic relationship. Beverley Cleary's *Fifteen*, published in the United States in 1956, was one of the first books directed to adolescent readers. It was followed by more sophisticated books on both sides of the Atlantic engaging in more than first steps of romantic relationships, to serious issues such as sexual encounters and teenage pregnancy. Writers such as Judy Blume helped to introduce the so-called 'problem novels' which are mostly set in realistic settings and tackle themes of interest to adolescent readers. Later, in what called 'New Realism', a new open approach to subjects once considered taboo in children's literature was common in adolescent fiction such as sexuality, violence and drugs. These themes have prepared to more cutting-edge narratives engaging in adolescent encounters with psychological abjection in the last three decades of the twentieth century. Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (1974) was one of the first challenging narratives to generate debate for its presentation of violence in school environment. Though Cormier's novel was written with adult readers in mind, it successfully appealed to young audience. His novel *I am the Cheese* (1977) was another psychological and complex narrative that became

unexpectedly well-received. Ann Fine's *The Tulip Touch* (1997) is an exploration of the cultural complicity of abjection and a sinister account of peer pressure.

While during the social and cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s authors have started to speak up for children and their rights, this sense of patronisation has later disappeared in fiction addressed to children and young adults in the nineties. Literature has responded to various cultural impulses, discourses and counter-discourses and as a result become more diversified and varied.[5] It was not until the nineties, however, that young adult fiction reached its bloom and became more complex and extremely diverse in styles, genres and themes. Currently, young adult fiction reflects many aspects of adolescents' lives and deals with themes related to their problems and conflicts such as identity crises, relationships, physiological and psychological development, alienation and adaptation. Young readers are now invited to adopt a cynical and critical stance that was reserved earlier for adults only. Their concerns as well as issues of general philosophical and epistemological value are represented in a variety of genres.

Many critics agree that the last decade or so has been a new golden age for children's literature including young adult fiction.[6] From the 1990s, the realm of children's fiction has been attracting the talents of more and more writers whose literary works have constituted a turning point in the course of contemporary children's literature. Children's writers such as Philip Pullman, Mark Haddon,

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[5] See Eva-Maria Metcalf's 'The Changing Status of Children and Children's Literature' in *Reflections of Change: Children's Literature Since 1945*, ed. by Sandra Beckett (London: Greenwood Press, 1997), pp. 49-56.

[6] See for example, Maria Nikolajeva, *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetics* (London: Garland, 1996) and S. F. Said, 'The Grown-Up World of Kidult Fiction' in *The Telegraph*, 11 January 2003. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3588398/The-grown-up-world-of-kidult-books.html> [accessed 13 Sep 2006]

Meg Rosoff, Geraldine McCaughrean and J. K. Rowling all came to prominence in mainstream publishing. This new wave of children's literature, especially those books ostensibly addressed to older children or young adults, has attracted considerable numbers of adult readers. The tendency of adult readers to explore beyond the conventional borders of their readership heralds the controversial 'kiddult' reading or the crossing-over of children's books into adult readerships.[7] J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books are famous examples of books that are cross-read in Britain and across the world. The series became the biggest publishing phenomenon ever known as million of copies were sold worldwide. While these books have been growing in popularity among children and adults, publishers have sought to legitimise their dual appeal by introducing adult editions generally distinguishable from previous children's editions only by their less colourful and more solemn covers. Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy is another example of crossover fiction which has inaugurated both controversy and critical acclaim. *The Amber Spyglass*, the last volume of the trilogy, won the Whitbread Book of the Year Award in 2001 and became the first ever children's book to win such a prestigious award.[8]

In my view, such children's fiction can question the adult reader's assumption of a fixed and stable identity in that it encourages the reader to act and be acted upon in the production of an adolescent identity. It is the reader's conscious disposition and readiness for the new experience of the adolescent text

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[7] See Rachel Falconer, *The Crossover Novel: Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (New York: Routledge, 2009) and Sandra Beckett, *Crossover Fiction: Global and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[8] David Lister, Children's Book Wins Whitbread Top Prize', *The Independent*, 23 January 2002 <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/childrens-book-wins-whitbread-top-prize-665992.html> [accessed 12 June 2009]

that allow him or her to be challenged by an act of reading. As Roderick McGillis argues, 'the self-conscious reader is a reader conscious of the self as acted upon and yet capable of acting.'[9] In this context, the adolescent text is inhabited by the boundaries of adolescence. It is also fraught with a tendency to capture by means of *figuration* rather than *representation* the juvenile amorphous territory of adolescence the borders of which are constantly breached and reasserted by the human being.[10] While this notion of representation is associated with the systematic arrangement of signs with emphasis on the signifier in Ferdinand de Saussure's sense of the term, figuration is more related to the signified or the meaning(s) attached to a sign.[11] In other words, it is not merely the content of the young adult text that determines the reader's response; it is also, crucially, the interaction between the reader and the text which releases the potential bliss of the text.

The term 'adolescent fiction' is generally used to describe books written for readers from late childhood to early maturity. While there remains a strong cultural dichotomy between childhood and adulthood, the concept of 'adolescence' is much more amorphous, and implies ambivalence and instability of the subject changing through time[12]. The genre of adolescent fiction reflects this ambivalence and furthermore, often attracts a mixed age group of readers from quite young children to mature adults. However, while adolescence has

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[9] Roderick McGillis, 'The Delights of Impossibility: No Children, No Books, Only Theory' in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, V 23, 4, Winter 1998, pp., 207-08.
[10] Barthes distinguishes between figuration (allegorical representation) and representation which is a poor imitation of something.
[11] See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983 [1916])
[12] See Mary Riddell's 'Childhood' and John Coleman's 'Into Adulthood' in *The Seven Ages of Life*, Sheila McLean et al (London: Centre for Reform, 2002), pp. 35-55 and 57-79.

become well known in various discourses today, it is by no means a new concept.

'Adolescence' is derived from the Latin verb *adolescere* meaning 'to grow up'. Its

definition is associated with more than one branch of human studies.

Sociologically it denotes the transitional period from a dependent child into an

independent adult. Psychologically it is a period in which new adjustments of

behaviour have to be made in order to conform to the standard behaviour of a

given society. And in common usage, it describes young people between the ages

of eleven and their early twenties.[13] Though it first appeared as a word in the

fifteenth century, adolescence was not scientifically defined until the early

twentieth century in the psychoanalytic works of G. Stanley Hall and Sigmund

Freud. Sociological and psychoanalytic studies by D. W. Winnicott and Erik

Erikson later in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century initiated a fresh

interest in adolescence as a significant and problematic stage in the course of

human development.

Often, it is claimed that adolescent literature is a recent invention related

to the rise of contemporary capitalism and postmodernism. Roberta Seelinger

Trites argues that the birth of young adult fiction in the sixties was inspired by

postmodern culture whose institutional discourse became essential for

constructing individuals socially.[14] While the emergence of young adult fiction

coincides with the advance of postmodern discourse and culture, it can also be

viewed as a product of a growing general awareness of the younger generation's

literary and psychological needs: an awareness precipitated by new systematic

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[13] Rolf E. Muuss, *Theories of Adolescence* (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 4-5.
[14] See for example, Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2000), p. 16.

social and psychological studies of adolescence and adolescents in the fifties. It is also possible to assume that the postmodern culture so implicated in commodity production, has found a wide potential market in young adults. But even if adolescent fiction is not purely a postmodern form of cultural production, it is almost impossible to ignore the high and diverse impact of postmodern capitalist culture on young adults and the books (among other artefacts) addressed to them which foreground issues pertaining to adolescence and youth in contemporary thinking.

In the new millennium, many adults including parents and social organisations have become more alert to the younger generation's problems; there are, for example, serious concerns about children and young adults' obsessive fascination with technology and electronic gadgets, which offer them virtual play as contrasted to real play. Depression, learning difficulties, violence are some of the many problems that characterise contemporary childhood as Sue Palmer's recent study, *Toxic Childhood* aptly illustrates.[15] Sociologist and children's literature critic Karen Coats also suggests that the escalation of child and teen violence is likely to have provided the impetus for the surge of interest in childhood in our current time.[16] For cultural theorist, Johan Fornäs, new social patterns in family and school have contributed to 'a general sociocultural erosion or de-naturalization of traditional identities to increase the urge for narcissistic experiences, both by adults and [...] adolescents'.[17] In a wider philosophical

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[15] Sue Palmer, *Toxic Childhood: How the Modern World is Damaging Our Children and What We Can Do About it* (London: Orion Books, 2006)

[16] Karen Coats, 'Keepin' It Plural: Children's Studies in the Academy' in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 26.3 (2001), 140-150. Project MUSE. University of Sheffield Library. <http://muse.jhu.edu/>. Hereafter cited in the text as 'Keepin' it Plural'.

[17] Johan Fornäs, *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity* (London: Sage Publication, 1995), p. 266.

framework, Coats builds relevant insights on Julia Kristeva's analysis of the Romantic and modernist interest in the figure of the child. Kristeva discerns that the child enters historical consciousness at times of crises in rationality: 'Twice during the past few centuries Western reason perceived that its role of being a servant to meaning was imprisoning. Wishing to escape, it turned toward and became haunted by childhood.'[18] Kristeva refers to the works of Rousseau and Freud and the corresponding revolutions in political economy and in the speaking subject. Rousseau, diverting from Locke's reason to Romantic Naturalism, and Freud, exhuming the roots of the human psyche, turned to the child as evidence of the Real.[19] At such times, the child, argues Kristeva, becomes the major protecting shield against our loss of reality. Coats suggests that in our contemporary culture of virtual reality 'we are caught once again in what feels like a dead-end of rationality, an enclosure of our linguistic making', and therefore we tend to 'haul in the figure of a child to answer to our postmodern sense of inauthenticity, of decadence, of banality, or evil even' ('Keepin' it Plural' 145). But the myth of the child, as Kristeva notes, obstructs the reality of the child. Coats puts it more directly: 'our actual children are violating their mythic innocent status by crying out through other and self-directed violence' (145-46). Thus, even if our myth can be redeemed in very young children, it is certainly despoiled by existing violations exercised by older children and adolescents. In the present time, the Romantic myth of innocence for and in childhood is starting to undergo a

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[18] Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, Quoted by Coats in 'Keepin' It Plural'.
[19] Rousseau (1712-1778) was concerned with human individualism and favoured nature as primary feeling to society and social institutions. See Rolf E. Muuss, *Theories of Adolescence*, pp. 26-31 for more about Rousseau's Romantic Naturalism, see also Jacqueline Rose's chapter on Rousseau in *The Case of Peter Pan: or the Impossibility of Children's Literature* (Basingstoke; London: Macmillan press, 1984). Hereafter cited in the text as *Case of Peter Pan*.

noticeable transformation in social contexts and is equally challenged in fiction written for children and about children. This change, however, is more noticeable in literature addressed to older children and adolescents than in books written and illustrated for younger ones.

In a more specific case, Coats notes that adolescent fiction is characterised by expressions of violence, sexuality and workings of abjection.[20] In her Lacanian approach to children's literature, Coats views adolescence as a second crisis of identity in which the Real resurges in the form of the abject. Old configurations of the body have to be remapped in terms of new physical changes and emerging erotic desires. Coats' notion is certainly prevalent and its influence is more apparent in the first chapter of this thesis in which I explore abjection, albeit less as a social act bound with negativity than a psychological aspect of the subject-in-process that features both adolescents and adolescent fiction.[21]

The notion of yearning for childhood as a safeguard against our (adult) fall into experience is recurrent in Jacqueline Rose's argument about the desire of children's authors to construct an image of the child. In her seminal case of impossible children's literature, Rose claims that children's fiction can preserve our culture from imminent decay (*Case of Peter Pan* 61). But again this preservation is paradoxically maintained by the construction of an imaginary child who replaces the 'real' one in children's books. Rose claims that the child appearing in children's literature and its criticism is a manifestation of the adult's

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[20] Karen Coats, *Looking Glasses and Neverlands: Lacan, Desire, and Subjectivity in Children's Literature* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004), pp. 137-60. Hereafter cited in the text as *Looking Glasses*.

[21] The notion of the subject in process in contrast to the Cartesian self is introduced by Julia Kristeva in *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

desire for the child, in the sense that the adult 'desires in the very act of constructing the child as the object of its speech' (2). Rose contends that J. M. Barrie's well loved children's book, *Peter Pan,* addresses the adult, and the child in the adult retrieved throughout fiction, and hence undermines the idea of children's literature genuinely addressing any real child reader. Yet, according to Rose, the child who appears in *Peter Pan* is not a truly innocent child, a notion foregrounded in the view of the child merely as 'a miniature version of what our sexuality eventually comes to be' (4). In this sense, in contrast with Coats's views, innocence is retained in the real child which children's literature, as Rose remarks, cannot capture as long as (adult) writers of children's fiction are unable to establish clear differences between the voice of the child and that of an adult (a notion proposed by Peter Hunt as a necessity in writing for children as I will elucidate later).

The notion of displacing the real child out of children's literature and its criticism is argued more extensively in the oeuvre of children's literature critic Karin Lesnik-Oberstein. In her evaluation of contemporary children's literature criticism, she remarks that the 'child' is no more than a construction that varies according to the demands of different perspectives and ideologies.[22] Following and complementing Rose in her critique of the figure of the child in children's literature, Lesnik-Oberstein views fictional representations of the 'child' as a carrier of the adult's emotions and meanings.[23] Like Rose, Lesnik-Oberstein criticises the assumption of many children's literature critics that the child is a

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[22] Karin Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 10. Here

[23] See also Virginia L. Blum, *Hide and Seek: The Child between Psychoanalysis and Fiction* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995) on the notion of the fictional child as interpreted and created by adults.

knowable and unified entity. Lesnik-Oberstein argues that the 'real child' is not reflected in children's literature criticism because of the gap existing between the literary critic and the real child. Furthermore, she critiques a number of children's literature critics, such as Barbara Wall and Peter Hunt, for applying 'adult' literary criticism to children's literature.[24] Lesnik-Oberstein contends that in attempting to appropriate literary theory to children's fiction, such critics are ignoring the 'reality' of the child. In order to bridge this discrepancy, Lesnik-Oberstein advocates psychoanalytical readings of fiction since, in her view, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy help to make the real child more accessible rather than an image constructed through the adult's memories of childhood and the adult's observations of the child. At the same time, she does not dismiss the possibility of elevating as well as equally endangering children's literary criticism when relying on adult literary criticism depending on the 'child' used whether it is real or constructed (142). She concludes that children's literature criticism 'makes non-statements, for its own purposes [... and] is only a sub-plot of wider problems with "knowing" the "child"' (163-64). Only within the field of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy can this 'knowing' of the child be pursued.

In her discussion of contemporary children's literature criticism and its attempt to situate the 'child' in relationship to adult literary theory, Lesnik-Oberstein compares the child's position in children's literature to that of the woman in feminist writing. She admits that the child-adult relationship is not directly comparable to the self-other relationship that exists in the binary

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[24] Lesnik-Oberstein's main argument here is based on Barbara Wall's *The Narrator' Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1991) and Peter Hunt's *Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

opposition between the male and female. This is due to the fact that every adult has been a child once, so the relationship between child and adult is one of continuity as well as of difference. While this is certainly true, it is worth pointing out that children's literature has most often been analysed utilising different approaches from those used to examine adult or mainstream literature, and yet the reality of the child has been constructed likewise in most studies of children's fiction.

Lesnik-Oberstein's comprehensive study is an endeavour to account for her concerns about what has been fundamentally the main aim of children's literature criticism: finding the right book for the child. Adopting adult literary theory in approaching children's books may, according to Lesnik-Oberstein, hinder this objective in one way or another. But in viewing the aim of children's literature criticism as being merely a medium to help us decide what is good for the child to read and what is not, we are in danger of again falling into the trap of considering children's literature as a subject only fit for pedagogical and educational studies, and not for 'serious' literary criticism and theoretical analysis. More recently, in her introduction to *Children's Literature: New Approaches*, Lesnik-Oberstein re-addresses this issue and raises few significant questions: 'does that fundamental goal of the criticism need to be changed at all? Ought it to be changed? Isn't the ability to know how to select the right books for the child exactly what children's literature criticism wants to achieve, and should therefore continue pursuing?'[25] But by introducing and editing '*New Approaches*' to children's fiction, Lesnik-Oberstein, is tacitly acknowledging the necessity of

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[25] Karin Lesnik-Oberstein ed., *Children's Literature: New Approaches* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 1-22

'*New*-ness' in the growing realm of children's literature criticism. The growing body of children's and adolescent literature criticism which uses methods and approaches common in the criticism of mainstream literature is a clear evidence of the possible means by which children's texts can be viewed from a perspective more comprehensive and varied than the viewpoint of pedagogy alone. Lesnik-Oberstein does not, however, actually engage with particular children's texts; her contribution is almost entirely theoretical as she attempts to reconcile the paradox of the "child" and "literary" qualities'[26]. In contrast, I engage in depth with specific children's literary texts drawing upon literary theory as well as psychoanalysis to shape my readings of the texts. In so doing, I view literature addressed to younger readers as worthy of close literary and theoretical analysis, an approach which in itself is likely to blur the binary categorisation of 'child' and 'adult'.

Lesnik-Oberstein's endeavour can be viewed as a critique of what Peter Hunt conceives as the paradox of the term 'children's literature.' For Hunt, writers of children's books should provide texts that 'require readers to read only within both implied and defined limits.'[27] But this view implies, on the one hand, that writers of children's fiction should aim to produce work that is monological and closed to multiple interpretations, and on the other, that children's literature critics should respect these limits. Hunt interprets *First Term at Trebizon* in such a monological fashion: 'It is very familiar, it is predictable; because it involves little deduction, [. . .] it is not so much implying a readership as prescribing the level of reading' (82). By placing children's literature in this interpretive ghetto, Hunt

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[26] Lesnik-Oberstein, *Children's Literature: The Fictional Child*, p. 140.
[27] Peter Hunt, *Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 81.

reiterates the traditional assumption of child and adult binary oppositions implied in his conception of the 'paradox' of 'children's literature'. Furthermore, he suggests that 'texts which challenge these assumptions commonly find themselves in the no-person's land between writings for adults (so-called) and writings for children (so-called)' (84). This dichotomy induces us to wonder: what about adolescent fiction? Is not writing for adolescents precisely a choice to reside in this 'no-person's land'? Is adolescent fiction then as impossible for Hunt as children's literature is for Rose? In his later writing, however, Hunt implies a different approach to the distinction between the two age categories. In his observations on contemporary young adult fantasy, he points out the many complexities and paradoxes of the fantasy genre, which 'is only now emerging from its literary ghetto' and which should by no means be associated only with children.[28]

For many critics, adolescent fiction is not lacking in all the narrative complexities, polyphonic and dialogical resonances that characterise mainstream literature.[29] As Caroline Hunt points out, the child reader implied in Hunt's *Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature* is a 'preadolescent being', and for this reason, it 'appears to exclude any systematic examination of young adult books'[30]. In 1991, Hunt advocates a reading of children's texts in the light of what

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[28] Peter Hunt, 'Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction- Revisited', *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, 11:2 (2005), 163-74
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13614540500324153> [accessed 16 July 2009] and Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz, 'Introduction', *Alterative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* (London: Continuum, 2001), pp. 1-39.
[29] See for example, Robyn McCallum's *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 1999)
[30] Caroline Hunt, 'Young Adult Literature Evades the Theorists' in Children's Literature Association Quarterly, Vol., 21, no 1, Spring 1996.
<http://muse.jhu.edu.eresources.shef.ac.uk/journals/childrens_literature_association_quarterly/v02 1/21.1.hunt.html> [accessed 27 January 2009]

he calls 'childist criticism' which is 'reading, as far as possible, from a child's point of view, taking into account personal, sub-cultural, experiential, and psychological differences between children and adults'.[31] Hunt is here proposing a fixed essentialist view of the implied child reader, whereas many contemporary children's texts construct implied readers with discursive and open subjectivities. To read as a child with such ideological and cultural inferences in the background may once again imperil the possibility of responding to the complexities and depth of contemporary adolescent and children's fiction with appropriately complex and nuanced literary criticism.

Though they are gaining more distinction of their own, books written for adolescents have been generally approached by critics and educationalists as part of children's literature. In *The Child and the Book*, Nicholas Tucker discusses 'Literature for Older Children (11-14)', yet he is quite aware that,

> around adolescence the difference between child and adult literature becomes so indistinct that it can make perfectly good literary sense for the adult reader to turn sometimes to children's authors of the quality of Alan Garner, Philippa Pearce, Leon Garfield, William Mayne, John Masefield, Walter de la Mare, Jane Gardam and many others.[32]

Tucker does not seem to have overlooked the value of adolescent literature, though the age band 11-14 does not comprehend the whole breadth of adolescence, yet he evokes a significant issue in the extract: that literature written for older children is sometimes undistinguishable from adult literature in literary terms, which would justify and actually legitimate a serious critical reading of such texts. Tucker's account, however, is still rather journalistic and his

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[31] Hunt, *Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature*, p. 198.
[32] Nicholas Tucker, *The Child and the Book: A Psychological and Literary Exploration* (London; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 18-19.

psychoanalytic explanation is lacking in full length analysis of literary texts aimed at adolescent readers.

If one views adolescence as late childhood, it is almost impossible to isolate adolescent literature and its criticism from children's literature and its criticism. But as this thesis will argue, there are narrative dynamics that are specifically pertinent to the genre of adolescent fiction. In line with the approach I adopt here, there have been a few recent studies that specifically focus on young adult fiction. In fact, the recognition that young adult fiction is growing in complexity and ambiguity and that until recently, there has been a dearth in literary criticism focussing on adolescent literature, are among the reasons for the rise of academic studies of young adult fiction.

Roberta Seelinger Trites's study of adolescent literature in *Disturbing the Universe* examines the dynamics of power and repression associated with adolescence in a number of young adult novels. Representations of adolescents in relation to school and other institutions, to questions of faith and religion, politics, and family are analysed, and questions of narrative authority and manipulation of the reader are particularly scrutinised. According to Trites, the adolescent's growing into maturity is bound up with his or her experiencing of gradations between power and powerlessness within the cultural structure. In order to grow, argues Trites, adolescents must negotiate their positions in relation to the institutions that continuously shape them, and they must balance their own power against their parents' and that of other authority figures existing in their lives. Trites goes on to examine cultural representations of two biological imperatives, sex and death, which are determined by the adolescent's need to feel empowered

and cultural institutions' simultaneous need to repress the adolescent. Trites' book is an important study not only for its valuable interpretations of power relationships represented in young adult novels, but also because of her attempt to identify certain distinctive features in adolescent literature in terms of this power hierarchy. As Trites puts it, 'the chief characteristic that distinguishes adolescent literature from children's literature is the issue of how social power is deployed during the course of the narrative'[33] While Trites's interest in power relationships presented in young adult fiction is undoubtedly an important issue, the present thesis takes a broader view of adolescents' social structures as it explores adolescents' renegotiations and psychological dynamics of primary relationships vis-à-vis the wider range of external relationships available to them. Given the notion that adolescence is viewed as a psychological process as well as a biological stage of life, these relationships are conceived within less obvious binary oppositions of power struggle than it is examined by Trites.

Martha Westwater's *Giant Despair Meets Hopeful* is another study which focuses on adolescent fiction in particular and like the current thesis, uses Kristevan theory.[34] Westwater touches on broad aspects of the Kristevan criticism as she searches for hope in the contemporary adolescent fiction, not in the meaning of saving this fiction as this may imply, but in order to claim that in the despairing lives of the adolescent characters she examines in her case study, there is room for contentment and hope even within the most difficult circumstances. The 'Giant despair' of the title is collectively the hardships and troubles facing the

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[33] Trites, *Disturbing the Universe*, p. 2.
[34] Martha Westwater, *Giant Despair Meets Hopeful: Kristevan Readings in Adolescent Fiction* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2000)

young generation and reflected in children fiction she is examining in her book. In her book, Westwater recognises that adolescent fiction is preoccupied with disillusionment and despair generated from the youth suffering of parental and peer pressure, violence, sexual abuse, divorce and other similar crises. Nevertheless, young adult readers, argues Westwater, should recognise hope implicit somewhere in their own lives and in the fiction of writers such as Patricia Wrightson, Kevin Major, Katherine Paterson, Aidan Chambers, Robert Cormier and Jan Mark. Westwater locates Kristeva's concepts of abjection, melancholy, forgiveness and the subject in process in their works, but her employment of Kristevan theory is highly focused on discovering hope in adolescent fiction amidst the crisis and decay of Western society. Her attempt to redeem adolescence could be viewed as infantilising and viewing young readers as vulnerable group whom we should shield from harsh realities. In this work, I avoid making sweeping value judgements about what is being prescribed for adolescents, and my use of Kristeva goes beyond a borrowing of her theoretical terms, to a broader consideration of the psychological development of the speaking subject in relation to adolescence and adolescent novelistic form, as suggested by her insightful analyses of adolescence.

This thesis, then, sets out to examine the nature of adolescence and its representations and figurations in young adult fiction, and to explore the extent to which these representations and figurations are intrinsic to readers' responses to young adult literature. With this aim, the image of adolescent subjectivity and its interpretations for the adult reader will be examined in a number of mainstream young adult books. Drawing upon a range of psychoanalytic approaches to

narrative, language and subjectivity, I aim to include a wider definition of the term 'adolescent' than is currently employed by children's literature specialists. In my usage, drawn from Kristevan theory, 'adolescent' does not merely describe fiction written for children of a specific age but also and more importantly a quality that conveys the volatile, renewable, and transitional spirit of the human psyche endlessly expressed in this fiction. As Julia Kristeva remarks, 'the very genre of the novel, with its characters and the logic of its plots, is quite dependent on the "adolescent" economy of writing'[35]. The writing subject as Kristeva describes the writer and the reading subject (the reader) are both works in progress, which situates them precisely in an adolescent condition. Adolescence is a time of metamorphosis and transition, and the fiction defined in relation to this stage of development reflects these aspects of change and transition. Narratives of adolescence are engrossed with representations of fluctuated subjectivity and can offer the reader the fluidity of experiencing the immaturity of the youth subject, because, as Kristeva observes, we are prone to be seduced by 'the immature' and 'the formless' ('Adolescent' 151). In the postmodern condition wherein the image of the self is more diffused than ever before, adult readers may find reconsidering their adolescent 'selves' through reading a rewarding way of constructing a more consistent adult identity. The newly emergent young adult fiction can be viewed not only as reflecting upon the youth, but also as reproducing adolescent identity and personal discovery of the youth hidden in all of us. Within this perspective,

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[35] Julia Kristeva, 'The Adolescent Novel', in *New Maladies of the Soul*, trans. by Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 135-53 (p. 139). Hereafter cited in the text as 'Adolescent'.

we may be able to understand the appeal of this particular kind of fiction to adult readers in addition to young adult ones.

In this thesis, I will be examining fiction by contemporary writers including Meg Rosoff, Geraldine McCaughrean, David Almond, J. K. Rowling and Philip Pullman. All of the texts under consideration are to be regarded as ostensibly addressed to older children or young adults, and since they represent adolescent protagonists they are in the normal sense 'adolescent texts'. Through analysing these texts, I attempt to illustrate how they work to capture the evolutional structure of adolescent subjectivity caught between conscious and unconscious transactions of both childhood and adulthood. The texts under scrutiny are drawn from a range of genres, from fantasy and adventure to magic realism and epic journey, and indeed many of them hybridise elements of several literary genres. Although they vary in the degree of their popularity, all have appealed to a broad audience of children, young adults and adults and have been critically acclaimed and recognised for their literary merits. Their breadth of appeal might, in itself, be taken as sociological evidence of the accuracy of Kristeva's perception that adolescence can occur at any age.

In the following chapters, as has been noted, I approach adolescent literature through the filter of narrative theory and psychoanalysis. This interdisciplinary approach is necessitated by the nature of adolescent literature and its readership, and by the need to bridge the gap between theory and praxis as well as between the 'fictional' and the 'real' subject which may be provided by psychoanalysis as Lesnik-Oberstein suggests. I will argue that the desires and fantasies of some individuals can be reflected in the adolescent novel and that

readers may consciously or unconsciously engage with these fantasies in significant and interesting ways. While there should be a distinction maintained between individual impulsive fantasies or the subject of psychoanalytic studies and the consciously composed works of fantasy which comprise some of the works examined here, these categories may often overlap in the mind of the reader. As Hunt significantly points out: 'published fantasies, however long and elaborate, are rooted in the "small" personal fantasies and their wide appeal as texts may well rest in the fact that the "small", "personal" fantasies are widely shared'[36]. In this process, the gaps and uncertainties residing in the text - crucial to the notion of textual indeterminacy in reader-response theory- take on new meanings inasmuch as the reader dynamically engages with bridging these silences producing his/her own textual construction.[37]

Responses to literature, however, may vary from one reader to another, and I do not attempt to construct a single, homogeneous and consistent response for all readers. What I am proposing in this thesis is that the experience of adolescence as an open structure in the Kristevan terminology is accessible to the readers of young adult literature whatever their age. Because as much as adolescence is a time for the young adult's ongoing constructions of identity, it is also a time of 'temporary uncertainty' and potential possibilities through which readers can carry out their own negotiations of identity. Jane Kroger's comments on Erikson's definition of adolescence as a stage of *identity versus role confusion* are instructive on this point:

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[36] Hunt, 'Alternative Worlds - Revisited', p. 167. This notion will be further examined in the first chapter in Norman Holland's views on literary response.
[37] See for example Wolfgang Iser's *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: Routledge, 1978)

> Here [...] the young person is faced with the psychosocial dilemma of synthesizing yet transcending earlier identifications of childhood to realize aptitudes in social roles, while the community, in turn, provides its recognition and contribution to an individual's sense of self. Ironically, it may be one's willingness to undergo times of *temporary uncertainty* that gives the identity achievement resolution its ultimate strength (my emphasis).[38]

Hence, the resolution of adolescent identity is by no means final, but always subject to reconsiderations at times where later the individual may need reassurance about the image of his or her 'self'. As Barthes notes, some texts have the tendency to 'unsettle [...] the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings [...] to a crisis his relation with language'[39]. It is, thus, an experience that is both contingent on the creative nature of the text and the reception of the text by readers of varying ages.

In order to illuminate the different aspects pertaining to the openness of adolescent narrative to readers, I will argue that each of the novels discussed in the present thesis manifests, in its own specific way, particular dynamics of adolescence with its general connotations of openness, metamorphosis as well as psychological tension between childhood and adulthood. It will be argued that such dynamics are communicated in the texts; hereby, an examination of the narrative and thematic features and the representations of their main character's psychological development will uncover their adolescent tendency that presents the adult reader with the possible means to re-experience, at a certain level, the adolescent 'economy' of narrative.

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[38] Jane Kroger, *Identity in Adolescence: The Balance between Self and Other* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 19.
[39] Barthes, p. 14.

In chapter one, my particular theme is the ongoing construction of the adolescent subject. In the light of Kristeva theories of the subject-in-process, I reinterpret 'abjection', that is Kristeva's concept of an individual state of being on border between subjectivity and objectivity, as emblematic of the adolescent's ongoing negotiations of identity. My interpretation focuses on the development of the protagonist and narrator of Meg Rosoff's novel, *How I Live Now*. The status of the young female narrator epitomises the adolescent's troubled state which is further exasperated by a particularly horrific historical crisis. By examining the protagonist's experience of abjection and narration, one can view the affinity between body and language and their interrelations with the continuous construction of subjectivity within the given of culture and society. Using Norman Holland's model of literary response, I contend that the heroine's experience of abjection as well as her provisional recovery are both mirrored in the reading experience of the adult reader of the novel. I argue that while the text can offer the psychic space in which abjection materialises and semiotic fantasies unconsciously constructed through *writing* or *narrating*, it is also a site for various fantasies and a possible locus for projecting abjection through *reading*.

In chapter two, I expand on the notion of abjection as necessary to the formation of the subject with particular focus on the adolescent formation of gendered identity. My case study in this chapter is the female protagonist and narrator of Geraldine McCaughrean's novel *Not the End of the World*. The adolescent's emerging subjectivity is inhibited by a sense of imprisonment within a phallocentric structure metaphorically represented by the ark of Noah. I argue that McCaughrean's novel represents, through the development of her female

adolescent protagonist, an enactment of a new female subjectivity that challenges the constraints of the patriarchal society in which she resides and eventually proposes a basis for a new kind of intersubjectivity. Like Rosoff's female heroine, McCaughrean's adolescent protagonist is in a state of becoming a woman with distinct individuality and like her she is caught within the grasp of abjection. McCaughrean's remodelling of the story of the flood is an excellent dramatisation of the female rejection of compliance with harsh patriarchal laws. Her feminist emplotment provides many readers, perhaps especially the female ones, with subversive pleasure, covertly destabilising the status quo and powerfully inciting a distinguished subjectivity structured on non-binary basis within a loving environment.

The notion of adolescence as a transitory and unsettled phase can be appropriately represented by hybrid genres such as magic realism. In chapter three of this thesis I explore David Almond's magic realist texts as adolescent narratives which question the unity of a self. The precondition of blurred boundaries between fantasy and reality existing in such narratives replicates the unsettling experience of adolescence; it summarises its uncertainty and problematisation of identity. Drawing on Freudian theory, I argue that as magical realist adolescent narratives, Almond's texts highlight the permeability of the borders adult construct to distance themselves from what they consider as immature earlier selves and hence readers become subconsciously attracted to narratives that safely bring this permeability into play. Through reading adolescent narratives, readers become able to relive a transitional state that

removes them from a playing and pleasure-related phase to one controlled by the reality principle.

In chapter four, I look more closely at adolescence as a second scene of emerging subjectivity. I draw a parallel between the experience of reading J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and that of rereading popular romantic fiction. Utilising Karen Odden's views on the psychology of rereading popular fiction, I attempt to show how such serial fiction can allow the reader possible ways whereby certain childhood dramas are re-enacted and gradually replaced by more complicated means of engagement with the narrative throughout the progress of the series. Through this developing experience the reader can be imaginatively transported between childhood and adulthood, and can metaphorically relive the transition of adolescence in the openness of narrative.

In the fifth and final chapter, I examine Philip Pullman's Trilogy *His Dark Materials* as an epic journey of growing up from childhood into adulthood through the troublesome hazy middle zone of adolescence. I offer a reading of the trilogy in the light of the psychoanalytic theories of D. W. Winnicott and Melanie Klein on potential space within which a child first attempts separation from the mother. While the potential space is a locus for the adolescent characters to negotiate sources of the self, the narrative can be perceived as a spectacle where a sense of fluid boundaries of subjectivity replicates the adolescent imaginary of the reader.

By pursuing close readings of these mainstream examples of contemporary young adult fiction, I attempt to unfold the richness and complexities of the emerging body of adolescent literature. Peter Hunt's call for

'new critical modes' in contemporary children's literature is clearly a response to the growing potentialities of this literature.[40] Therefore while focusing my close reading on specific examples I also use these as a springboard to make broader assertions about the complex and shifting representations of adolescent identity in contemporary fiction. In so doing, I aim to contribute to the growing body of literary criticism which is addressing itself to adolescent fiction in particular and to children's literature in general. By approaching young adult fiction as adolescent narrative in the fullest Kristevan sense, a psycho-textual model of reader/text dynamics is proposed here as a framework through which to engage with the pleasure of the adolescent text.

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[40] Hunt, 'Alternative Worlds - Revisited', p. 172.

Chapter One

Adolescent Literature and Abjection:

The Case of Meg Rosoff's *How I Live Now*

In much adolescent literature, the adolescent is represented and characterised as being engaged in an ongoing process of subject formation the result of which is crucial to articulating a more stable future adult identity. Julia Kristeva's notion of the subject-in-process manifesting itself through language is particularly pertinent to the realm of adolescent literature. As adolescents attempt to reposition themselves in relation to social, cultural and linguistic structures, they struggle to define their own boundaries as distinct from, yet paradoxically within the sphere of these structures and its dictates. One aspect of this incessant process of subject formation and reformation is manifest through abjection: a challenging process of defining the boundaries of the subject, by facing and excluding what is other to oneself. Meg Rosoff's *How I Live Now* is an ideal case study for exploring the logic of abjection as emblematic of the adolescent's fluctuating boundaries in the process of subject formation. In examining the thematic and linguistic manifestations of abjection as experienced by the adolescent protagonist and narrator and tracing its development, we can come to an understanding of the nature of adolescent subjectivity inscribed in and represented through fiction defined and marketed as 'adolescent fiction'. Like the young adult protagonist, the implied readers of young adult texts vicariously experience this provisional state of re-identification. As characterising the adolescent subject and its language, abjection emphasises the fluidity and openness that permeate adolescent literature

and that can be re-enacted in its implied reader. Here Kristeva's notion of abjection identified through language and Norman Holland's model of literary response can be very enlightening.[1] An analysis of Rosoff's novel in the light of Kristevan theories of subjectivity and Holland's psychological reading of literature can illuminate some of the features that Rosoff's book and similar books have in order to account for their appeal and openness to readers of indeterminate age. Both Kristeva and Holland theorise that an experience of openness and dissolution of boundaries in the reading subject is precipitated by the experience of reading; an experience that validates what Kristeva describes as the adolescent imaginary of the reader ('Adolescent' 139).

The economy of adolescence is intrinsically inscribed in the structure and fast-paced first-person narrative of Rosoff's *How I Live Now*. The main character, an American adolescent, self-consciously addresses her readers, and narrates what begins as a summertime romantic adventure story taking place in an idyllic, pastoral England. The sudden turn events take in Daisy's adventure metaphorically encapsulates the turbulence of adolescence. What initially appears as a sense of the teenager's alienation and estrangement at the setting of a new chapter in a foreign country, soon leads the way to more complex feelings of distrust and bewilderment towards her family and the whole society. Daisy's lack of emotional satisfaction evolves into an encounter with new emotions resulting in an incestuous relationship with her cousin which may in psychological terms indicate an incident of confusion in the teenager's objects of desire. Her situation becomes even more complicated when startlingly she finds herself alone with her

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[1] Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection is described in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans., by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Colombia University Press, 1982). Hereafter cited in the thesis as *Powers*. (All emphases in quotations are original unless otherwise indicated.)

nine-years-old cousin in the midst of an erupting war. Not only does the adolescent experience banishment, exhaustion and starvation, but together with her young cousin she does disturbingly witness violent killing and mass slaughter. Compelled to take up the role of a guardian and protector of her little cousin in their exile journey, Daisy has to bury her revolting senses of fear and disgust. Despite the adolescent's poignant experiences and extreme agonies, this journey turns out to be rewarding in terms of her own subject-formation, which had been in an arrested and distorted phase at the start of the novel. By the end of the novel, anorexic Daisy has come to recognise food as a symbol of nourishment rather than a source of revulsion. Her involuntary starvation caused by the scarcity of food, engenders a new appreciation of a healthy body which marks Daisy's triumph over anorexia.

Within this narrative structure, abjection recurs as a persistent threat to the subjectivity of the protagonist-narrator, yet also as a precondition to establishing a securely held place in the adult world. Daisy begins her narration sceptical about her own identity but she ends with no doubts about her position. Daisy reveals her original name, Elizabeth, to the reader and with some sense of irony speculates why her disinterested father might have given her such a name:

> My father took one look at me when I was born and must have thought I had the face of someone dignified and sad like an old-fashioned queen or a dead person, but what I turned out like is plain, not much there to notice[...] more Daisy than Elizabeth from the word go.[2]

Yet, at the end of the novel, she asserts to the readers: 'I know exactly where I belong' (211).

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[2] Meg Rosoff, *How I Live Now* (London: Penguin Books, 2005 [2004]), p. 3. Hereafter cited in the thesis as *How*.

The reader of *How I Live Now* is equally allowed to undergo fluctuations of subjectivity characteristic of abjection, through, identifying with the adolescent protagonist's subject. In addition to the reader's assimilation of the narrator's situation, he or she may experience ambivalence of feelings and a sense of indeterminacy in his or her position assumed 'in' the text, since Daisy's narrative constructs its narratee in an indeterminate state. Her sardonic tone, witty jokes, yet straightforward narration construct both experienced and inexperienced naratees and therefore open up the text to readers of various capabilities and experiences. The text, therefore, opens the possibility of the reader engaging in an adolescent imaginary; a state of being engaged in the fluidity and openness to other identities. To put it more clearly, the dynamic nature of the subject-in-process featured in the adolescent protagonist and narrator can be temporarily introjected by the reader as s/he can free up her or his own enclosed boundaries for renewal and reorganisation. Holland's theories of literary reading are useful in this approach as they include both the reader and the text as components in the mechanism of response. For Holland, the text offers materials which can be used by readers to create their own fantasies. While the text is, for Kristeva, a scene where abjection materialises and where semiotic fantasies are unconsciously constructed through *writing* or *narrating*, for Holland, it is a site for various fantasies and a possible locus for projecting abjection through *reading*.

Before going into further detail about abjection in Rosoff's novel, it may be useful to explore some of Kristeva's theoretical views on abjection and its relation to the subject and utterance. How these views are implicated in the

reader's engagement with literature can be particularly illuminated in the light of Holland's patterns of reading.

In her chapter 'The Adolescent Novel', Kristeva discloses an interest in adolescence, not simply as a stage of human life, but as an imaginary quality of open-structure that we can experience in reading, thereby uncovering a linguistic relation between adolescence and the novelistic genre. Kristeva begins her argument by shaping into words our relation to adolescence which we both apprehend and misunderstand:

> The adolescent [...] is a mythical figure of the imaginary that enables us to distance ourselves from some of our failings, splittings of the ego, disavowals, or mere desires, which it reifies into the figure of someone who has not yet grown up. Moreover, the adolescent allows us to see, hear, and read these subjective fluctuations. ('Adolescent' 135)

According to Kristeva we attribute our deficiencies to some kind of immaturity which we associate with adolescence. These workings of our psyche referred to in the extract are typical of the subject in the pre-oedipal stage. The adolescent figure mirrors the fluctuations of our subject, allowing a violation of our presumably secure boundaries. Though Kristeva's description alludes to a threat implied in adolescence that we generally try to keep at bay, she does not preclude what she calls the 'seduction of the formless and immature', of adolescence ('Adolescent' 151). By analysing a number of literary works, Kristeva challenges the negative connotations of an 'open-structure' personality, from which she develops the notion of '*open structure*' which should be regarded as a valuable feature that resides in certain modes of signification. But this *open*ness is not confined to adolescents; even an adult is entitled to experience the adolescent imaginary of openness 'only as a reader or spectator of novels, films, or painting - or as an

artist' ('Adolescent' 139). Kristeva's primary insight is that the novel as a genre, with its ambivalence and openness to multiple interpretations, is a realm for experiencing adolescence. She observes that 'as a permanent witness to our adolescence, the novel would enable us to rediscover the state of incompleteness (which is as depressive as it is joyful) that leads in some respects to what we call aesthetic pleasure' ('Adolescent' 139). Kristeva has no specific interest in young adult or adolescent novels per se; rather, she refers to adolescence as an open structure which writers can experience through writing novels or engaging in other types of artistic production. While there is no apparent association between adolescence and abjection in her analysis, Kristeva makes it clear that 'the adolescent structure opens itself to that which has been repressed ('Adolescent' 136). Within the 'free flow' of our 'mass-media' culture, it is usually adolescents who defy any clear demarcation of social roles and taboos. This defiance typifies the very defining feature of abjection with its permanent challenge to fixed boundaries (136).

According to Kristeva, abjection, the psychological elaboration of horror, arises in a moment of weakness, though not of surrender, of the subject and threatens its substantiality. Often associated with 'times of dreary crisis', abjection is the safeguard against social, cultural and moral disintegration (*Powers* 208-09). It is the speaking subject's revulsion against its corporeality in order to set up clear boundaries and attain a stable identity of discrete borders. The abject represents what the subject should exclude from its civilised condition; it is the '*"object" of primal repression*' (*Powers* 12). Kristeva's elaboration of her theory on abjection extends how subjectivity is constituted in the first place most notably

in Freudian and Lacanian theories. It summarises how a person comes to perceive himself or herself as a separate being with his or her own borders between a self and the other. Thus, though it is an ongoing process through an entire lifetime, abjection is, initially, experienced with the child's first attempts of separation from the mother's body in its passage from the pre-Symbolic or the Real to the Symbolic.[3] The intervention of the Symbolic mediated by the father marks the entry into a realm of significations and social culture from an earlier stage represented by the continuity of the mother-child body and characterised by semiotic compulsion and desires. In the moment of separation from the mother, abjection, painful but necessary, occurs defying identification and threatening boundaries. The intrusion of the Symbolic set off by the impression of the mirror stage (through the Imaginary) and the acquisition of language, forms the initial step towards establishing one's identity.[4] Prior to attaining the position of the subject, however, there comes the psychic exercise of abjection in which the child suffers a painful and disturbing state (*Powers* 12-13). In order for a child to constitute his or her own entity s/he has to create a space of his or her own away from the mother into the Law of the Father, the law which controls desire and communications. As John Lechte writes, 'there must have already been moves, by

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[3] The Real is Jacques Lacan's term for the realm of the mother or 'the state of nature from which we have been forever severed by our entrance into language'. It is often contrasted with the Symbolic as the realm of linguistic discourse or 'the social world of linguistic communication, intersubjective relations, knowledge of ideological conventions, and the acceptance of the law (also called the "big Other"). It should be noted that for Kristeva the Symbolic does not wholly and irreversibly substitutes the Real which she refers to as the Semiotic, but combines the Real within its very symbolic means; language. For a definition of the Symbolic and The Real, see Dino Felluga, 'Terms Used by Psychoanalysis', in *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory* (November, 2003) <http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/psychoanalysis/psychterms.html> [Accessed 22 January 2006].

[4] The Imaginary is the narcissistic phase in which the child makes fantasy images of his/him self and object of desire and is associated with the mirror stage whereas the child, between 6-18 months, identify his/her image (see note 3 above)

way of the drives, towards expelling/rejecting the mother.'[5] As habits of cleanliness linked to toilet training and eating develop, the mother becomes unnecessary and is gradually purged as being 'the prototype of what the drives expel' (159). Thus, the child at this stage learns to reject what is improper and unclean in order to articulate his or her own boundaries. The child must dismiss as abject those things which threaten the purity of his or her own body such as the mother's breasts, faeces and filth among other things.

But such a sense of abjection is not limited to childhood as, according to Kristeva, it is associated with our continuous formations and reformations of selfhood. The abject is always latent; it is what 'I permanently thrust aside in order to live' (*Powers* 3). Even though the abject is what the Symbolic is not, it is a consistent threatening undercurrent to the symbolic subject; it is 'what disturbs identity, system, order' (4). This is exactly why abjection becomes a permanent support to the subject as Lechte explains: 'after the successful imposition of the symbolic, abjection tends, at least in Western cultures, to remain as a kind of background support for the symbolic and its attendant ego; it is the ego's quite *un*desirable face'.[6] In the phase preceding full maturity, the adolescent subject comes to experience abjection in his or her continuous negotiations of surrounding discourse. Kristeva argues that 'after the oedipal stabilisation of subjective identity, adolescents begin to question their identifications, as well as their capacities to speak and to symbolize' ('Adolescent' 136). As a phase of reviewing and reconsidering prospective identity, adolescence can also be viewed in Lacanian terms as another mirror phase wherein identity structures are re-

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[5] John Lechte, *Julia Kristeva* (London & New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 159.
[6] Lechte, *Julia Kristeva*, pp. 159-60.

questioned in relation to the Symbolic and its counterparts: culture, family, society and religion.

In *Looking Glasses and Neverlands*, Karen Coats suggests an affinity between Kristeva's notion of abjection and adolescence at more than one level. Socially, adolescence is compatible with abjection in the way it 'breaches and challenges boundaries'; it is an 'in-between time' once both childhood and adulthood ethics are challenged (*Looking Glasses* 142). Furthermore, adolescence is a time for questioning sexual identity. In adolescence, the subject, gendered but not yet sexualised, has ambivalent views towards what was once considered as 'abject'; body openings such as mouth, anus and genitals which generate abjection as they blur boundaries between the inside and the outside, become erotic zones since adolescence marks out 'a movement from disgust to eroticism' (143). Though the Symbolic traditionally excludes the abject by means of repression, displacement, and sublimation, adolescents in contemporary times tend not to abide by social and cultural restrictions. In other words, it is unlikely for an adolescent to undergo a strong abjection as the borders between what is socially and culturally acceptable and what is not become more permeable. Abjection is also weakened by the absence of absolute agreement between social institutions such as family, school, and religion, from which the adolescent derives his or her own values that constitutes the superego.

Against the threat the abject poses to the borders of the subject, Kristeva proposes an aesthetic task that paradoxically both represents and protects against the abject. She writes of this aspiration:

> In a world in which the Other has collapsed, the aesthetic task – a descent into the foundations of the symbolic construct – amounts to

> retracting the fragile limits of the speaking being, closest to its dawn, to the bottomless 'primacy' constituted by primal repression. Through that experience, which is nevertheless managed by the Other, 'subject' and 'object' push each other away, confront each other, collapse, and start again – inseparable, contaminated, condemned at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable: abject. (*Powers* 18)

Quite clearly, this extract captures Kristeva's notion of subjectivity as being formed in and through artistic endeavours. If writing can characterise and define the abject and in so doing can be expelled as Kristeva suggests, it also gives rise to abjection: abjection becomes inescapable. With a slightly different emphasis, Sue Vice declares the text itself to be abject. In her comparison between Bakhtin's grotesque body and Kristeva's abject, Vice views the text as being grotesque or abject:

> What is grotesque or abject is the text itself, whether or not it is concerned with images from either realm. The body which can best described as operating along its margins, its protuberances and convexities, or administrating the shock of abjection through an unexpected plunge into different and disorientating subject positions, is that of the text.[7]

Vice's main insight is that the text is never confined; it invariably seeks to reach beyond its boundaries confusing its presumed demarcations. This, at any rate, amounts to what Kristeva's interpretation of the 'The Adolescent Novel' with its open structure would tell us.

Kristeva's concept of abjection, which manifests itself through writing and speaking is only one of the ways in which drives and desires (the semiotic) may disrupt the Symbolic, a notion that outlines significant aspects of Kristeva's oeuvre. She is predominantly interested in the view that subjectivity may be seen

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[7] Sue Vice, 'Bakhtin and Kristeva: Grotesque Body, Abject Self', in *Face to Face: Bakhtin in Russia and the West*, ed. by Carol Adlam and others (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), p. 164.

to be shaped in and through art and literature. In order to expand on this view, in particular on the notion of abjection as affecting the speaking or writing subject, I will draw on Holland's theories of reading to suggest an equivalent relationship between the reading subject and abjection in order to examine how this relationship is pertinent to the current study of adolescent fiction. In *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, Holland claims that the book duplicates our relationship to the mother in its ability to repeat our early experiences of satisfaction and unity. His *Dynamics* works through three elements: fantasy, form as defence, and meaning. The verbal and structural form of a book transforms the content into an acceptable meaning. When readers read a literary text, they 'introject both its fantasies and the formal devices by which the work transforms the fantasy toward meaning'. In so doing, the text merges with the readers as being a part of their 'psychic economy'. This implies 'partly' a regression to a stage of merging and fusion with the mother.[8]

Holland assumes that fantasies of 'fusion' and 'merger' originating in early childhood constitute the basis for our relationship to literature. One of the ways through which we respond to literature is by projecting our concerns onto a literary character. This could happen because reading unconsciously recalls a stage where the infant is unable to distinguish between itself and the outside world, mainly the nurturing mother. Thus, our feelings about a literary experience reflect a residue of this primary situation, 'we are responding, therefore, from a level of our being which existed prior to the sense of another reality,' which is the self as different from the mother (*Dynamics* 78). This oral phase appears in

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[8] Norman N. Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989 [1968]), p. IX. Hereafter cited in the thesis as *Dynamics*.

literature 'as fantasies of losing the boundaries of self, of being engulfed, overwhelmed, drowned, or devoured [...]' (35). Furthermore, Holland discovers a correlation between the experience of reading works that deal with worlds of fantasy and oral fantasies in the psychoanalytic sense. He argues that reading a fantastic work invites us to enter into a world of fantasy and to merge orally with this world. This is because a relation of 'trust', similar to the one between a child and mother, develops between the reader and the literary work. Drawing on Freud's discussion of the earliest fantasies of fusion, Holland argues that there are certain situations in which adults, whose sense of self is more certain, may fall into a state of an unrecognisable merging of ego and object. For example, Freud states that 'at the height of being in love the boundary between ego and object threatens to melt away.'[9] It is not difficult, then, to relate Holland's notion of the dissolution of boundaries in the process of reading to Kristeva's notion of 'abjection'. To put it concisely: reading can be perceived as enacting a state of abjection. Introjection, which is a primary unconscious practice in reading, protects us from dissolving outside of the Symbolic, just as abjection would do. Reading 'is one of the means by which we internalize, put into ourselves, the superego whose "still, small voice" reminds us of the values of our parents and society' (*Dynamics* 55). By bringing together Kristeva's and Holland's theories, we can establish a link between psychological operations occurring within the text on the one hand, and psychological operations introjected by the reader from the text, on the other. By way of illustration, I will show how abjection, experienced by the adolescent narrator in Rosoff's *How I Live Now*, can be introjected and

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[9] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*. Quoted by Holland in *Dynamics*. P. 35.

experienced by the reader as an essential part of his or her own response to the text.

Rosoff's novel reveals multiple facets of abjection as experienced by its adolescent protagonist-narrator whose borders of identity are temporarily lacking in clarity and distinctiveness. In essence, Daisy's abjection is the natural outcome of combined factors the effects of which begin to resurge more prominently at this critical phase of her life. Her disappointment at her mother's loss, anger at her father and powerlessness at controlling her incestuous desire towards her cousin are some of the triggers that instigate her psychic crisis making her more vulnerable to what has primarily been repressed. It is the struggle between her urgent desires and the prohibitions imposed by the Law of the Father that unleashes her abjection. In the first part of the novel the reader is introduced to the psychic atmosphere which enhances Daisy's first encounter with abjection. It becomes clear that her critical situation is basically a natural repercussion of the collapse of Daisy's first social institution: her family. Two causes, writes Kristeva, stimulate the emergence of abjection: '*too much strictness on the part of the Other* [...and] *the lapse of the Other*' (*Powers* 15). For Daisy, the *Other* from which she ought to derive her values and support; the Other represented by family, country, and religion, seems to be temporarily either absent or unsuccessful. Her relationship with her immediate family - her father and stepmother - is a failure. Daisy's memories of her home in America recall unpleasant moments of living with her stepmother Davina the Diabolical. Daisy perceives her stepmother as replacing her own mother in the relationship with her father through viciously 'suck[ing] his soul' (*How* 14). Furthermore, Daisy

speculates that by getting pregnant with what she derogatorily calls 'devil's spawn', her stepmother is attempting to replace her with a new baby, which to Daisy's mind is an attempt be make her redundant in the family structure. Hence, Daisy recognises herself as being a victim of the disintegration of her family - disintegration concurrently inaugurated at the moment of her mother's death in childbirth, but also as responsible for this disintegration since she is mainly the one to blame for the death of her mother.

Through her narration of her eventful English summer, Daisy expresses not only her anger towards her stepmother for plunging her into the family triangle and towards herself for being a matricide, but also a deeper wrath against her father is communicated as well. Having recognised that her mother might, after all, not have been living happily with her father, Daisy does not exempt her father from the guilt of displacing her mother. In the period that Daisy has lived in America, she has never seen a photograph of her mother taken before her marriage. All the pictures Daisy knows of show her mother always accompanied with her father, and in none of them does her mother look like the woman Daisy happens to see in a photograph in her Aunt Penn's office: 'she looked so different, happy and young like someone you've known in another life' (*How* 22). If this glimpse of her mother holds any meaning to Daisy, it would suggest that her mother had been deprived of happiness by her father. It would also make her aware that there was no physical representation (photograph) of her mother before marriage. Describing her father as 'one of those Never Mention Her Name Again type of fathers' implies that there has been no vocal representation of the mother after death either. Daisy, then, has an impression that the mother was only allowed

to survive within marriage and with a relation to the father, neither before nor after that: an impression that would lead Daisy to blame her father for the loss of her mother.

Abjection makes itself more noticeable through the adolescent's eating disorder. With a fear of displacement roaming inside her head, Daisy has always been haunted by the idea that her stepmother wants to poison her, which initiates a phobia of food that has developed into anorexia. The lack of nurture and emotional starvation within the family atmosphere may be one reason for Daisy's anorexia. Another probable reason for anorexia is that adolescents in general tend to absorb mixed messages from the media which instigate a yearning to have the 'perfect' body image dictated by the contemporary culture and at the same time, a desire to satisfy hunger. Eating disorders are common signs of abjection in contemporary adolescence, as Coats explains: 'the subject is as likely to topple into the abyss of abjection, which includes such material expressions of the death drive as eating disorders' (*Looking Glasses* 143). Daisy's problem with food can then be interpreted in one sense as an indirect influence of the absence of a relationship with her mother, since, in Freud's terminology, the death drive, associated with anorexia, is 'a bodily instinct to return to the state of quiescence that preceded our birth'.[10] But as the adolescent narrator explains to her cousin Edmund, the problem goes much further than that:

> I really tried to explain about at first not wanting to get poisoned by my stepmother and how much it annoyed her and how after a while I discovered I like the feeling of being hungry and the fact that it drove everyone stark raving mad and cost my father a fortune in shrinks and also it was something I was good at. (*How* 48)

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[10]Dino Felluga, see footnote 4 of this chapter.

Daisy's eating disorder emerges as a result of fear and an expression of anger but ends up as an enjoyable act of revenge against her father and stepmother and probably against herself.

Daisy experiences an imminent threat to the boundaries of her identity mediated through continuous conflict between her own desires and others' (or the Other's) expectations. It is this conflict between the un-symbolised Real drives and the Name-of-the-Father that unleashes Daisy's experience of abjection.[11] According to Kristeva, the repression of desires can be best traced in sign and image representations produced by the subject at the symbolic level, a notion she explores fully in her semiotic approach to literature in *Desire in Language*. The acquisition of language prompts the subject to articulate a pre-symbolic existence, typically a situation where the infant has no desires as such, because all desires are satisfied even before they develop. The mother's non-symbolised body becomes the focus of the semiotic as it is materialised in art and literature. Among materialisations of the mother's body are 'the voice as rhythm and timber, the body as movement, gesture and rhythm. Prosody, word-plays and especially laughter fall within the ambit of the semiotic.'[12] Just as bodily drives are discharged into signification, the logic of signification is already operating within the materiality of the body.

By means of signification, Daisy's repressed desire for the mother she is unable to relinquish appears within the gaps of her speech. In the first part of the

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[11] The Name-of-the-Father is Lacan's term for The laws and restrictions that control both desire and the rules of communication. According to Lacan The Name-of-the-Father is closely associated with the superego, the Phallus, the symbolic order, and the Oedipus complex. See Dino Felluga "Modules on Lacan: On Psychosexual Development." *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory* (November, 2003) <http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/psychoanalysis/lacandevelop.html> [Accessed 22 January 2006].
[12] Lechte, *Julia Kristeva*, p. 129.

novel, the paternal presence, a counterpart of the Name-of-the-Father, is eclipsed by the maternal aura. An abrupt and devastating separation from the mother occurred the moment Daisy was born. It is unquestionably traumatic for a child bearing the guilt that her mother died to give her life, 'it's a shame starting out your first day on the planet as a murderer' (*How* 22). The state of wholeness in the mother's womb is forever disrupted by the mother's death in childbirth, nor little Daisy were able to experience a state of a Real attachment to the mother's body. As a precondition to structuring the self, the mother should be rendered unnecessary on the level of the psyche, but for Daisy the mother is not yet expelled or ab-jected.

For the little child attaining a sense of self involves moves to engage in language and discourse that signifies the intrusion of the Name-of-the-Father. The mother must become abject in order for the child to become a subject, a process that is never easy as 'it is a violent, clumsy breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling' (*Powers* 13). The point made clear by Kristeva is that the Symbolic is not strong enough to secure an entire separation from the mother. There is always a risk of falling back into the semiotic against which abjection and the abject are the only 'safeguards' (2). Abjection is accordingly coexistent with the 'I' as a *'precondition of narcissism'* and 'causes it to be permanently brittle' whenever repression becomes less tense; 'the more or less beautiful image in which I behold or recognize myself rests upon an abjection that sunders it as soon as repression, the constant watchman, is relaxed' (*Powers* 13). The adolescent, then, with the renewal of

identity questions and relationship with the Real is prone to be caught in abjection.

Reluctant to confess her desire for the mother, Daisy's narration of her story is deeply resonant with this desire. Her primary repression of 'the mother' is a 'curious primacy, where what is repressed cannot really be held down, and where what represses already borrows its strength and authority from what is apparently very secondary: language' (*Powers* 13-14). Hence, language is a Symbolic act wherein the semiotic erupts through an unconscious expression of the Real. With the maternal ambiance present in Daisy's sphere, she is unable to come into terms with her own self without leaning on the mother's image for sustenance. Her language pulsates with a desire for the mother's presence; Daisy narrates that at one of the picnics she arranges with her cousins: 'I made a *nest* for my self [...] and lay down very still [...] I *warmed up* and all I could hear [...] talking in a *steady low stream* of conversation' (*How*, 21 emphasis added). This picture of Daisy nesting herself in a place where she can be warm recalls a moment of unity with the mother. The *steady low* conversation is also a prototype of the maternal soothing voice to the child attached to the mother's body. Though at first sight, the image may not appear laden with desire for the mother it soon does when Daisy correlates this moment of happiness and satisfaction with a memory of her mother: '[I] got a little bit of a flashback of what it was to be happy [...] It was times like this when I let my guard down for something like half a nanosecond, that Mom had a habit of strolling into my brain' (*How* 22). Nevertheless, Daisy's conscious feeling of guilt when she allows her mind to explore memories of her mother deters her from further contemplation. Daisy

attempts to create enough distance between herself and her lost mother, yet she continually conjures up images of her mother merging with her own thoughts and sensations.

A significant archetype of the mother-child fusion appears at another occasion when exhibited in the image of Daisy's unity with the earth. Lying under a tree on a fishing trip with her cousins, Daisy tells us she 'tried to imagine melting into the earth so [she] could spend eternity under this tree' (*How* 69). The image reveals the narrator's desire for a unity with 'mother earth'. In Holland's terms, the scene is closely related to our earliest oral fantasies of losing boundaries and of being overwhelmed (*Dynamics* 35). The scene is directly preceded by another image of unity, in which the river engulfs Daisy's body and initiates in her an uncanny feeling for which she lacks 'enough words to describe' (*How* 69). It is the non-presentable body of the mother that no symbols can fully capture. Moreover, both these pictures of unity are likely to be read as repetition fantasies which, according to Holland, are linked to omnipotence-of-thought fantasies (*Dynamics* 44). Holland refers to the fact that Freud, in some of his essays, points to the tendency of human beings to put themselves repeatedly in the same situation in order to deal with their inner psyche; this tendency is known as 'repetition compulsion'.[13] Hence, Daisy's desire to unite with the earth 'symbolizes a wish to return to one's warm, hungerless paradise before birth, or in the somewhat misleading layman's phrase, "return to the womb"' (*Dynamics* 45). These scenes may be interpreted as manifestations of Daisy's unconscious desire for the mother and an indication of the overwhelming presence of the mother

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[13] Sigmund Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey and Anna Freud, (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), 12, pp. 147-156.

which should become abject if the adolescent is to establish her own secured identity. In order to expel the mother, Daisy should know the mother even in the form of a semantic experience of attachment to her image. At her aunt's English house, Daisy expresses curiosity to learn more about her mother. She is eager to know more about her state of mind, not just her physical features: 'I guess what you really want to know are the things you can't ask.' The knowledge Daisy is after is how it feels to be in her mother's arms and what her touch would be like. In her innermost thoughts, she questions her aunt about her mother:

> Did she have eyes like yours and When you pushed my hair back was that what it feels like to have your mother do it and Did her hands look serious and quiet like yours and Did she ever have the chance to look at me with a complicated expression like the one on your face, and by the way Was she scared to die. (*How* 23)

Daisy's unanswered questions echo her buried desire for the making the mother known and differentiated. Part of Daisy's curiosity is satisfied when Aunt Penn tells her how happy her mother was when she knew of her pregnancy: 'she sounded happier than she'd ever sounded in her whole life about that baby. Which was you, Daisy' (*How* 26). The partial knowledge Daisy acquires will help her outline her mother as a person, so that the mother can stop being a whole presence that overshadows the speaking subject.

The shift depicted in Daisy's life from the New York lifestyle to the serenity of the English countryside symbolises a search for roots in the sense that Daisy is unconsciously seeking knowledge of her mother at her aunt's house. But this shift turns out to be a foretaste of a greater upheaval, both physical and psychological, that will test the adolescent's endurance to the limit. Through the narrative the reader gradually gets a more convincing sense of the mental and

psychological experience Daisy is going through. Her direct invitation to the reader to stroll into her mind and into the world of her story can be seen as direct expression of fluid boundaries between the narrator and the reader. Early in the novel, the reader's attention is drawn to Daisy's direct addressing and usage of such expressions and questions as 'let me tell you' and 'do you know..?' The adolescent narrator leads the reader into her own world focalising the story entirely through her eyes which allows a heightened sense of credibility and involvement from the reader. Viewing her as initially lacking in self-confidence, the reader probably feels empathy towards this motherless girl who depreciates herself as unbeautiful, and plain with nothing distinctive about her. When Daisy begins to narrate her life story, she also excludes as 'plain' her previous life in New York during which she has never had enough attention from her father. It took him a single look at her as a new born baby to decide that 'Elizabeth' was a suitable name, which turns to be in her view completely inappropriate for her personality.

Unexpectedly, Daisy's summer escape to England does not heal her from the memory of her father's indifference and her own self-pity, rather her narration takes on a newly intensified resonance of discordance in locating herself. Daisy's narration evokes a sense of unbridgeable split between her home country and the new English setting. When Daisy gets off the plane at the opening of her story, she steps into a different world where the prevailing conventions, or rather the violation of conventions, are unfamiliar. Edmund, for example, smokes cigarettes even though he is fourteen years old; nine-year old Piper can cook and almost run the household. Adulthood and childhood parameters are challenged and become

confusing to the American newcomer. Daisy's bewilderment towards the American/English split is a primary indication of her state of abjection. As Kristeva writes, the deject person, 'the one by whom the abject exists', is more concerned with the question '"Where am I?" than that of "Who am I?", for the space that engrosses the deject, the excluded, is never *one*, nor *homogeneous*, nor *totalizable*, but essentially divisible, foldable and catastrophic' (*Powers* 8). Almost immediately, Daisy's irreconcilable dichotomy becomes less distinct and transformed into a diffused and mutable sense of belonging. Upon her arrival in England Daisy's language appears to be rife with direct and implied expressions of comparison and contrast between the lifestyle and people of the English countryside and their counterparts of New York. While sometimes she logically understands her sense of estrangement in the new surrounding, she unexpectedly falls into a dispersed sense of where she belongs. For Daisy, English children seem to be more 'grown up' than children in America, and the English country house is very unusual compared to the apartment she has been used to in New York. However, when she lies in a room more suitable for 'a monk' assigned to her by her cousins, Daisy feels to be in 'the safest place' she has ever been in her life (*How* 11). When she covers herself with a black sheep blanket she has never seen alike before, she does not feel like a stranger: 'I felt like I'd belonged to this house for centuries but that could have been wishful thinking' (12). Next morning, it seems that the feeling she has had is merely 'wishful thinking,' because Daisy now readily feels and expresses an awareness of being in a strange place: 'I thought how strange it was to be lying in someone else's bed thousands of miles from home surrounded by greyish light and a weird kind of quiet that you never

get in New York City' (*How* 13). In essence, Daisy's first encounter with an English setting evokes ambivalent feelings of being in an in-between space. Her feelings are neither those of alienation nor those of comfort and familiarity. The lack of equilibrium evoked in her words suggests a sense of self that is transient and plural which reflects mutable adolescent subject in the process of becoming.

Daisy is not an exceptional or extraordinary adolescent, yet her adolescence is intensely heightened in the novel when dramatised throughout her encounter with extreme conditions. In the adolescent's journey into maturity, these conditions exemplify the critical obstacles and threats an adolescent has to confront socially and psychologically in order to establish a secure place in the adults' world. Coats encapsulates this notion by describing adolescence as a time of 'apocalypse'. It is a time of a second 'battle to establish one's place,' and to separate from the mother in the process of defining one's own boundaries within the Symbolic order (*Looking Glasses* 145). In adolescence lies a potential domain for abjection when an adolescent responds to his or her own desires, but has also to conform to the cultural codes of society. Abjection is a violent reaction to a threatened collapse in meaning caused when no clear distinction between subject and object or between self and other can be made. For Daisy whose geographical landscapes are as turbulent as her psychological ones, abjection becomes a test of her endurance.

The extreme conditions and exaggerated situation into which Daisy is driven awaken the reader, too, to the possibility of the nauseating sense of abjection which implicates a sense of threat to the discrete boundaries of the self. As Holland would say, the reader shares his or her own consciousness with the

adolescent's own consciousness, so s/he would introject her situation to enact his or her adolescent identity. Holland makes clear that 'identity is not a conclusion but a relationship: the potential, transitional, in between space in which I perceive someone as a theme and variations.'[14] Thus, the teenager's unsettling sense of abjection marked by her overtly and covertly expressed nausea towards her incest and graphically depicted death scenes among other things may well play on the reader. The day Aunt Penn leaves England for Oslo to give a lecture on 'The Imminent Threat of War', Daisy is left with her cousins unsupervised and almost completely cut from the rest of the world. The absence of obligations and communication creates a haven for Daisy and her cousin Edmund to engage in an underage sexual relationship. But the peaceful haven and the romance are soon interrupted by the Enemy's invasion and a new chapter of horror, trauma, and suffering starts in Daisy's life.

By means of depicting children as afflicted by the chaotic situation of the war despite their living in a quasi-isolated place, the novel undermines the mythical notion of children as living in a world of their own. The myth clearly collapses with the collapse of the serene English setting and its Edenic lifestyle. The scene of the children enjoying their peaceful haven inattentive to what is going outside is sharply contrasted with a consecutive scene in which the children are forced to split up and exiled from the farm house only to face one or another of the dystopian versions of the war. When Aunt Penn leaves the country, the children are happy to be left alone though they do not actually declare so. All that is happening elsewhere in the world only dimly impinges on their concerns; as

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[14] Norman Holland, 'Reading and Identity', *Academy Forum* (American Academy of Psychoanalysis) 23.2 (1979): 7-9. <www.clas.ufl.edu/users/nholland/rdgident.htm> [Accessed 22 January 2007]

Daisy says, they 'DIDN'T REALLY CARE' (47). The lack of adult supervision simply allows the children uncontrolled freedom and independence, since it turns out, as Daisy later deduces, that the moment Aunt Penn has left 'was exactly the moment [they] all started skewing off into crisis' (27). Significantly, adults are depicted in a diversity of roles in the novel. Adults like Aunt Penn seem to be capable of providing security and welfare to children, but too busy to afford doing so. Other adults such as Davina, Daisy's stepmother, and her father are, perhaps unintentionally, a threat to the emotional and psychological welfare of children. But there are more threatening type of adults, those who are capable, by launching *adult* wars, of depriving children of safety and happiness.

It becomes apparent that the absence of adults has indirectly created an atmosphere conducive to a love and sex relationship between Daisy and her cousin Edmund. A world without parents or teachers is, for Daisy and her cousins, an imaginary world of fantasy: 'there no longer *was* any real world' (*How* 51). For Daisy, Edmund seems to replenish, at some level, the space hollowed by the mother's absence replacing by such the original love object. Drawing on Kristeva, Martha Rainwater explains this process:

> The child/adolescent must eventually and irrevocably leave the mother and seek a new love object which is also susceptible to loss. In psychoanalytic thought, all love objects are replacement for that irreconcilable, unrecoverable abject, the mother. [15]

This psychic replacement facilitates an establishment of the subject identity which is accompanied by the expulsion of mother as abject. With Edmond replacing the original love object in Daisy's psyche, she starts to show signs of will to recuperate. Daisy, who has always hated to justify her eating habits to anyone, is

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[15] Martha Westwater, *Giant Despair Meets Hopeful: Kristevan Readings in Adolescent Fiction* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2000), p. 11.

now able willingly to explain her problem to Edmund. To be capable of talking about and therefore signifying her eating disorder can be seen as an initial step towards defining and excluding the abject. Daisy's feelings towards Edmund transform her mode of self-destruction into a temporarily positive view of life. Her damaging starvation is partly replaced by emotional 'starvation' and desire for Edmund.

Having subconsciously recognised that she is facing and violating the social and cultural Law, Daisy falls into a deep turmoil of abjection. This experience of abjection is precipitated by Daisy's continuing tension between her 'inappropriate' desire and the need to conform to social norms that delegitimize such desire. Her 'falling into sexual and emotional thrall with an under-age blood relative' as she consciously puts it in her own words, is not a rebellious act she is proud of: 'I was pretty far gone, but not so far gone that I thought anyone with half a toehold in reality would think what we were doing was a good idea' (*How* 52-53). Her premature sexual relationship can be seen as an unconscious attempt to have access to the adult world, to re-access the Symbolic, or to put it differently to be empowered.[16] Yet, her behaviour cannot be redeemed within the rules of the Symbolic represented by cultural, social and religious codes. Knowing very well that she is taking part in the 'Decline of Western Civilization', she is no longer in control of herself (*How* 52-53). Though Daisy states that she and Edmund are living in a state of 'oblivion' in a world of their own, she is unable to ignore the accusation of the 'Family Stare' (66). Daisy's feeling of abjection is intensified by her inability to exclude the improper: the taboo and the abject.

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[16] See Roberta Seelinger Trites, 'Sex and Power' in *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2000) for the role of sex in empowering and disempowering adolescents.

Abjection, as conveyed through defying and breaching boundaries, creates, in the reader, fantasies that allow him or her to introject the good and project the bad; which in other words restructure the borders of the reader's subject in relation to the Other. The reader may, however, negotiate his or her own boundaries by an experience of reading a text that in itself defies a fixed sense of identity and reflects the metamorphic quality of the subject in process. The very title of the novel, *How I Live Now*, bears a resonance of openness and a yet-to-come identity which echoes in part what Vice calls a text that is operating along its margins. The tentative status of the implied reader and the speculative tone of the narrator's construct the novel itself as an 'adolescent' text that is open to interpretation by different kinds and ages of reader. The reader experiences abjection triggered by his/her lack of specific identification with the narratee. In other words, it is not clear whether Daisy's narration of her emotional and sexual whims is directed to a child or to an adult narratee. Her invitation to the narratee 'Now let's try to understand that falling into sexual and emotional thrall with an under-age blood relative [...]' and her assumption 'whether you like it or not, Things Happen' are both provocative to an adult reader and overstating the case for a child reader (*How* 52). Although in adult reading, gestures of emotional and physical intimacy as depicted in the novel imitate the prelapsarian scene of desire and fulfilment, the situation here is totally different. The adult reader hesitates to identify with the utopian scene of love and intimacy because the fantasy image is not perfect. There is some distortion in the picture, as the two people involved are 'too young and too related' (*How* 51). In spite of Daisy's frequent references to her love relationship as 'illicit' and 'inappropriate', no clear moral perspective is

conveyed by the narration. But a clear moral message might also lead one to classify the novel within the didactic type of children's books. The confusedness of the moral stance in *How I Live Now* has led some critics to criticise Rosoff for presenting ambivalent perspectives unsuitable for younger readers. They argue that she has not included any kind of guidance 'with her novel's unconventional morality' and that by 'including a scene of underage sex between cousins, Rosoff has been - and will be - accused of immorality.'[17] As Seelinger-Trites writes, 'adults enjoy lecturing to adolescents about sexuality because it gives the adult power and certain sexual pleasure, the scintillation present in the act of forbidding.'[18] However, by juxtaposing the two scenes of childhood mentioned above, the utopian scene and the ensuing apocalyptic one, the reader may be able to infer moral messages out of the structure or in Holland's words to use the form as defence. The image of the abrupt shift from a utopian to an apocalyptic scene echoes the Fall from the Garden of Eden into the earth of suffering and mortality, which is prompted by a sexual act and by defiance to God's orders (a theme will be discussed in chapter five). Daisy and Edmund, prototypes of Adam and Eve, are forced to set feet in the world of suffering and separation as a result of their negligence of the law of God, the Law of the father. Moreover, to employ the biblical metaphor again, the outbreak of the war in McCaughrean's novel could be read as a punishment from God for human beings' growing corruption and

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[17] Julia Eccleshare, 'Love, Loss and Loyalty', *The Guardian*, (9 October 2004) <http://books.guardian.co.uk/childrensfictionprize2004/story/0,14765,1323022,00.html> [Accessed 27 September 2005]
[18] Seelinger-Trites, *Disturbing the Universe*, p. 95.

breaching of prohibitions as in the story of the Flood.[19] As we shall discuss in a later chapter, the narrative structure of the myth of the Flood follows the pattern of human wickedness which leads to the destruction of the earth.

For a reader who is well aware of the threat of terror that may reside closer than expected, the war depicted in the novel may evoke the continuous fear of the abject. The 'unknown' enemy represented in Rosoff's book is not only a threat to the borders of the country, but its immense threat comes from its indistinctness from the institutions that support the Symbolic. This war epitomises the abject because it is a 'cunning murder' (*Powers* 4); which arouses feelings of 'anxiety and superiority and paranoia all mixed in one polite grimace' in people's faces (*How* 44-45). For Kristeva, abjection is caused by 'what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules' (*Powers* 4). The enigmatic enemy is abject as it 'waited for most of the British Army to be lured into crises on the other side of the world and then waltzed in and cut off transport and communications [...] so basically they were DEFENDING Britain against its own [...] forces [...]' (*How* 93). The fact that this enemy cuts food supplies off from civilians and poisons water, throwing the country into chaos, makes this war a criminal act and a cause of abjection.

The first omens of suffering emerge when the cousins, confronted with the reality of war for the first time, are forced to separate. When Osbert, the eldest cousin, asks Daisy and Piper to pack a bag because they are going to live with someone else in compliance with military orders, Daisy's abjection intensifies because she is put face to face with what is supposed to be a representation of the

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[19] See for example, the use of biblical literature in children's fiction in John Stephen and Robyn McCallum, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature* (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1998), pp. 25-58.

Law. Rejecting the idea of living away from her new love object in the 'BACK OF BEYOND' (75), now Daisy begins to suffer a deep sense of estrangement and dissolution of borders,

> And looking at those miserable faces I wondered whether this was a cultural thing or what, that no one in this country says You've got to be...kidding when told to vacate their home and abandoned the newly loved ones by a bunch of jumped-up reject army guys playing war games for a lark. (76)

Daisy, who regards her Aunt's English house as almost her own 'home,' is now reacting as a 'Female American National'. Unable to predict her place in this 'Vital Juncture in History', Daisy thinks that she may get stuck with what an American calls 'hillbillies' (76). Daisy is confronted with the ineffectual system of power, and whereas this system should provide her with protection, it threatens her with separation and victimisation.

This departure marks a new turning point in Daisy's life; a point which initiates the most challenging time to the adolescent's identity. The adolescent who has just discovered a higher self-evaluation through love is obliged to desert almost everyone she cares for. With her young cousin Piper, Daisy sets off for a new setting where she faces the most abominable versions of the abject: war, death and blood, all of which blur the distinction between the moral and the immoral, the animate and the inanimate, the clean and the dirty. Her narrative of the war scenes is also suggestive of abjection; images of blood, 'brain splattered,' mud, weeping pus, blisters are powerful manifestations of Daisy's abjection. Daisy relates a horrible scene of death she closely witnesses upon her return with Piper from work to Major McEvoy's house. When the 'show-offy' Joe insults a checkpoint guard,

> [he] pulled the trigger and there was a loud crack and part of Joe's
> face exploded and there was blood everywhere and he fell over out
> of the truck into the road. Piper watched the whole thing without
> moving a muscle but the shock of it made me retch and I had to turn
> away over the side of the truck [...] I heard about a hundred shots
> from a machine gun and the momentum of the blasts hurled Major
> M. backwards across the road away from Joe with blood welling up
> in holes all over him and this time you could see Joe's condition was
> a hundred per cent dead with brains splattered everywhere.' (*How*
> 112-13)

Not only does the detailed graphic description of the act of killing reflect the sense

of the narrator's abjection, but it produces a similar sense of revulsion in the

reader. The death scenes intensify the effect of abjection since death is

traumatically a reminder of the materiality and vulnerability of a human being.

Kristeva notes that the corpse violently 'upsets' the one confronting it: 'if dung

signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits

me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached

upon everything' (*Powers* 3). The corpse initiates abjection as it blurs the

boundaries between 'the inanimate and the inorganic'. With reference to the

Bible, Kristeva argues that a lifeless body represents 'fundamental pollution', a

transitional stage between animation and abiotic earth; 'a body without soul', a

threat to the symbolic, 'is to be excluded from God's *territory* as it from his

speech' (193).

In Rosoff's novel we visualise abominable scenes of death as filtered

through Daisy's eyes. Repugnant for the reader as well as for the narrator, the

decaying dead bodies at Gateshead farm turn into what Kristeva calls 'dejection'

(109). Daisy and Piper are shocked by the horrible scene of the horrendous

aftermath of the massacre: 'dead things everywhere [...] putrid and rotting' (*How*

151-52). The scene instigates a state of uneasiness, transferred to the reader who

becomes implicated by the very graphic description of the scene: 'the birds were pecking at a dead face...tugging at the skin...and pull jagged purple strips of flesh' (152). Likewise the reader's visceral response is evoked by Daisy's vivid description of her own nausea: 'so foul your stomach tries to vault out through your throat and if your brain has any sense it wants to jump out of your skull and run away as fast as possible with or without the rest of you [...]' (151-52). In response to these horrific images, the adult reader struggles with the question of how much the narrator, who is herself a child, ought to reveal of atrocious scenes if she is addressing an inexperienced younger reader.

In Holland's words, 'the mental process embodied in the literary work somehow becomes a process inside its audience. What is "out there" in the literary work feels as though it is "in here," in your mind or mine' (*Dynamics* 67). It is the reader's 'undisbelief' that invites the reader to be involved mentally and psychologically in the narrative. Here, the abjection overwhelming the narrator Daisy is transferred to the reader. The adult reader's sense of abjection is perhaps slightly different to that of the child reader as it is derived from social and cultural awareness of the necessity of burying the dead. For the child reader, one may posit the hypothesis that there would be a feeling of revolt against the action of murder itself (*Powers* 109). In a review of the book posted on Amazon website, an adult reader notes that it is 'so shocking I really felt sick with horror at a certain point in the book. I thought: this is how it would be. This is how ordinary life would change, in exactly this way.' In contrast, a teenage girl finds that 'some aspects are rather upsetting, but I felt this to be a good transition into slightly more

mature novels.'[20] The fact that among the massacred people there are women and children is disturbing and poignant to both adult and child readers. It is the stage where abjection reaches its apex as Kristeva suggests: 'abjection reaches its apex when death [...] interferes with what in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death: childhood, science, among other things' (*Powers* 4).

Abjection is not merely expressed through thematic description of suffering and horror. Rather, Kristeva argues that abjection makes its ultimate appearance through narrative itself: 'for, when narrated identity is unbearable, when the boundary between subject and object is shaken, and when even the limit between inside and outside becomes uncertain, the narrative is what is challenged first' (*Powers* 141). Daisy's narrative seems to undergo a change in tone and pattern whenever she attempts to put into words a scene of death she witnesses during the war. Her narrated description of the murders of Joe and Major McEvoy, and a major part of her account of the massacre demonstrate a diversion from her normal narrative. In these two scenes the sentences tend to be very long and lack any punctuation. It looks as if the unbroken streams of words were uttered at once without interruption. One can detect a demand to spell out the horror all at once. As Kristeva notes: when narrative 'coincide[s] with the incandescent states of a boundary-subjectivity' or what she calls 'abjection', narrative yields to 'the crying-out theme of suffering-horror' (*Powers* 141). If in abjection the subject tends to expel what threatens its integrity, then this is one attempt to spell out the abject. At the end of the novel, Daisy expresses a stronger

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[20] Both reviews in *How I Live Now* Reviews, *Amazon* <http://www.amazon.co.uk/product-reviews/0141318015/ref=cm_cr_pr_link_next_2?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=0&pageNumber=2&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending> posted on 23 October 2007 and 20 May 2007 respectively [accessed 3 August 2009]

desire to spell out her anger at her abject love when she states: 'and suddenly the thing inside that had kept me focused all these years rose in my throat like vomit. It was as strong as poison and for once I didn't fight it down or try to reshape it as something polite' (*How* 198). In fact, the narrative as a whole seems to mirror Daisy's psyche and this certainly affects the reader's experience. It is striking that a thirty year-old actual reader expresses her dislike to the narrative style because 'it's meant to sound like you're listening to Daisy talking out loud - lots of sentence fragments and run-ons.'[21] One may suggest that this is exactly what the narrative is meant to evoke in the reader; a sense of being emotionally entwined with the protagonist.

Daisy's abjection reaches its apex at the massacre scene, because it suggests an act of murder committed in cold blood and which she is able to witness at close range. In the face of powerful, immediate threats, Daisy feels weak and insecure. In Kristeva's response to her own inquiry about the possibility of any defence, she advocates that 'scouring is the only one; by a reduction, not a transcendental but a mystical one' (*Powers* 143). The only means of defence Daisy is capable of equipping herself with is burying her feelings of horror in order to give a place for more urgent feelings of great love and protection towards Piper, her young cousin 'Piper's job was to be a Mystical Creature and mine was to get things done here on earth'(84). The motherly affections Daisy develops towards Piper during their desolate journey after the banishment help both of them to survive. Daisy is certainly empowered with a new 'incarnation' as a mother of Piper (156). Now that she has no one but Piper, Daisy feels a great responsibility

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[21] Jessica Gockley, '*How I Live Now* Reviews', *GoodReads*, (2 January 2008)
<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/161426.How_I_Live_Now> [accessed 3 August 2009]

towards her, 'I was Piper's guardian now and thought I'd better act like it and make it clear to her that she was safe with me no matter what. And the thought made me fierce and strong like a mother wildebeest [...]' (77). Daisy, thinking of her cousins as being, like her, deprived of their caring mother, wonders how she could love someone more than herself. She realises that her worries about getting stuck in the war are 'transferred on to worrying about keeping them alive' (87). But very different from any cousinly relationship, the teenager recognises a unique bond with young Piper. Daisy, who herself has never experienced a relationship with her mother, expresses a desire to become Piper's surrogate mother, to be able to protect and love her child. This mystical incarnation as a mother compensates for Daisy's loss of the mother and inaugurates the subject for as Coats argues 'it is only when one stands on the side of the mother, so to speak, that one is able to pass through to the other side of the Lacanian mirror stage' (*Looking Glasses* 19). It can be added that Daisy renders her mother temporarily redundant by means of 'displacement'[22]. In mothering Piper, Daisy becomes able to create a new self-esteem unthreatened by the abject as these protective emotions are recognised as acceptable within the Symbolic order.

At the end of the survival journey, Daisy's narrative reveals a substantial change in her personality. Symbolically, when Daisy and Piper wash dirt away from their bodies in the river, Daisy's attitude to the body sounds remarkably different. Having noticed Piper's skinny body, she comments: 'I noticed how skinny Piper was which once upon a time I would have thought was a good thing and now I thought was just what happens when you're nine years old and don't

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[22] In his *Interpretations of Dreams*, Freud defines 'displacement' as one of the primary processes (fundamental inner drives) when a symbol takes the place of something.

have enough food to grow properly' (*How* 141). Food becomes a symbol of life and survival rather than abject. Now that food tastes delicious after an exhausting journey, Daisy realises that throughout her life she has been starving. Moreover, it becomes clear that Daisy's views about God and faith have radically changed as well. When the two girls arrive at home, starving Daisy remembers that few months ago she hid some food in the barn, 'I prayed to all gods I never believed in my whole entire life that there would be enough for Piper and may be some for me. I guess this means I now have to believe in God' (159-60). At the end of the novel, Edmund himself is pictured as a manifestation of God's law. Thin, worn and covered with scars, Edmund's image bears unmistakeable resemblance to the figure of the Christ. The 'sharp crucifixes', 'passion' and 'the statue of the dead child' all underline this association (196-97). More importantly, according to Kristeva the image of Christ stands for a universal object of faith and forgiveness as it is 'the vanishing point of all fantasies' (*Powers* 120). Both Daisy's new view of God and the presence of the image of Christ at the end of the novel are indications of her entry into the Symbolic law represented by God.

Another key reference to the narrator's regeneration occurs towards the end of the novel when Daisy and Piper move from the barbarism of the barn to the civilisation of the house. In a variant of the mirror stage, Daisy looks at herself in the mirror and strongly refuses to believe that the person she is looking at is herself, 'I didn't recognise the person I saw there, including how thin I looked and how dirty and how matted my hair was' (163). Unlike the false image with which a little child aspires to identify once he or she catches its glimpse during the mirror phase, Daisy rejects to identify with the reflection of herself in the mirror,

it is what Lacan describes as the misrecognition or *méconnaissance* of the alienating identity which marks the development of the subject.[23] She is now fully aware that this distorted image is a manifestation of what she should not be like. Her revulsion against dirt is an indication of the transformation she experiences within herself. With soap, water and clean clothes, 'I started to reinvent my self as a person' (164). Having a body that is clean and proper is necessitated by the superego's victory over the abject of impurity.

Daisy's narration of her story is another means by which she recuperates from the painful experience of abjection. She becomes a speaking subject not only through *narrating* her story, but also more specifically through *writing* it.[24] Back in New York, Daisy starts to put her story in words. Her feeling of loss; the loss of her mother, Edmund and Piper, is replaced by the means of signification: 'I wrote everything down, at first in choppy fragments; a sentence here, a few words there [...]. Later I wrote more, my grief muffled but not eased by the passage of time' (182). Writing, suggests Kristeva, is itself a kind of 'discharge', a defilement rite which can 'hollow' out abjection (*Powers* 208). But writing is also a signification system which secures the writer's access to the Symbolic. Daisy's choppy writing at the first shot is emblematic of a fragmented self. Her story, however, is soon substituted by a more coherent one, the one she presents to the reader. In this selfhood narrative, Daisy achieves an integration into the Symbolic away from her mother. The position of the subject is structured by a break from the mother, this break 'establishes what Lacan calls the place of Other as the place of the

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[23] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. by Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1977.
[24] Kristeva's notion of attaining subjectivity by means of writing appears in *Revolution in Poetic Language*.

"signifier".[25] Writing has secured a transition for Daisy from the solipsistic state of waiting and suffering to a state of awareness of herself as different from the m/other.

The adolescent's modest artistic endeavour of writing and narrating her story has certainly secured Daisy a status of distinction from her narratee, but it also casts fresh doubt about the identity of this addressed narratee. With a voice that sarcastically speaks about a horrible stepmother, passionately declares romantic feelings, angrily shouts at the craziness of children's banishment and shrewdly lectures about the non-logic of war, the narrator attempts to reach beyond a young narratee. Notwithstanding the fact that the story is uni-focalised by a first-person narrator, a typical feature of young adult literature, still, the narrative raises serious questions that can only be inferred by the adult reader.[26] Furthermore, thematic issues such as violence, sex and war visualised as such, label the book as controversial in the context of writing for children which at least until recently, has tended to shelter the child reader from the hard facts of life.[27] Non-conservative critics, however, argue that it is difficult to keep children from real-life facts such as war which becomes all around us. In most children's books, suggest Fox and Hunt, a child is empowered through fiction, but in the case of war fiction 'adults are disempowered too, and if children are given a story in which even the adults are disempowered, what hope or power is there for the children?' (501) In response one may argue that in a text such as Rosoff's, which

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[25] Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language.* p. 48.
[26] On the narrative characteristics of children's literature, see for example Maria Nikolajeva's *Introduction to the Theory of Children's Literature* (Tallinn, Estonia: Tallinn Pedagogical university, 1997)
[27] Carol Fox and Peter Hunt, 'War' in *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, ed., by Peter Hunt, 2nd edn (London : Routledge, 2004), I, pp. 499-506 (p. 499)

is clearly not directed to little children, fiction does not need to be always hopeful; at adolescence children become more open to accept reality-oriented issues without losing the ability to fantasise as will be discussed in chapter three.

In fact, *How I Live Now* shifts the attention to the role of the powerful adult in disempowering the child, the weak, by imposing unjustified conflicts/wars onto the world of children. Written in the run-up to the Iraq war, a war built upon 'a fairly thin proposition', the novel invites the reader to sense an atmosphere of worldly turmoil, 'paranoia and dread of future'.[28] The war which is depicted as occurring in England, is intended to draw attention to 'adult' institutions' carelessness towards people and children all around the world who suffer terribly from the repercussions of continual wars based on divergent assumptions and prejudicial attitudes. The realistic depiction of the apocalyptic scenes of war and death produces a realistic version of a war capable of threatening the reader's sense of subjectivity because it happens here on his/her own homeland and not on the other side of the continent. It blurs the distinction between the self and the other which instigates the experience of abjection. In essence, the novel provokes the reader to share the anguish imposed upon the innocent many by the powerful few.

Abjection, then, can not only be enacted through identification with the teenager's condition, but also through a level of recognition that, as individuals and nations we are not invincibly powerful; our borders can be exposed to threats of the abject. Abjection is not a single battle in defining the subject's discreteness, but a constant test and necessity for its individual existence. Much as adolescence

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[28] Meg Rosoff 'Interview: Meg Rosoff Discusses the Inspiration for her First Novel', in *Book Browse* <http://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm?author_number=1059> [Accessed 30 September 2005]

is implicated with abjection, so is every juncture of the subject's personal history. Rosoff's *How I Live Now* is a text which defies boundaries with its depiction of the unknown, its breaching of the traditional codes of children's fiction and its open ending. The text can well play the abject in its power to allow its reader to experience the subject's fluctuation and temporal crossing of boundaries between the Real and the Symbolic; childhood and adulthood; self and other. Such temporary lack of distinction in the subject's boundaries is what Kristeva calls 'the adolescent imaginary'- an imaginary which an adult can experience in the process of reading.

Chapter Two

Blessed by a Daughter: Female Enunciation in

Geraldine McCaughrean's *Not the End of the World*

While questions of subjectivity are intrinsically predominant in much of contemporary adolescent literature, in some of the novels depicting female protagonists these questions tend to be related specifically to negotiations of female identity. In adolescence, girls do not merely redefine their sense of selfhood by appropriating what is proper and excluding what is improper within the mandates of the Symbolic Order and the Law of the Father as discussed in the first chapter. Rather, at this stage of dramatic change teenage girls significantly begin to question gendered roles prescribed and controlled by the logic of this Law and apparently predetermined by their own anatomy. It should come as no surprise that narratives of rebellion and female self-discovery are closely related to the feminist sub-genre of young adult fiction. Representations of female subjectivity in fiction are based on ideological and cultural assumptions constructed about the relationship between the female and male sex and the way this relationship is traditionally defined and controlled by the masculine Other. An articulation of female autonomous subjectivity becomes a significant feature of coming of age fiction directed to female adolescent readers. While in some adolescent fiction this may be expressed by presenting a female protagonist as pursuing a career or abandoning a romantic relationship, Geraldine McCaughrean's novel discussed in this chapter provides rather an unusual example of constructing a female identity.

In her feminist retelling of the biblical story of the Flood, McCaughrean does not simply depict a female protagonist rebelling against masculine suppression, but by inserting a new female character into a well-known plot, she deconstructs by the very act of rewriting a canonical patriarchal text. *Not the End of the World* breaks the women's silence prevailing in the biblical text and replaces its detached objective view of the tale with a close subjective experience of McCaughrean's fictional characters. Timna, the invented female character, is assigned the role of the main narrator since it is her first-person narrative voice that mostly speaks to the readers and her eyes that filter the events of the story. Though the task of narration is occasionally taken over by other male characters, the female voice is clearly predominant. As a close witness of the apocalypse of the Flood and to the hegemony of the male powers, the fictional daughter of Noah undertakes the duty of relating the story of the flood in which she recounts her experience of horror and rebellion. Throughout the narrative, McCaughrean attempts to demonstrate how crippling and repressive the masculine power onboard the Ark is to Timna's female agency.[1] The novel is a dramatisation of female desire for liberation from a state of marginalisation and disempowerment prescribed by a patriarchal ideology that conceives of female individuals as ignorant and weak creatures. The intertextual revision of the biblical structure of the story takes on a strongly feminist slant, which is mainly manifest in the female narrative voice critiquing stereotypical masculinity and celebrating transcendent female agency. This revisionary structure also emphasises the necessity for a transgressive advance beyond traditional and institutionalised boundaries which

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[1] The Ark capitalised in this argument is not necessarily a reference to the historical Ark in the Bible. It is written as such to correspond with the capitalised Ark in the fictional text of McCaughrean.

intrude on female space. Not only does McCaughrean fictionally account for the silenced voice of women in the historical context, she also redeems this silence by giving her female characters voices and perspectives.

McCaughrean's feminist insights are primarily communicated, through the development of adolescent Timna who is nevertheless a witness to other women's transformations in the course of the novel. Sceptical about the ethics of drowning the world, fourteen-year old Timna has just arrived at a stage in which she is no longer able to blindly comply with what she perceives as the oppressive law of her own family. Beginning in a state of abjection, she gradually becomes conscious of a growing sense of power and, with the help of an imaginary father figure, she ultimately develops into an individualised female self capable of making her own choices. Timna's successful survival outside the enclosures of patriarchal domination at the end of the plot marks an enactment of female identity evolving from subjugated self into a distinct female subject wielding her own agency within an alternative patriarchal order. One effect of this enactment is to open up for the female subject alternative visions of growing into maturity which does not simply operate according to the rules of rivalry and conflict with authoritarian male subjects.

Admitting the fictional female adolescent into the biblical story line and building up an alternative chronology result in a dialogic tension between the fictional and the original biblical texts. The intertextual dialogue serves to underscore and express the writer's feminist views and revisionary meanings. John Stephens remarks that intertextuality 'often plays a major part in attempts to

produce determinable meanings and to acculturate the audience'.[2] McCaughrean's novel, however, stretches beyond fixed interpretations for some readers allowing them to internalise particular ways of reviewing and restructuring their adolescent subject positions. It may also equally work for the writer herself who, in an interview, describes herself as being 'caught up with her discontented teenage self'.[3] It is no surprise, then, that among her wide audience, there are considerable numbers of adults who may find themselves questioning and reconsidering their adult identities by internalising an adolescent sense of subjectivity through reading. The elaborate style and subtle cynicism of the novel, however, make the book quite approachable for mature readers. On her general tendency to write more or less above the age group of the young, she observes in an interview:

> Every time I start a novel I think to myself, 'This time I'll make it a bit younger'. But somehow the age pitch always creeps upwards ... In the end I just have to go where the story takes me, because the themes and preoccupations of a book only really emerge as I write it.[4]

It is quite likely that *Not the End of the World*, implicated in subtle and explicit feminist connotations, can work upon women readers as much as effectively as it does on younger female readers. McCaughrean herself has not been exactly specific about her target audience, *Not the End of the World* has mainly been promoted as a children's book. When asked if her book is 'purely' a children's book, McCaughrean clearly states that it is not 'strictly' one:

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[2] John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children's Fiction* (New York: Longman, 1992), pp. 85-86.
[3] Nicholas Tucker, 'Geraldine McCaughrean: Surfing the Sea of Stories', *The Independent* (22 July 2005) < http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/geraldine-mccaughrean-surfing-the-sea-of-stories-499646.html> [accessed 13 March 2009]
[4] Geraldine McCaughrean, 'Hooked on an Adventure', *Book Trust* (2008) <http://www.booktrust.org.uk/show/feature/Interview-with-Geraldine-McCaughrean> [accessed 12 March 2009]

I don't see any of my books as strictly children's books. I just write a book. Generally, they tend to have children in them, and they tend to be about things that are of interest to children. I think this one in particular is older than anything that I've ever written before, older in appeal, because it is quite dark, and ...yeah this is the one of all my books I would like adults to read as well.[5]

Having opened the threshold for its readership, the book has quite attracted a wide audience from children, who would enjoy a girl storyteller relating a version of a story with which many readers would be familiar, to teenagers who would find Timna parodying their own desire to challenge parental authority, to adult readers who might view the novel as a feminist critique of patriarchy in religious tradition. The novel's status as a book for readers of indeterminate age can be confirmed by the various awards and prestigious status bestowed upon it. The book won the Whitbread Children's Book Award 2004 in the United Kingdom, School Library Journal's Best Books 2005 and New York Public Library books for Teen Age 2006 in the United States. The book was also listed for a new show on BBC entitled 'Page Turners' to be read alongside twenty-four recognizably 'adult' books.[6] A close analysis of the narrative representation of female subjects in the novel, and that of the adolescent narrator in particular can help reveal the potential significance the text may have for its readers. If this new retelling of Noah's Ark succeeds in refashioning the accepted mythical genealogy of the Judeo-Christian world, it will also present the (female) reader with new horizons for constructing subjectivity. While the previous chapter focuses on the

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[5] Geraldine McCaughrean in an Interview with Jenni Murray, 'On her Book, *Not the End of the World*', *Woman's Hour*, BBC Radio Four 29 November, 2004.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/2004_48_mon_02.shtml> [accessed 3 February 2007]
[6] John Ezard and Owen Gibson, 'Joy for Book Trade as BBC Takes on Richard and Judy' in *The Guardian* (8 February 2005)
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,1407871,00.html> [accessed 27 February 2007]

adolescent's enunciation of the female subject through an imaginary future, this chapter valorises the female subject in an imaginary alternative view of a mythical past.

The invention of Timna's as an intradiegetic narrator, both as a participating character (as a member of Noah's family) and a narrating observer of the episodes, is a considerable departure from the traditional tale of the Flood.[7] The Bible relates the story of Noah and his three sons Shem, Ham and Japheth; there is neither a reference to any daughters nor a significant representation of women onboard the Ark. In McCaughrean's version, women are given names, voices and personalities. Ama, Noah's wife, Bashemath, Shem's wife, Sarai, Ham's wife and Zillah, the unwilling bride of Japheth all play an important part in shaping McCaughrean's feminist views. Indeed, even few female animals are given voices to express their own instincts and fears. Though each of the women presented transcends oppression in her own way, the feminist implications of the text are mainly evinced through the narrative articulation of the adolescent subject's passage from the fragile disposition into a clear configuration of the female mature self. Timna recounts her experience of living within the patriarchal atmosphere of the Ark, her challenge to the authoritarian orders and ultimately her escape to the island of grapes which represents, with all its unparalleled perfection, a utopian alternative to the patriarchy of the Ark. The structure of rebellion and reward fits a general pattern in many adolescent narratives, wherein it is common to find young people being represented as fighting their way into

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[7] 'Intadiegetic narrator' is contrasted to 'extradiegetic narrator' who is superior to the story s/he narrates (not a diegetic character), see Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1983), pp. 94-95.

maturity through defying adult authorities and parent figures.[8] Yet this structure

also initiates profound questions that adult readers, perhaps women in particular,

may find playing on their affective and intellectual response. An adult female

reader may identify with Timna's continual distrust of stereotypical and

patriarchal views. The text can also activate, for the adult reader, new negotiations

of her gendered identity; if adolescence is defined as the inevitable requisite for

our passage to adulthood, this structure may allow the adult reader to negotiate a

new sense of female self that has previously crystallised in her own former

adolescence. This may occur through the reader's reliving of the apocalypse of

adolescence as experienced by Timna. If subjectivity is 'a fluid concept based

more on the primacy of language than on the primacy of individual mind', it is

quite possible for the adolescent subjectivity constructed in the novel to be

experienced by female readers, of different ages.[9]

While considering the current fictional text within the parameters of the

biblical narrative for children can determine the features often labelled as

uncharacteristic of children's literature such as its strong picturesque language, it

can also help reveal the aspects that open the text for older readers. Indeed setting

the fictional text against the biblical source hardly unfamiliar to most Western

readers can serve to construct an implied reader in McCaughrean's text, a reader

who is able to appreciate the ideological implications of the writer's textual

parody. Whereas divine authority in children's biblical stories is generally

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[8] See for example Roberta Seelinger Trites, 'Paradox of Authority' in *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2000), pp. 54-83 (57).
[9] Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), p. 26. See also Catherine Belsey, 'Constructing the Subject: Deconstructing the Text' in *Feminist Criticism and Social Change*, ed. by J. .Newton and D. Rosenfelt (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 45-64.

presented as something to be taken for granted and never questioned, it is not that straightforward in McCaughrean's novel. Here, the adolescent narrator questions the validity of divine authority and its dominating agents represented by the fanatic Noah and his ruthless campaigners Sam and Ham.

In their study of retelling biblical stories in literature, John Stephens and Robyn McCallum argue that the unquestioned divine authority represented in children's Bible stories is equivalent to the 'irrefutable premises' required by Christian theology. This authority is associated with boundaries which are normally presented as un-transgressable:

> Authority is constituted by establishing boundaries, so that rules, prohibitions, and so on, presuming that those boundaries are natural and universal, teach that moral and social normality is defined by refusal to transgress them.[10]

In fact, boundaries and transgression are key motifs in the representation and articulation of female subjectivity in McCaughrean's text. According to Seelinger Trites, negotiations with authority in young adult novels are designed to reflect the dynamics of power, self-assertion and repression, which an adolescent has to experience in order to become an adult.[11] In McCaughrean's novel, though, Timna's need to challenge rules and transgress boundaries becomes a natural outcome of her inability to come into terms with the repressive authority of her father and older brothers. Incessantly, she questions their fanatic zeal and the validity of their beliefs and actions through her sharp satirical voice. One of the main issues she intermittently disputes is why those men should ignore drowning people's pleas for help just in order to pursue God's absolutist will to punish and

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[10] John Stephen and Robyn McCallum, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature* (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1998), p. 27.
[11] Roberta Seelinger Trites, 'Paradox of Authority'.

· destroy the world. She interrogates why the floating Ark should have to be stuffed with all kinds of animals, and why these should be chosen instead of humans: 'If it weren't for the animals, we could have picked up so many. So many people, I mean. Why did they have to...?'[12] A similar distrust of Noah's decision-making is echoed in the thoughts of Ama, Noah's wife's, though not openly declared till the end of the novel.

The multiple narrators enrich the story by extending Timna's subjective views in manifold perspectives. While Japheth expresses his distress for losing his best friend and for being overshadowed by his older brothers, Shem reveals unparalleled pride and arrogance in being God's hand on earth. Women also have their contrastive views. Zillah, for example, shows how insulted she is by the way Noah's family has chosen and kidnapped her to be Japheth's bride. In contrast, Bashemath, Shem's now-pregnant wife, arrogantly views herself as the mother of the 'new Adam', and perfectly understanding of God's plan of drowning the world, 'I'm in harmony with the Lord's way of thinking' (14). Hence, the multiple narrative voices adds more depth to the fictional characters and raises more questions than can be taken for granted in traditional omniscient third-person retelling of biblical tales.

The novel as a whole cannot be read as bearing a message to reinforce cultural heritage, as Stephens and McCallum argue is typically the case in retellings of biblical narratives for children. The familiar moral derived from the majority of biblical stories, that disobedience leads to punishment, is not applicable here; though the human race is drowned for apparently defying divine

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[12] Geraldine McCaughrean, *Not the End of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.11. Hereafter cited in the text as *Not the End*.

commands. We see the young girl protagonist violating the authoritative restrictions and yet getting rewarded by a utopian life at the end of the novel. Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that the traditional topology of the biblical text is partially retained here, still, a considerable alteration is made in terms of the plot, characterisation and dénouement in order to enact a new textually constructed feminist topology, an exploration of which can help to determine the effect of the feminist slant of *Not the End of the World* on female readers.

The novel lays emphasis on the individuation process of the adolescent female subject, a process which principally involves redefining her boundaries and excluding what threatens their integrity through abjection. The experience of abjection is particularly associated with the adolescent's negotiations of subjectivity for what potentially is the sense of adult selfhood. Like Rosoff's protagonist, Timna undergoes the horror of abjection for which the apocalyptic vision of the flood stands as a lucid metaphor; albeit its symptoms are considerably mitigated later by the inclusion of the figure of the imaginary father. The opening pages of *Not the End of the World* are an interpretation of the apocalypse as focalised through the adolescent narrator's eyes. Overwhelmed by the scenes of horrible deaths generated by the flood, Timna is put into the most likely situation to precipitate an outbreak of abjection: the death scene. As discussed in the previous chapter, the scene of a lifeless body provokes abjection because it disturbs the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate (*Powers* 109). Abjection is associated with a sense of threat to the subject who experiences the precarious condition of borderline between the self and the other, the inside

and the outside. At one moment in the aftermath of the flood Timna gives an illustrative picture of what her eyes are able to capture from onboard the Ark:

> All the flotsam tends to collect in the eddies, so that everything drowned gathers together into rafts of restless death, legs overlapping arms [...] mouth against ear [...] as if they're conspiring together in bubbling whispers - seething with resentment - hatching rebellion against the god who did this to them. 'They can't hurt you,' said mother, but to me that seemed rather beside the point. Anyway, it patently wasn't true. (16)

With her sarcastic tone, Timna intuitively expresses her vulnerability to the death scene. This dark scene is one of several manifestations of the submerged humanity, each of which richly elaborates on creating an intricate textual physicality of the flood. The focus on such sickening details trigger a threat to the young adult's integrity and autonomous existence.

With its emphasis on the physical horror of the Flood, *Not the End of the World* is an experimental, hyper-realist version of the story of Noah's Ark. Timna, who narrates most of the story, testifies to the horrific manifestations of the flood in her journey to the new promised world. When the massive wave first sweeps over the earth, the Ark, stuffed with Noah's people and with enormous numbers of animals from all species, abruptly rises to the surface of the water setting off the horror show:

> Below us, in the bowels of the ship, along the entire length, beasts squealed and shrieked and keened, scrabbling with claws and talons and tails for some purchase on the rolling world. Grinning with fear, the apes sank with their teeth into whatever flank collided with them in the dark. The dogs and jackals turned round and round and round, unable to secure a space of their own and besieged by teeming, terrifying smells. (13)

The sudden overwhelming feeling of terror is simultaneously affecting the people above as Timna relates 'alongside me, Zillah and Sarai were retching into the

darkness, sickened by the heaving motion or the sounds or the stench or all three'
(5). The mediation of heightened senses of smell, vision and sound permeates the
narrative allowing the reader to break the boundaries between the textual and the
'real' and almost capture those intense senses of the narrator. With intricate
details, Timna, for example, narrates how she can hear the 'roar of rushing water
howl[ing] like a wind,' and the '*clip* and *ting* and *rap*' of objects hitting the hull
on their way to extinction (5). Hardly typical of a retelling of a biblical narrative
for children, the unconventional narrative strikes the reader with powerful graphic
descriptions of what such a flood could be like in historical reality. The gushing
water is described as stripping the earth of everything; trees, objects, animals and
people some dying and some pleading for help and others being dislodged from
the hull by Noah's eldest son, Shem, for trying to cling to the last hope of
survival. But it is God's message to Noah '"Every living thing will I destroy from
off the face of the Earth..."' that Shem is proud to respond to (17). The dark
atmosphere of McCaughrean's book contrasts sharply with the anodyne, innocent
version of the story, as it is characteristically recounted to children. Matt Breman
expresses this notion in his review of the book:

> Our predominant cultural images of the Noah's Ark story, brought to
> us in books, cartoons, musicals, and toys, have always been of gentle
> lions laying down with adorable lambs, all in pairs, on a clean ship
> with good people for a miraculous journey. But Author
> McCaughrean brings it to life as a real horror show. Until the end the
> story is one of unrelenting horror and degeneration of mind, body,
> and spirit. [13]

It is through Timna's eyes that we witness the intensity of brutal realities and it is
through her voice that we aspire for a resolution to her ordeal.

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[13] Matt Berman, 'Common Sense Review of *Not the End of the World*' in *Commonsense Media*
<www.commonsensemedia.org/book-reviews/Not-End-World.html> [accessed 16 February 2007]

> The flood was solid, brown, metallic enamelling of the earth. There
> was no colour left in the natural world. I thought there would be no
> people, either, but I was wrong.
> *'For God's sake, neighbour!'*
> *'Over here!'* [...]
> *'Take the children, at least! The children, in God's name!'* (7,
> original italics)

The fact that such disastrous scenes are communicated through the voice of young

Timna adds to the intensity of the graphic illustrations of these scenes. An

Amazon adult reviewer of the book shows how shortly she becomes involved with

the horrible subjective experience of the adolescent narrator:

> I bought it for my 11 year old niece but having started it in the
> afternoon, soon found myself so caught up in the dark, fetid,
> frightening atmosphere of the ark that I read through the night to be
> with Timna, the girl narrator right to the end.[14]

The reader apparently is invited by the horror experience to temporarily dissolve

her psychic boundaries in the process of reading. Timna's subjective recounting of

the shocking episode of flooding spectacled from such a close perspective is

meant to metaphorically reflect and intensify the state of confusion and the

turmoil the teenage girl is facing at this critical point of her life.

But for Timna this is not only what initiates her revulsion, it is also the fact

that her religiously zealous family bears a considerable responsibility for this

catastrophic outcome. The apocalypse of adolescence is figuratively mirrored in

Timna's sense of horror as well as moral outrage while witnessing the external,

actual apocalypse of the flood. In response to her mother's assurance that they

have not lost close people, Timna ironically reflects: 'A lucky escape then [...]

God wept and his tears have drowned the world. But first He reached out and

plucked me and my family to safety. So why can't I lift up my heart in praise? I

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[14] *Not The End of the World* Reviews on *Amazon* <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Not-End-World-Geraldine-McCaughrean/dp/0192719726> 12 sep 2005 [accessed 23 July 2009]

must be so ungrateful, so thankless' (10). Timna's moral conflict, then, originates from the fact that the abject stems from the very Law that imparts moral imperatives. Her ethical dilemma represents one facet of her individual reconsiderations necessitated by the exigency of the abject situation. Nancy Chodorow argues that 'adolescence is a period of renewed crises and conflict, in which new object-relational and ego resolutions are made.'[15] Adolescents become inclined to reconsider their relationships with their families and rethink the others' postulations of cultural and social rules which sometimes become incompatible with the adolescents' sense of incessant turbulence in the reworking of their psyche.[16]

The ramifications of Timna's abjection are encoded in the narrative construction of her thoughts and expressions. Her anguish at the cataclysmic nature of the flood creeps into her dreams precipitating a claustrophobic sense of powerlessness:

> Halfway to sleep, I keep picturing what's happening deep down, underneath me under that opaque shield of water. Beast are grazing in slow movement herds [...] The people are all holding their breath, swimming upwards [...] frantically emptying their pockets to lighten their weight. I dream I'm in among them [...] dragging my way through syrupy water [...] Holding my breath, holding my breath, holding my ... I wake up with my lips pursed tight and my throat bulging, and I can't remember how to breathe [...] I don't think I can bear it. (*Not the End* 15-16)

Clearly, the traumatic experience produces a sense of terror that drives Timna to become haunted with the repulsive scenes of death imprinted in her mind. Her vicarious experience of picturing herself in the muddy water with drowning

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[15] Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) p.134.
[16] See for example Coats chapter on abjection and adolescent fiction in *Looking Glasses and Neverlands*, pp. 137-160.

people trying to sustain the last breath turns out to be not only a painful experience both mentally and physically, but also symptomatic of her own sense of an imminent threat to her own selfhood. Kristeva observes how voice and vision become indistinguishable in the textual construction of abjection. Kristeva asks herself whether abjection may be considered 'a narrative?' but reflects 'No, a vision ... it is indeed a vision, to the extent that sight is massively summoned to play a part in it, broken up by the rhythmic sound of voice' (*Powers* 154). Kristeva's expression of linguistic ambivalence is an attempt to capture the sense of abjection as a failure to perceive coherent spatial differentiation between body, psyche and the conscious symbolic signification.

The experience of reading such a text can be characterised by a certain degree of reflexivity. N. B. Kennedy, an adult reader of McCaughrean's book, who labels it as 'a gripping read for an adult' writes:

> You'll experience the claustrophobia, the pettiness, the annoyances, the hardships, the revulsion, the agonizing split-second decisions that characterize daily life, wherever it happens to be unfolding.[17]

When reflecting on Kristeva's reading of Louis-Ferdinand Céline in *Powers of Horror*, Anna Smith argues that upon our reading of a text that 'represents and scrutinises the affects produced from the speaker's intimate engagement with the space of abjection' we are likely to bear its traces upon us.[18] Kristeva notes that while reading Céline 'we are seized at that fragile spot of subjectivity,' and abjection grasps us similarly because it occurs 'within our personal archaeology'

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[17] N. B. Kennedy, 'Review of *Not the End of the World*' in *Amazon* , January 8, 2007 <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/customer-reviews/006076032X/sr=8-2/qid=1184321201/ref=cm_cr_dp_all_helpful/002-0780784-3998451?ie=UTF8&n=283155&qid=1184321201&sr=8-2#customerReviews> [accessed 17 April 2007]

[18] Anna Smith, *Julia Kristeva: Readings of Exile and Estrangement* (Basingstoke; London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 154-55. Hereafter cited in the text as *Readings*.

(*Powers* 135). Smith argues that Kristeva herself is not immune from abjection since, both as a reader and as an analyst, she 'leap[s] to a jubilant identification with the body of Céline's texts'. Hence, 'just as abjection fails to distinguish between subject and object, the experience of horror and its intimate connection with maternal space cannot be distinguished here from her critique' (*Readings* 154). Kristeva's voice is wavering between identification and analysis and thereby creating 'a new kind of space' which is 'neither entirely outside or within abjection'; an experience of reading 'where the text represents and scrutinises the affects produced from the speaker's intimate engagement with the space of abjection, and the bearing of this abjection on the practice of reading' (154-55). This reflexive engagement with the text may provide a universal example of intellectual women's reading experiences of Smith's conceptualisation of Kristeva's reading of Céline and is comparable to the way female readers may engage with and experience McCaughrean's novel. Readers may indirectly become involved with the space of abjection which opens up the text. This involvement may in consequence lead the reader to experience, as Smith suggests, 'an elaboration of a different relation to the theoretical object (and hence to the notion of space)' which according to Kristeva 'a woman's discourse may, under certain circumstances, produce' (*Readings* 155). It is by 'an influx of the imaginary', that the reading experience may metaphorically open 'the closed in nature of the binary relation' between the Real and the Symbolic. (155)

Implicit in the realm of abjection is an expression of a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by a loss of distinction between subject and object or between self and other. The breaking down of comprehensible articulation

combines both signs and drives in producing an utterance (*Powers* 10). Watching human beings and animals dying horribly, Timna's ability to fashion a linguistic representation is brought to a halt: '"Oh, God ..." I said but there were no other words left in my head [...] there was no air left for shaping the words [...] there is a space - a blank - an ignorance' (*Not the End* 5-6). Timna's language becomes an expression of the fragile status of her own subjectivity. Her inability to enunciate words to expound the horror also mirrors the flux of her turbulent instincts experienced in her struggle to express her female individuality within the patriarchal atmosphere prevailing onboard the Ark. The lack of coherence in the narrator's voice could also be seen at times as reflecting an unresolved ambivalence about her subject position within the familial structure.

This disruption in the adolescent's vocal coherence is emphasised by the narrative structure of the novel wherein the main narration of Timna, is punctuated by other characters' voices. The break in the flow of Timna's narration is one way through which the adolescent's inability to control language is conveyed. But this diversity of voices throughout the narrative, whilst enriching the story with various points of view, does not perfectly disguise a duality in the narratorial voice. An attentive reader would be able to discern a dual narrative voice rather than a multiple one; a voice which blurs the distinction between subjective and objective views. For whenever a new chapter narrated in the first-person by one of the secondary narrators, whether human or animal, opens, there is an impression that an omniscient adult narrator is consistently present, reflecting upon and transmiting the others' perspectives. The Rabbit, for example, utters its ambivalence and fear in a cautious adult human voice, 'keep close,

children. Keep still. The jackal can smell you. The hyena is waiting for you to move' and then ponders in bewilderment: 'what kind of place is this? Not a burrow; it cannot be dug. Not a tree: the wood is dead [...]. A womb, then, and all these beasts are waiting to be born. Life has gone back to the beginning' (69). Out of this alternating pattern of narration, then, the reader may begin to recognise two distinct and different narrators: Timna (who is the most frequent first-person narrator) and behind all the speaking voices in the text, an omniscient adult narrator.

Even Timna's voice evokes doubleness as it wavers between an average teenager's voice and that of a witty articulate adult voice. For example, we read Timna narrating 'the children of Shem must re-people the Earth, he says. (He must mean the children of Noah, of course, but that's not what he says)' (*Not the End* 84). Here, we are likely to hear the young girl stating innocently that Shem must have accidentally uttered his name instead of his father. For an adult reader, the inflection of the adult overtone is unmistakable as the narrator ironically satirises her brother's delusion and arrogance which is especially distinct if we follow previous references to his unacceptable behaviour and arrogance. Such perceived sense of dual narration is another potential factor in attracting adult readers to the text.

Furthermore, the adult sub-text which appears in the powerful critique and sarcastic metaphors alluding to Noah's restrictive rule makes it more appealing. A modulation of an adult tone is often heard in Timna's constant questioning and satire on the traditional role that women are happy to adopt in such a patriarchal milieu, which implies a more mature perspective than a fourteen-year old would

ordinarily possess. Timna perceives that Bashemath and Sarai attempt to be good wives in staying at their husbands' sides, and as she sardonically relates, certainly 'had to stand aside and not get in the way' when it was time for the husbands to show their 'warrior' roles (*Not the End* 10). She sarcastically comments on Bashemath's passion physically expressed in the way she prepares food for her husband: 'she leaned over the pot tenderly, coaxingly, as if preparing a meal for her husband was the greatest privilege ever bestowed on a woman' (129). As for Timna herself, of course it is obligatory and natural that she should take care of her parents in their old age as 'that is the duty of an unmarried daughter' (127). Overwhelmed by the demands of others and by her own destiny being taken for granted, Timna has to learn to consider her own right to agency and self-determination.

Abjection can be signalled by the subject's inability to recognise herself as clearly distinct from the other. The female subject who feels overshadowed by the overwhelming masculine structure becomes liable to a threat of collapsing boundaries whenever encountered with difficulties to express herself. Accordingly, Timna's inability to articulate openly her own genuine needs and feelings within the male-dominated community of the Ark grows into a symptom as well as a catalyst for abjection. Timna is constantly reminded not to transgress the marginal space allowed to her: "'you must keep to your place! You know what your father told you! Do as you are told!'" (*Not the End* 9) As a narrator, Timna communicates to her addressee disapproval to her father's actions and by extension to God's plan of drowning the human race, but as a female member of Noah's family, she is not permitted to question openly its Divine purpose. This is

because, as her mother clearly puts it, 'it's not for us women to talk about the ways of God' (19). The Divine will of ultimate destruction is associated in Timna's mind with a patriarchal exercise of mighty power similar to the one entrusted to her father and older brothers. She is consciously aware that, in her culture, 'a daughter is not the same blessing as a son, after all' (2). The Ark as an enclosed space in water imposes natural, physical borders on everyone inside, but for Timna there are far more borders than these natural ones. Her sense of entrapment as a powerless female is experienced physically and emotionally by the patriarchal assumption of supremacy. Her words are rife with this sense of oppression as she describes her claustrophobic experience when confined with the other women at the rise of the flood: 'shut up in the dark, we five women lay clamped along the base beams of the house as if we had been built there by the house martins. The dark was so intense I thought it was water, flowing up my nostrils, in at my throat, filling up my eyes and lungs' (7). Once again the adolescent's language is evocative of a psychic collapse of the boundaries between the interior and the exterior. The primary trigger of Timna's abjection, thus, is particularly a response to the threat endangering or rather obliterating her feminine identity.

Another ramification of Timna's experience of intimidation by patriarchal oppression can be traced through her frequent phobic delusions about demons. The notion of the demons is introduced to Timna by her father in an attempt to demonise people pleading for help when the flood rises, and hence to justify turning backs on them. For Noah those people are demons sent by the evil to impede the 'the Lord's ship' (*Not the End* 19). After clandestinely saving two

children with the help of her brother Japheth, Timna falls into a state of delirium. Obsessed by this idea of her father's, and worried how demons may disguise themselves, she says to herself: 'maybe *I* am the demon' (49). Timna starts to picture demons in everything, in ugly animals, in the two children she saved and even in her own shadow. Timna's phobia of demons is a materialisation of her sense of horror which the severe restrictions of the law of the Ark allow to grow. Later, the impression gained by children's material presence and ordinary actions displaces her imaginary fears: 'demons and sisters-in-law *never* help you pull dung baskets. This helpful, hard-working Kittim could not be a demon after all' (65). It is only when she recognises that Kittim and his baby sister are normal innocent children that she becomes less obsessed with demons and less troubled by the ideology of patriarchal order of the Ark.

The experience of abjection has its basis in the archaic state of un-differentiation prior to the child desire for separation from the mother is being precipitated. The mother-child exchange is thus invariably influential upon the child's later formations of an autonomous subject. In McCaughrean's novel, Timna's relationship to the mother should play a significant role in the adolescent's redefinition of an individualised sense of subjectivity. But the mother (as an overwhelming space and desire) from whom Timna should seek separation is non-existent. Timna's observations about her mother in the first part of the book reveal Ama as frigid, submissive and hostile who later emerges as maternally tender and even powerful within the patriarchal economy of the Ark. Even within the wider network of familial relationships in the oedipal conflict, revived as well at adolescence (puberty), Timna finds it difficult to situate herself fittingly. In

Freud's oedipal model of development the girl turns to her father in revenge

against her mother whom she considers as responsible for the girl's lack of penis.

In fact, Timna recounts occasional compassionate encounters with her father,

which she never recalls experiencing with her mother. She admits she derives

comfort from her all-powerful father: 'with his arms around me, all the worry fell

away. It was as if he had lifted me free of a blanket that had been smothering me'

(50). But this is rather a lamentation for the absence of her mother from such

intimate encounters since the mother never stops being a site of desire and

primary love object. According to sociologist Chodorow the relationship between

a girl and her mother has a special nature of its own. Unlike the boy who turns to

his mother in a heterosexual desire against the father in the pre-oedipal stage, the

girl is not able to turn completely to her mother:

> A girl's 'rejection' of her mother, and oedipal attachment to her
> father, therefore, do not mean the termination of the girl's affective
> relationship to her mother. Rather, a girl's dual internal and external
> mother-infant world becomes triadic.[19]

The oedipal constellation of love and rivalry in the triadic relationships is not

definite for the female subject. Though for a successful resolution of her oedipal

complex, it is necessary for the girl to 'confront her entanglement in familial

relationships' (135). In Chodorow's account the girl maintains her attachment to

her preoedipal mother and remains 'preoccupied with issues of separation,

identification without merging, mitigation of dependency, freedom from

ambivalence' (140). Women unconsciously tend not to separate sufficiently from

their mothers; they remain in a state of fusion and merging, often never achieving

distinct identity. This deterministic view is rather very pessimistic from a material

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[19] *The Reproduction of Mothering*, p. 126.

feminist perspective, though the notion of merging with the mother may provide informative clues to the experience of abjection.

Lacan's model of psychological development in which he theorises the position of the Law or the Name of the Father may be enlightening here. Upon the entry into the Symbolic network of relations, the child has to break the dyadic connection with the mother. Signalled by the father's imposition of law and order, the child has to move from the realm of desire represented by the mother into the sphere of the Other which represents cultural and linguistic structure as voiced by Shoshana Felman:

> The triangular structure, crucial to Lacan's conception, is not the simple psychological triangle of Love and rivalry, but a socio-symbolic structure positioning the child in a complex constellation of alliance (family, elementary social cell) in which the combination of desire and a law prohibiting desire is regulated, through a linguistic structure of exchange, into a repetitive process of replacement-of substitution-of symbolic objects (substitutes) of desire.[20]

This stage is initially inaugurated by the mirror stage in which the 'I' comes into existence following a crisis of identification. The subject emerges as a result of a conflict between a desire for the mother and a need to be introduced to the paternal Law. Even though it is clear that the child's entry into language, which entails that the child expresses her subject in a system of representation, implies a kind of subordinate attachment to the Other of the subject, because language is nevertheless the Other's system.[21]

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[20] Shoshana Felman, *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 104.
[21] See for example *Looking Glasses and Neverlands*, p. 3.

In Lacan's patriarchal Law of the Father, however, the position of the subject is male, whereas the feminine is located at the Imaginary.[22] As premised in Freud's oedipal and castration complexes, Lacan's representation of the female is marked by 'lack' (in relation to the male possessing of the phallus) or absence (in relation to the male presence in the signifier). The fictional sense of the self signified by the child first utterance 'I' marks the child's position in the Symbolic, a position not allowed to a girl-child since the 'I' is a male signifier. Accordingly, what cannot be expressed in the Symbolic (the feminine) should be repressed. Lacan's determinism is challenged by feminists such as Hélèn Cixous and Luce Irigaray while Kristeva remains uncritical of Lacan's male subject since she develops her own philosophy of the semiotic as an undercurrent to the symbolic. Yet, since this formulation occurs at the level of the Imaginary, Kristeva's notion of the imaginary father can offer an antidote to Lacan's severance of the feminine. This postulation will be put forward in the current discussion of McCaughrean's novel wherein the notion of the imaginary father is dramatised by a paternal figure that supports Timna in her challenge to the patriarchal Law as well as subdues her abjection for a sharper self image.

As already indicated, Timna struggles with her own dilemma of identification attempting to articulate her own space away from her mother, and rejecting alliance to the harsh law of Noah. Timna's subject position in the sociolinguistic structure of the Symbolic is precarious. Breaking away from the Ark can be seen as a necessary step for Timna not to fall into a permanent state of abjection since its rules do not perfectly fit in the sociolinguistic structure that

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[22] This notion is mainly argued in French feminists' critique of Lacan such as Hélèn Cixous and Luce Irigaray, see for example Christine Wilkie-Stibbs, *The Feminine Subject in Children's Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

may satisfy Timna's relationship to the Other. Timna rebels against entering this familial economy. Yet, because the speaking subject must enter some form of symbolic, in order to use language and fashion an identity, Timna finds herself constructing an identity by renegotiating her symbolic position through the space of the imaginary father.

Before going into explicating the idea of the imaginary father as dramatised in the text in focus, it is important to trace the development of Ama's character which consequently shapes a healthier relationship with her daughter and concurrently has intrinsic effects on Timna's adolescent negotiation of her identity. Unconventionally, the mother in McCaughrean's book seems to be completely submissive to the masculine economy represented and controlled by Noah, Shem and Ham. Indeed, Ama actually contributes to subjugating Timna to the male-dominated system. When the Ark is hit by massive amounts of locusts swept by water, Timna suggests that it must be God's act of destruction. When Timna narrates the family's reaction to her ostensibly blasphemous accusation she reveals her mother's propensity to echo Noah's patriarchy:

> Father flinched. Sarai gasped. I bit my tongue. I never meant it to come out that way: resentful, insolent. Shem put the toe of his shoe into my back and pushed me over. Mother looked reproach out of those reproachful eyes. (*Not the End* 59)

Clearly, at this early stage of the narrative Timna does not reveal any intention or desire to be a rebel. Her articulation is simply an uncompromisingly outspoken way of expressing herself which is itself quite a transgression since God's will should not be questioned in Noah's world. What is certain at this stage, however, is the fact that women, Ama in particular, are aligned with the dictatorial law laid down by the male.

Timna's ambivalence towards her mother originates from her inability to recognise her mother as a distinct subject. While in *How I Live Now* Daisy is unable to make such distinction from her dead mother, because she is trapped in a place where real experiences of the mother are only fantasised, Timna's mother has not yet been recognised separately as a 'mother' because she is so overwhelmed by the presence of the father and his Law. For the greater part of the novel, Ama is perceived as a mere shadow behind the superior power of Noah. Ama herself emphasizes that her daughter should be an exact echo of her father's voice: '"Does your father say so? Wouldn't he have told you? Must I tell you over and over? Your duty is to think like your father! "' (126). Through her account of her story, Timna expresses a desire to renew a physical attachment to her mother in an attempt to regain the comfort of the mother's body she used to have as a little child, 'I slid my hand under mother's arm; her armpit was warm and comforting' (10). Her mother, however, is unable to reciprocate affection with her daughter: 'mother extricated her arm and moved away' (11). Timna's use of the word 'extricated' has a clear connotation of how frigid and austere she senses her mother's attachment is towards her. For Timna, the word implies a wish on the part of mother to free herself from a constraint applied upon her by the daughter's demanding affection. Chodorow remarks that mothers feel ambivalent towards their adolescent daughters; 'they desire both to keep daughters close and to push them into adulthood.'[23] Yet, Timna's mother is nowhere near pushing her daughter into womanhood except in demanding that her daughter becomes similarly submissive to the terms of masculine power of her father.

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[23] Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, p. 135.

It is only towards the end of the book when Ama starts to question the Divine task assigned to Noah that she sounds like an individual and that eventually she becomes a mother to Timna. When Timna convinces her family that she is possessed with demons in order to keep uncovered the two children she has saved, she consciously challenges the Law of the father. She becomes physically relegated to silence when they cover her face and bind her hands: 'I curl my tongue behind the rag in my mouth, and try to push it out, but the cloth over my face holds it in place' (149). Closely watching her only daughter's humiliation and exasperated by her husband's decision that Timna must die, the mother has to say '*Enough!*' and stand up for her daughter (150). Though at this stage she cannot prevent the death sentence imposed on her daughter, Ama is able to put it off. Ultimately, Ama reveals in a speech addressed to the women how her doubts about her husband have been residing with her for a long time hoping that her doubts would be 'washed away' by the flood: 'we women wonder if it can possibly be true: that Noah is wrong. A little wrong. Wrong in certain crucial respects. Wholly, catastrophically wrong' (157). At this turning point, Ama sounds like a person with her own identity. More importantly for Timna's development, she has become a mother who can help her daughter to achieve independence smoothly: 'mother's voice is deep and confiding. She reaches out and strokes Japheth's hair - talks as she did when we where little children and played pretend' (159). Ama's voice shapes her powerful position in the Symbolic of the Ark and clears her daughter's a space to take a position supported by the imaginary father.

As indicated earlier, the imaginary father is dramatised in the novel as an antidote to the Lacanian Imaginary severance of the feminine. Distinct from Lacan's symbolic father, in *Tales of Love* Kristeva posits an imaginary father who does not embody the Law as much as it represents love. The imaginary father appears as a necessary impulse for love whose configuration mitigates the suffering of the narcissistic subject by allowing a reciprocal exchange with the loving Other. In McCaughrean's novel, Noah's Ark is presented as lacking in love and sympathy, a lack brought to prominence when a stranger ship with contrasting values emerges to the sight of Noah's family. The sudden emergence of this intact clean ship is puzzling to the crew of Noah's stinking, nearly broken Ark, Timna suggests, 'perhaps [it] had sailed from some point behind The Wave - or outside the corner of God's eye' which refers to a space of being that exists beyond the infliction of the law and of Noah's God (88). The emergence of this ship metaphorically marks the very first step towards an imaginary idealisation that will support Timna to realign herself with an alternative Law.

In order for Timna to protect her female subjectivity from dissolution into a system incapable of recognising her individuality, she has to accommodate her speaking subject in relation to an alternative loving Other able to afford the ideal requirements necessary for a secure individuality to thrive. Timna's association with this alternative system can be facilitated by love and encouragement offered by a supportive figure of the imaginary father which can substitute for the harsh patriarchal father without threatening the integrity of the speaking subject. Because the imaginary father is more than an image, as we will see, it can help the subject of the adolescent narrator to break free from her containment within the

Ark not only through drawing a new space of freedom using her imaginative faculties, but also through empowering her to escape from the Ark.

The stranger ship is, thus, a vehicle through which Timna has a chance to be introduced to a new sociolinguistic structure which defines human relationships in a new way. This structure can be recognised as an alternative version of the symbolic of the Ark. Preaching new lessons of humanity and love, the people onboard the other ship use an eloquent symbolic communication as they 'spoke more clearly than our men' (*Not the End* 89). For Timna, this clarity sharply contrasts with the unintelligibility of the utterance of her brother Shem whose threats sound 'indistinctly, as though his mouth was on loan and did not quite fit him' (90). The young man on the ship is a peace-maker in contrast to zealous Shem who starts shooting arrows aimlessly assuming a position of righteousness. Timna remarks that there is something about the figure of the young man which invincibly empowers him against any means of defence (or attack) shot from onboard the Ark: 'the curve of his collar bones shaped like a bow' is 'truer than any weapon aboard the Ark' (89). The imaginary bond Timna starts to have with this young man and what he stands for henceforth resembles the bond between a child and the imaginary father. Though the young man in McCaughrean's narrative seems to be a concrete materialisation of such an abstract agency to Timna, he is more likely to represent the spark that opens for the adolescent narrator's possibilities of subjectivity mediated by a 'father of individual prehistory', by 'simple virtuality, a potential presence' that can empower her through 'imaginary exchange'.[24]

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[24] Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans., by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Colombia University Press, 1987), pp. 42-3. Hereafter cited in the text as *Tales*.

The imaginary father is needed where love is missing. Anna Smith remarks that as a response to our own estrangement and abjection in Western society, and because 'our love objects are irretrievably lost, indifferent, or punitive', and because 'conventional social structures, habitual patterns of speech and ideal images fail to absorb pain and violence', Kristeva advocates a way out of enclosures to the loving figure of the imaginary father (*Readings* 162). It is in other words 'a point, place or structure able to absorb the shocks and disappointments of human love simply because it draws its subjects in a loving gaze directed away from enclosure toward elsewhere' (162). In the light of this definition, we can postulate the figure of the imaginary father in *Not the End* as a means by which the adolescent Timna escapes the domineering Law of the Ark into a domain of well defined female self. Love offered by the imaginary father to the female subject helps to mitigate her abjection and enacts a cathartic effect upon the reader in the aftermath of the experience of abjection.

According to Kristeva, the imaginary father is recognised as what she calls a *Third Party* which relieves the suffering (or emptiness) of separation from the 'ab-jected' mother and prepares for the entry into the Symbolic system: 'within the sight of that Third Party I elaborate the narcissistic parry that allows me to block up that emptiness, to calm it and turn it into a producer of signs, representations, and meanings' (*Tales* 42). Significantly, Timna does not lack such a symbolic function; she is already a speaking subject in a phallocentric system. Yet, her function as a subject is recurrently threatened by the imposition of the male-dominated paradigm. Hence, Timna has to displace such a harsh system by means of love through 'the contrivance of imaginary, representations,

identifications, and projections that accompany it on the way toward strengthening the Ego and the Subject' (*Tales* 42). So, in spite of the fact that Timna's maturation into secure subjectivity is initiated by exterior cultural effects, still, it is her own agency and new identifications that allow her to express her powerful female individuality.

Significantly, the emergence of the strange ship marks a turning point in the progress of the female subject of the adolescent narrator. Timna is introduced to a community whose humanitarian ethics are more in harmony with her own values and ideology than those of the Ark. Timna makes it clear that it is not her intention to seek a different world outside the Ark, 'that was the only reason I went outside - to take Ham his arrows' (*Not the End* 89). Yet, she cannot help being impressed by their peaceful way of speaking, by their polite manners and by what she thinks as 'hard to suppress' human quality, that is hospitality (174). 'In the day of disaster people should be close' remarks the old man on board of the other ship (90). His attitude is utterly different from the way Noah and his sons have treated the people pleading to be saved from the deathly water of the flood. This disparity initiates Timna's approach to the new territory outside the Ark. She expresses a particular interest in the young man when she reflects upon her mixed feelings of apprehension and joy: 'each time his eyes brushed over me I could feel it - like when a bird flutters against you by mistake' (90). But this cannot be seen simply as an interest, since this unconscious attachment inspired here marks a metaphorical step out of the Ark: 'And at last the bird-wing brushing of those eyes let me be' (90-91). This expression evokes a revelation that symbolises Timna's new sense of her entity and distinct being. The ideal conceptualisations of love

and respect for which the stranger ship stand may be understood as precursor of a new faith: a loving and saving imaginary figure that can substitute for the adversity inflicted by defective representations of faith onboard the Ark.

In a paper entitled 'Identity, Love, and the Imaginary Father', Antoinette Goodwin identifies Kristeva's association of the notion of imaginary father with faith:

> *When parental flow of feeling provides inadequate compensation for the loss of oneness with Mother, the infant intrapsychically constructs its own 'foundation,' an Other that has both parents' ideal qualities, a God 'He.' Consequently, females have different experiences than males as they form and relate to their self-and God-representations.* (original italics)[25]

The genesis of this link between the notion of the imaginary father and some kind of belief is rooted in Kristeva's elaboration of this notion. According to Kristeva, our need for the imaginary father is concomitant with our abjection resulted from the collapse of Christanity in Western society. In other words, it is associated with the crisis of contemporary subjectivity which materialises itself in our inability to identify a 'code' to understand love (*Readings* 162). The imaginary father thus comes to represent a kind of faith which bridges the gap between the archaic mother and the ruthless symbolic father.

In his review of the novel, Phil Groom suggests a link between the Ark in McCaughrean's novel and the defective institutionalised representation of Christianity:

> If there's a Noah's Ark sailing around the world today, I dare suggest that it's the Church. Like McCaughrean's Ark, it's full of leaks, it's tossed about in the storms, and some people on board are so obsessed

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[25] Antoinette Goodwin, 'Identity, Love, and the Imaginary Father' in *Pastoral Psychology* 49. 5 (2001) p., 349
http://www.swetswise.com/swetsfo/swproxy?url=http%3A%2F%2Fcontent.kluweronline.com%2Farticle%2F301013%2Ffulltext&ts=1176980983376&cs=682964747 [accessed 16 April 2007]

with their own righteousness and purity that they'll push other survivors away to drown.[26]

In the light of this notion, McCaughrean can be seen as advocating an alternative Christianity out of this relentless economy of the Ark. If we consider, however, other reviews that associate the Ark in McCaughrean's novel with the Old Testament, we may come to a more holistic view of the novel.[27] Whatever institutionalised faith McCaughrean's Ark may suggest for the reader, it is definitely a failing scheme of faith as it is caught within the trap of imperiousness and fanaticism for which women are obviously scapegoats.

McCaughrean's narrative can be perceived as bringing forward an alternative faith which emphasises compassion. Love is one of the human qualities which seem to be lacking on the Ark. Notably, it is not only the relationship between Timna and her family with the exception of her brother Japheth that presents this deficiency, rather it is the people of the Ark being unable to reciprocate humanitarian love with other human beings what matters most for Timna. When she first catches the sight of Kittim and his baby sister in water, Timna finds it extremely difficult to ignore them as she must do if she follows the dictates of her father. With their 'submerged' mother, the image of the children echos her own deprivation of maternal sustenance. The love and care Timna affords to the children she has saved is partly of compensation for their loss and partly an expression of what she herself would like to be offered by her

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[26] Phil Groom, 'Review' in *Christian Book Shop* May 2005
<http://www.christianbookshops.org.uk/reviews/nottheendoftheworld.htm> [accessed 17 April 2007]

[27] See for example Diane Samuel 'The Drowning World' in *The Guardian*, 18 December 2004 <http://books.guardian.co.uk/reviews/childrenandteens/0,,1376223,00.html> [accessed February 22 2007] and Dina Rabinovitch's 'Author of the Month: Geraldine McCaughrean' in *The Guardian*, 19 January 2005
<http://books.guardian.co.uk/departments/childrenandteens/story/0,6000,1393703,00.html> [accessed February 22 2007]

own mother and by her family. Having noticed Japheth and Zillah sleeping

peacefully with the children, Timna recognises a typical image of a loving family

that she would be eager to be part of, 'rightly they're *mine* to look after. Zillah and

Japheth have made the demons theirs, whereas rightly it should be me sleeping

there, on the wad of hay. Being a part of a family' (*Not the End* 106).

In Kristeva's theorisation, it is with the assistance of a father having a

maternal character, that the child becomes able to separate herself from the

symbiotic relationship with her mother and so begin developing the set of

boundaries necessary for the construction of her subjectivity. This imaginary

figure can be seen as a mediating means by which Timna has been compensated

for the lack of motherly love and transformed into an autonomous subject. Thus,

Timna starts to imagine a space inside her mind in which the young man of the

other ship dwells together with people capable of providing her with love and

attention, 'I *imagine*. I have decorated the inside of my skull [...] I've filled my

head up with people' (*Not the End* 130). For Timna this world inside her mind

opens the enclosure of the Ark into a free space far away from the Ark wherein

she can express herself

> I don't mind that Shem thinks being the Hand of God means he has
> to hit people whenever he issues God's commands for the day [...] *I*
> have friends inside my head who lives on raisins and milk. My
> friends draw closer when disaster looms, the way people should [...]
> they always speak very, very quietly, so that no one on the outside
> ever hears them. But they tell me about the Appra Mountains [...]
> where they are going to live. They often say how fond they are of me
> and ask questions about myself. (131)

Timna begins to develop a new self-esteem whereby she becomes empowered

against the harsh Law of the Ark. On more than one occasion, she takes pleasure

in fooling her merciless brother Shem: first, by replacing his dead daughter with

the little girl she has saved and second, by convincing him that she is herself possessed with demons. Through this act she is able save Kittim: 'it gave me such a pleasure that I thought, *you fool, Shem. Can't you see? I am the demon.*' (144). Earlier, we saw Timna expressing regret for appearing as a rebel towards her family; now she is more conscious of herself acting as a rebel without repentance. In her monologue, she seems to have begun recognising and appreciating her own power over the domineering authority of Shem. Timna is able to turn into a powerful monster within the defective patriarchal system of the Ark. But this is not her primary aim; Timna is more interested in an alternative loving system in which she can express herself without being a hypocrite.

The progressive empowerment of women (Timna and her mother) is not at all unrewarding in the dynamics of McCaughrean's novel. Modelled upon a biblical episode in which women's existence is largely ignored, McCaughrean's text is a resurgence of women out of *dereliction*. This is a state of loss peculiar to women which Luce Irigaray describes as exile or a place outside the Symbolic assigned to women by Western culture because the identity of a woman is too closely associated with the identity of the mother (*Readings* 131-32). As a matter of fact, McCaughrean's novel does not only represent women unmentioned in the biblical version, but it also gives a prominence to their identities both in being *symbolised* and in becoming themselves *symbolisers* (narrators). In a noticeable maturing of self-regard, towards the end of the story, Ama confidently narrates how the women of the Ark are chosen by the mynah bird to disclose the five grapes in its mouth heralding the existence of the grapes island: "'the bird did not come to father. It came to us," I said. "It came to the women'" (*Not the End* 154).

Taught by her mother and forced by culture to obey her husband blindly, Ama observes that submissiveness has been nurtured within her day by day: 'Noah would obey God and I would obey Noah' (154). To conceive of herself as her husband's peer was beyond the bounds of possibility.

As for Timna, she is more reluctant to abide by this harsh system; love has empowered her to displace such patriarchy both internally and externally. We see her at the end of the novel in what Kristeva calls 'allegiance to the Father - not as Law but as Noun, Word-and-Love. A nominal immersion. Christian baptism' (*Tales* 140). Timna becomes able to repeat the message of love she once heard communicated by a mild and loving *Other* onboard the other ship: 'all strangers are a gift from God, to be cherished' (*Not the End* 174). This dialogic interrelationship is significantly expressed by Kristeva when she states that 'in being able to receive the other's words, to assimilate, repeat, and reproduce them, I become like him: One. A subject of enunciation. Through psychic osmosis/identification. Through love' (*Tales* 26). Consequently, Timna has acquired a new identity for herself, rejecting as abject that which does not belong to the new subject.

Throughout this narrative journey, McCaughrean's novel may encourage women readers to consider a fantasised genealogy that looms, threatening the patriarchal legacies of humanism. If we are to displace our own genealogy, it may have been possible through an imaginary return to the adolescent's instinct for emancipation. Here, an adult female reader would identify with Timna's rebellious instinct for emancipation and liberation from all kinds of enclosures. Ironically, Timna is a character who does not actually exist in the biblical

narrative source, so she may strike the reader as most unbelievable. We may in fact experience feelings that can best be communicated through her own words:

> Hibernation: that's what this whole voyage has been. A long night's sleep full of nightmares. In fact, it never really happened. Any of it. That's my belief. That's going to be my belief from now on. (147)

Timna has not only stepped out of the Ark, but also out of this version of the actual biblical text. The flawlessness of the utopian scene that McCaughrean infuses with philosophical overtones and epiphanic moments seems to be too optimistic for a reader to quite believe. The image of Timna on the utopian land of grapes seems too perfect to be believed. The reader is thereby invited to question this idealisation of the utopian scene against the historical background of the biblical text or to put it another way, 'the utopian setting becomes almost an exaggerated way for the young adult to find his or her voice, and this voice is seen having a deep effect on a wider society.'[28]

It is this particular inflection of the biblical text in McCaughrean's storyline that makes her novel so brilliantly challenging. In her story, McCaughrean plays well on the peripheries of a well-established text fleshing out a female adolescent as a close observer of the weakness and flaws of the harsh patriarchy of the Ark. In doing so, McCaughrean uses a symbolic means of subverting such a patriarchy. Yet, by moving from the hyperreal apocalypse of the flood to the too perfect picture at the end, McCaughrean seems to question the possibility of individuals, women especially, existing outside the boundaries of historical and religious context. The image of women escaping their own lack of

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[28] Carrie Hintz, 'Monica Hughes, Lois Lowry, and Young Adult Dystopias', *The Lion and the Unicorn* 26.2 (2002) 254-264, p. 255
<http://muse.jhu.edu.eresources.shef.ac.uk/journals/lion_and_the_unicorn/v026/26.2hintz.html#R EF1> [accessed 13 October 2008]

recognition into a world where their views are weighed equally to men's seems a utopian conclusion. But this could also be seen as a suggestion that escaping is not always a solution: necessary changes may happen from within the territories of the patriarchy. This change can be achieved by challenging pre-determined roles and by gradually building up a positive ideology in which men and women co-exist on a more equal and more productive basis. Within these views of formation and reformation of the female identity prompted by the adolescent narrator, *Not the End of the World* can work equally well for both adolescent and female adult readers. As I hope to have shown, adult readers can re-experience the adolescent compulsion for a re-enactment of distinct female individuality in the progression towards adulthood.

Chapter Three

Vision or Dream: Negotiations of Adolescent Identity in

David Almond's Magical Realist Novels

Among the literary genres which mirror the impulse of adolescent identity, magical realism seems to be one of the most pertinent. With its concerns of questioning predominant cultural and ideological paradigms and its expressions of fluidity in temporal and spatial boundaries, magic realist narrative provides a fertile ground for exploring and articulating the ongoing construction of adolescent identity. Often associated with Latin American writers, magic realism has become a popular mode not only for expressing postmodern and postcolonial distrust with monologic political and cultural discourses, but also for representing innovative perspectives and narratives of reality. As a literary mode suited to transgressing boundaries and yet to reconciling differences, magic realism employed in young adult literature represents in significant ways the liminal state of adolescence as an intermediate stage between childhood and adulthood. Recent reviews of children's books have revealed that some contemporary magical realistic children's fiction has been widely applauded by readers of different age categories.[1] David Almond's novels *Clay*, *Skellig* and *The Fire Eaters*, all of which have either won or been shortlisted to win distinguished literary awards,

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[1] See for example, Julia Eccleshare, 'Eyes on the Prize' in *Guardian*, (3 October 2006) <http://books.guardian.co.uk/childrensfictionprize2006/story/0,,1886491,00.html> [Accessed 20 November 2006] and 'Key Reviews' <http://www.davidalmond.com/books/review.html> [Accessed 20 November 2006]

embody to varying degrees the magic realist mode of writing.[2] Not only do these

three books demonstrate features of mainstream magical realism, but they also

provide experimental new ways of representing adolescent identity. These

representations attract many young readers who find the dynamics of their identity

reflected therein. Adult readers become tempted by the emphasis of magic realism

on the transitory whereby they may undergo an experience of transcending

temporal borders that would ordinarily be inaccessible to them, and of reconciling

their present selves with memories of their own childhood. Since magical realism

is traditionally associated with suppressed cultures and voices, it is a mode

quintessentially apt for David Almond's fiction, which seeks to express both a

child's (or a young adult's) voice and the decentred culture of northern England.

In their definition of magical realism Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy

B. Faris remark that,

> magical realism is a mode suited to exploring - and transgressing –
> boundaries whether the boundaries are ontological, political,
> geographical, or generic. Magical realism often facilitates the fusion,
> or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be
> irreconcilable in other modes of fiction.[3]

This concept of magical realism echoes contemporary views of adolescence as a

temporal and transitory stage which brings together two different territories of

childhood and adulthood. If magical realist texts are situated on 'liminal territory'

where 'transformation, metamorphosis, dissolution are common', it comes as no

surprise that magical realism is an apt metaphor for the metamorphic fluid nature

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[2] Chronologically *Skellig* won The Carnegie Medal and Whitbread Children's Book Award in 1998, *The Fire Eaters* was shortlisted for The Carnegie Medal, won Nestlé Smarties Book Prize (Gold Award) and Whitbread Children's Book Award in 2003 and *Clay* was shortlisted for The Carnegie Medal and Costa Children's Book Award in 2006.

[3] Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris, 'Introduction: Daiquiri Birds and Flaubertian Parrot(ie)s' in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, ed. by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris, (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1995), pp, 1-11(5-6). Hereafter cited in the text as 'Introduction'.

of adolescent identity. Magical realist narratives embodying the experience of coming of age, such as David Almond's, offer readers an arena to explore or re-explore such a state of liminality experienced in adolescence. Before going into textual analysis of Almond's novels, it is necessary to explore the dynamics of the fantastic and its implications for the reader in order to develop an adult/adolescent model of reading magical realism in adolescent fiction.

As a literary mode, magical realism implies a coexistence of ordinary and magical elements incorporated seamlessly within the body of narrative. It may also imply an effacement of the boundaries which usually distinguish other contrasting binaries, such as life and death, matter and mind, self and other. Magic realism typically presents magical occurrences within a realistic narrative.[4] The serious tone given to the narrative voice in introducing magical elements effaces traditionally clear distinctions between the ordinary and the supernatural. Magic becomes no longer an exotic matter and the supernatural becomes ordinary and integrated into the rationality of everyday life. Since the magical is not usually explained, the narrative creates doubts and questions in readers who may hesitate between two contradictory interpretations of the events narrated. A state of unsettling wavering between belief and non-belief in the supernatural events presented is thus prompted by the magical realist mode.

Many magical realist narratives are thus encompassed by Tzvetan Todorov's definition of the fantastic. Todorov argues that the fantastic emerges as a moment of uncertainty, in which the reader hesitates between the uncanny, where an event narrated can be explained according to the laws of nature and

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[4] See for example, Wendy B. Faris, 'Scheherazade's Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction' in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, pp. 163-193 (p. 169).

psychology, and the marvellous, which should be explained in terms of the supernatural.[5] Much of Todorov's formulation of the fantastic pivots on the way a reader receives and interprets the magical incidents narrated in the text presented, and on the degree of his/her identification with the narrator or the characters in their confrontation with what is apparently supernatural. This hesitation is assigned to the implied reader rather than to any actual, extratextual ones. The actual reader merges with the implied reader only in so far as s/he can suspend belief and temporarily accept the conditions of the referential world as reality. The fantastic lies in the indecision between the uncanny and the marvellous and lasts for as long as this hesitation exists. The fantastic then is preconditioned by a moment of indeterminacy towards two contradictory worlds where the implied reader is no longer given a view of a single consistent world. The fantastic depends on the unresolved nature of the indeterminacy in order to survive its precarious existence.

As the fantastic moment is initially confused and associated with an uncanny feeling, a consideration of the 'uncanny' as formulated in psychoanalysis seems to be essential here. In his seminal essay on the uncanny, Freud argues that 'infantile complexes' and 'primitive beliefs', both of which are primarily rooted in our past experiences, are the main reasons for instigating uncanny feelings once such complexes and beliefs happen to be stirred by certain stimulations. Freud states that 'an uncanny experience occurs either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs

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[5] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to the Genre.* Trans. by Richard Howard (Cleveland & London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), p. 7.

we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed.'[6] In essence, our old beliefs and ways of thinking that have been surmounted are not totally dispelled but 'still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation' (402). In a sense, an adult reader's confrontation with a children's book displayed on shelves can awaken an uncanny feeling. Then, the adult's actual experience of reading such children's books can also function as a trigger for an uncanny access to the child s/he once was. This literary experience of the uncanny is particularly important in magical realist fiction written for children.

In fact, Freud's views on fantasy and day-dreaming are closely associated with the question of the fantastic in literature. Though certain reservations about his authoritarian and patriarchal generalisations cannot be totally ignored, still Freud's readings of fantasy provide a thorough examination of the workings of fantasy inherent in our psyche. According to Freud, the writer has a licence to select the world of representation which the reader is bound to accept whether this world is familiar to him/her or not. Freud claims that a writer can create the conditions required to produce uncanny sensations in the reader. In order for the writer to achieve his own success, he tricks the reader to react to his own creation in the same way he reacts towards real life taking advantage of the reader's 'supposedly surmounted superstitiousness' ('Uncanny' 405). Lucie Armitt criticises Freud for his attempts to enforce the implied author's control over the reader; for Armitt, he, 'seems incapable of recognizing that there is anything of interest in literature beyond that of the implied author's perspective.'[7]

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[6] Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny"' in *Collected Papers*, 5 vols., (London: The Hogarth Press, 1925), IV, p. 403. Hereafter cited in the text as 'Uncanny'.
[7] Lucie Armitt, *Theorising the Fantastic* (London: Arnold, 1996), p. 42.

Nevertheless, Freud's analysis of the uncanny effects produced in the reader provides a useful starting point for analysing children's magic realism.

What is particularly significant in Freud's readings of fantasy is the relationship he analyses between literary writing and day-dreaming. Freud claims that the role of the writer is analogous both to the role of a day-dreamer and to that of a child at play. His views in this regard are mainly explained in 'The Paths to Symptom-Formation'[8] and in 'The Poet and Day- Dreaming'[9]. The writer, says Freud, creates his own world and takes it seriously in a way similar to that in which a child uses his/her imagination to create a world of his/her own during play. Language supplies the link between children's play and literary creation. Freud argues that even after a child grows up and abandons playing, there is still a possibility that the division between play and reality may collapse ('Poet' 174). The fantasy world which the child creates at play is not subject to the reality principle, so when a growing child reaches a stage when s/he stops playing, s/he abandons the pleasure principle and undertakes the reality principle in which the ego makes its most noticeable appearance. Though this process occurs early in an individual's life, it may also coincide with adolescence when a new sense of subjectivity begins to appear. The border between childhood and adulthood is reached when one accepts the need to make concessions to the reality principle. Still, the adult can recall with what seriousness s/he used to play as a child. According to Freud, pleasure never ends; it just takes another form or is substituted by another: 'so when the human being grows up and ceases to play he

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[8] Sigmund Freud, 'The Paths to Symptom-Formation' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey, 24 vols., (London: The Hogarth Press, 1963), XVI, pp.358-377.
[9] Sigmund Freud, 'The Poet and Day- Dreaming' in *Collected Papers*, pp. 173-183. Hereafter cited in the text as 'Poet'.

only gives up the connection with real objects; instead of playing he then begins to create fantasy' ('Poet' 175). Thus, day-dreaming which is a common process of producing fantasy, is a substitute for and a continuation of the play of childhood. It is an experience in which the dreamer can achieve pleasure which is exempt from the external compulsion of reality. The play of a child is constructed within his/her wish to grow up, so in play a child imitates the activities s/he usually observes performed by adults in their daily lives. In contrast, an adult is no longer expected to play in a child's sense of playing or to day-dream as his or her fantasies can be met by reproach by other adults (or cultural systems) who regard them 'childish' or even 'prohibited' ('Poet' 176).

Freud does not only make such associations between the fantasised activities of a writer and a day-dreamer on the one hand and between a writer and a child at play on the other, but he also goes further to consider the writer as a borderline neurotic or less brusquely as an introvert who uses his creative fantasies to satisfy his instinctual needs.[10] Whenever an activity of fantasising or day-dreaming is triggered by a particular moment in the present, it usually involves a fulfilment of a wish by drawing back into the past, into an early moment in infancy wherein such a wish was fulfilled:

> Some actual experience which made a strong impression on the writer had stirred up a memory of an earlier experience, generally belonging to childhood, which then arouses a wish that finds a fulfilment in the work in question, and in which elements of the recent event and the old memory should be discernible. ('Poet' 181)

In fact, in considering that the reader of fantastic literature is likely to undergo an uncanny experience due to some primitive and infantile complexes on the one

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[10] Sigmund Freud, 'The Paths to Symptom-Formation', p. 376.

hand and to the origins of imaginative writing in infantile satisfaction on the other, we may be able to find analogies and equivalences between the reading and writing of literature. As a matter of fact, Freud touches upon this particular equivalence at the end of 'The Poet and Day Dreaming' referring to the point that the dynamics of achieving pleasure through writing are similar to those of achieving pleasure through reading. Freud argues that a reader's pleasure arises from many sources, one of which is derived from the fact that the reader's repulsion towards the writer's ego is overcome. Once the egotistical impulse of the writer is disguised in the literary material, the reader becomes able to achieve pleasure through his/her own fantasies. The reader, hence, also plays a similar role of that of a day-dreamer and enjoys his/her fantasy experience through the very act of reading. Freud summarises this effect: 'the true enjoyment of literature proceeds from the release of tensions in our minds. Perhaps much that brings about this result consists in the writer's putting us into a position in which we can enjoy our own day-dreams without reproach or shame' ('Poet' 183).

In essence, adults' experience of reading recalls the freedom they once had in expressing their fantasies when they were children at play. The only difference is that an adult can now retain a sense of 'otherness' to the child s/he once was. The child becomes a stranger, an attribute which does not diminish the pleasure itself yet reforms and modifies it. Freud tells us that one reason for the reader's pleasure can be associated 'with those barriers erected between every individual being and all others' ('Poet' 183). An original version of such sense of estrangement emerges when a child in the mirror phase gazes for the first time at

his/her fragmented reflection in the mirror.[11] This stage initiates the child's entrance into the place of the Other or the place of 'signifier', a precondition to articulating his/her own subjectivity. Julia Kristeva argues that the mirror stage creates the 'spatial intuition' which is vital for initiating the function of language (46). In order for the child to protect his/her unified image from fragmentation, s/he must separate from the mirror whose image alienates him/her from him/herself. Kristeva takes this alienation a step further in *Strangers to Ourselves*, where she describes the other as 'my own and proper unconscious'.[12] The stranger becomes a manifestation of the inner strangeness of the self: 'uncanny, foreignness is within us: we are our own foreigners, we are divided' (181).

The theme of estrangement is a recurrent motif in magic realist fiction where the other is represented (or non-represented) by the unknown, the unconscious and also by the past child of the adult reading children's magical realism. It is perhaps impossible for the adult to recall his/her original sense of estrangement in the mirror stage; yet, it may well allow him/herself to revive a similarly overpowering sense of the estrangement once experienced in adolescence. It is known that adolescence is a critical turning point at which childhood ostensibly comes to an end and a new phase of maturity begins. For the adult, adolescence is a transitional passage from the child s/he was to the adult s/he is, but it is also a stage at which significations of possible identities were constantly at play. In this sense, adolescence generates a new image of the subject and hence functions as a second mirror stage. Magic realism in children's and

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[11] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. by Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 46.

[12] Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Colombia University Press, 1991), p. 183.

young adult literature offers the adult a potential space for experiencing a state of liminality where s/he can enjoy a freedom of playing in an intermediary realm between the adult self and the child other, the real and the magical, the familiar and the strange.

Drawing on Helen Cixous's interpretation of the uncanny and its relation to the familiar, Rosemary Jackson suggests that the fantastic disturbs the line between the real and the unreal. Ghost stories, for example, blur the distinctive barrier between the reality of life and the unreality of death, and consequently subvert 'those discrete units by which unitary meaning or "reality" is constituted'.[13] Thus the fantastic, while attempting to represent that which is culturally unrepresentable, is actually representing the 'other' which is non-signified within the signifying practice of culture. Jackson suggests that the problematisation of definitive versions of reality in the fantastic accentuates the non-signified nature of the fantastic (*Fantasy* 34). By offering a challenging representation of an empirically real world, the fantastic interrogates the nature of the real and the unreal. Yet, the gap between sign and meaning is emphasised by the attempt of the fantastic to represent that which is culturally invisible. The fantastic, for instance, attempts to capture death which is non-signified in culture. In this way the fantastic 'introduces absences' or 'other' for which no adequate linguistic representation can be made (*Fantasy* 69). By introducing such an area of non-signification, in which the signifier has no real signified, fantasy threatens the social order whose integrity depends on unified signification practice. Fantasy thus 'functions to subvert and undermine cultural stability' (69). This notion is a

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[13] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London & New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 69. Hereafter cited in the text as *Fantasy*.

key point in Jackson's argument about the ideological dimension of the fantastic, which is neglected, as she claims, in Todorov's structural approach to the genre of the fantastic (*Fantasy* 63). The ideological dimension of children's magical realism can partially justify the adult reader's turn to children's fiction and thus negate the assumption that the adult reader is an escapist.

Closely related to Jackson's notion are Bowers' views on magical realism, though the latter is more interested in the power of the fantastic to manifest other facets of reality than those of non-reality. According to Bowers, magic realist narrative offers 'a way to discuss alternative approaches to reality to that of Western philosophy'.[14] Bowers refers here to examples of postcolonial fiction written mainly for adults, most famously, by writers such as Gabriel García Márquez and Salman Rushdie, although Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is equally addressed to adult readers and children. The idea that fiction written for children can also hold certain cultural and ideological perspectives is something that Bowers does not herself consider. She confines the aim of the fantastic in children's fiction to pedagogical and entertainment purposes, regardless of the possibility that children's narrative may equally offer the reader a space for discovering alternative modes of reality. In her brief assessment of magical realism in children's literature, Bowers concludes that the magical realist element in children's fiction 'provide[s] moral teaching or social critique in an entertaining form much as adult magical realism often provides commentary on real political situations'[15]. There are, however, some children's books which touch upon

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[14] Maggie Ann Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 1.
[15] Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*, p. 109.

serious cultural, political and even ontological questions, as David Almond's novels for children well attest.

Though Almond's main characters are mainly children and young adults, his use of magical realist narrative often serves objectives and demonstrates characteristics of the fantastic narrative used in mainstream magical realism. *Clay, Skellig* and *Fire Eaters* all create an atmosphere of unease and apprehension, reflected in the narrative voices, but penetrated by magical occurrences which mirror in a particular way the status of this atmosphere. Yet, although certain elements of magical realism are recurrent in these novels as they generally are in Almond's oeuvre, they are more evident in some novels than in others. In the three examples discussed in this chapter, Almond's more recent novel *Clay* seems to be at the heart of Almond's fondness of combining the magical with the ordinary whereas the balance between the two is more evident in generating doubts in the implied reader than in the other two novels. The reader's hesitation and doubts in *Skellig* are slightly diminished by the presence of too much magic whereas in *The Fire Eaters* they tend to be so by the presence of too much reality. In other words, whereas both *Skellig* and *The Fire Eaters* are situated on both opposite ends of Almond's spectrum of magic realist fiction, *Clay* seems to be situated at the central zone between the two.

All of the three novels, however, merge two realms of conflicting codes echoed by the emergence of certain fantastic elements. Even the three narrative voices of the adolescent narrators present in the novels merge two spheres of childhood and adulthood. Set in the sixties north eastern England, the time and place of Almond's own childhood, both *Clay* and *The Fire Eaters* represent a time

period of looming political and cultural change in the wake of the Second World War. The two novels also employ an adult perspective implied in the voice of the young adult narrators. For example, Davie, the intradiegetic first-person narrator of *Clay*, starts telling the reader about the arrival of a new boy at Felling, saying: it was 'not so long ago, but it was a different age. I was with Geordie Craggs, like I always was back then'.[16] Similarly, such temporal distance is echoed in the narrative voice at the end of *The Fire Eaters*, when Bobby, the young narrator, reflects on his encounter with the fire eater McNulty: 'now it all seems so long ago, and it's like it happened in some different kind of time, in some different kind of world, it almost happened in a dream.'[17] The alteration in the temporalities of the narrative, a recurrent motif in both novels, provides one way of expressing the multiple perspectives on reality that characterise magical realism. It also offers a temporal mode which describes adolescence as a time of fluctuations, a time of possibilities. *The Fire Eaters*, however, advances further on general issues such as class differences and cultural clashes between northern and southern England in addition to taking on political crises and war threats. While the fantastic narratives of *Clay* and *The Fire Eaters* are interwoven with issues pertaining more generally to the culture of eastern northern England, it unfolds on a more personal level in *Skellig* where the young narrator (the youngest among the three protagonists) recalls his magical encounter with Skellig, a creature hybridising features of a bird, an angel and a human being. Hence, in his magical realist landscape Almond vacillates between the public and the private; the general and the personal; the

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[16] David Almond, *Clay* (London: Hodder Children's Books, 2005), p. 1. Hereafter cited as *Clay* in the text.
[17] David Almond, *The Fire Eaters* (London: Hodder Children's Books, 2004 [2003]), p. 247. hereafter cited in the text as *Fire Eaters*.

present and the past. While his earlier novels, *Skellig* and *The Fire Eaters* have been critically acclaimed and awarded, his more recent work *Clay* has not been yet recognised as such. In what follows I will extend my argument on magical realism with reference chiefly to *Clay* which stands at the core of Almond's use of magical realism.

Set in Felling, a small town near Newcastle Upon Tyne, *Clay* retells the story of the creation of a Frankenstein monster by two adolescent boys. The novel raises questions about the kind of faith that may survive in a difficult, post-Second War era; it furthermore explores how faith can be either redeeming or destructive. In the practising Catholic community of Felling, altar boy Davie has to put his long-held religious beliefs to a test when he is seduced by a stranger boy Stephen Rose to help him make a clay golem that should be able to avenge his enemy, the local bully Mouldy. Within the limited space of their relationship, the narrative transcends known realities to consider the individual's relation to God, religion, death, and evil, among other things. Stephen intrudes into Davie's relationship with Geordie, a close friend and an altar boy working in the same church as Davie. The depth of the narrative and the complex meaning presented in a fantastic mode make Almond's novel not only entertaining for its adolescent implied readers, but also potentially functioning as inviting more mature readers to an arena of permeable boundaries implied in the openness of adolescence.

The fantastic narrative of *Clay* deploys much of humanity's hunger for spiritual knowledge of life, creation and evil. The reader's engagement with the fantastic narrative depends on the narrator's assumptions of and hesitations towards what he knows as true. Though Davie expresses his own distrust towards

some faith issues, it is only with the arrival of Stephen Rose that Davie's doubts start to overpower his sense of faith-based reality. With his artistic ability to make life-like models out of clay, Stephen further manipulates Davie into believing that he can breathe actual life into his creations. Stephen claims that he is 'privileged' by an angelic figure that empowers his hands with an ability to do 'the 'Lord's work' (*Clay* 58-9). To Geordie, Davie freely expresses his doubts about the existence of God and devil: 'mebbe the whole lot of it's a load of nowt. Just a pack of crazy tales and lies and legends' (45). Yet, Davie is rather passive, unable to argue, when confronted by Stephen's claims about the latter's powers. When faced by arrogant Stephen's claims that an angel has once paid him a visit, Davie's answers are brief, monotonous and lacking confidence, mostly summed up by 'Dunno' in his north eastern accent. It is Stephen playing on Davie's weakness that initiates the latter's introduction to the realm of the fantastic: '"some people find it hard to believe anything, Davie. They want proof. What if the angel came to you, Davie? Would you believe me then? Or would you still just say dunno?"' (59) As an altar boy, Davie knows about the scriptural idea of 'being dust and unto dust we shall return', so he is attracted as well as horrified by the idea that Stephen Rose, is like God, can infuse life in clay (13). When Davie watches Stephen for the first time making two clay figures of an angel and a devil squirm in his hands, he is fascinated, but hesitant to believe: 'I looked at the angel on the floor, at the devil in my hands. Had I really seen what I thought I'd seen?' (92) This incident intrigues Davie, and his fascination leads him all the way through to making a living clay monster with Stephen.

Overwhelmed by uncanny feelings towards Stephen, Davie is both fascinated and repulsed by his own thoughts and behaviour. Davie's sense of uncanniness reaches its apex when he looks into one of Stephen's clay figurines just to recognise that his own face is staring at him from the clay, 'I cleaned his face with spit: a calm and ordinary face, a Felling face [...] then my heart stood still. The clay figure was me. It was my face that looked up at me from between my own hands' (*Clay* 66). Such apprehension towards his image in the clay is resonant with the uncanny feeling a child experiences in the first encounter with a new self-image reflected in mirror at an early stage of life. Yet, if Davie's image signifies some aspects of his subjectivity, it also signifies that he is being controlled by Stephen, metaphorically being brought to life by him. This notion is later emphasised when Davie narrates his strange dream or what he believes to be a dream about Stephen: 'I felt Stephen's fingers on me, like he was forming me, like I was his clay. His fingers slid and slipped across me. I squirmed on the bed, trying to break free from him. "Be still," he whispered. "Let me make you, Davie."' (76) The existence of Stephen who initiates the fantastic opens for Davie a new experience that characterises adolescence, a stage where realities are due to be questioned, 'I told myself that Stephen Rose was something strange and new, something that had been sent to me, something that stood before me as I grew from being a boy into a man' (127). While Stephen, who is himself a teenager, seems to be using Davie in his destructive impulse to create a killing monster, for Davie, Stephen stands for a new experience which may satisfy Davie's own desire for the unknown.

> I knew that when I was with him, I could be more than I was by myself. I knew that something had drawn us together, that somehow

> we were meant to be together. There was no going back to the life
> I'd had before. Not till I'd gone through what I had to go through
> with Stephen Rose. (166)

On one level, this passion can be read as a homo-erotic relationship with Stephen,

especially when one considers that Davie's romance with Maria, a local girl, has

been disrupted by Davie's relationship with Stephen when the latter kisses Davie

in the presence of Maria and other children. As Almonds demonstrates

adolescence is a time for experimenting with different possible identities, and

sexual identity is one of them. On another level, with his demonic powers,

Stephen seems to empower Davie, who feels threatened by Mouldy, a bully who

often abuses Davie and his friend Geordie both physically and mentally.

Moreover, on a more general level, Stephen offers Davie a space wherein

negotiations of his adolescent identity can be tested. Davie's surrender to

Stephen's temptations allows him to experience the ambivalent nature of the

fantastic, and ultimately awakens Davie to a new sense of a more mature and

experienced self. Persuaded to steal communion bread and wine from the church

to give life to their clay creation by using the power of Christ's body and blood,

Davie acts against the religious and cultural norms of his Catholic community.

His act marks a step surpassing his former childish behaviour such as stealing

wine from church to drink with his friend Geordie into a more sinister attempt to

create something entirely evil by his use of the church's possessions. Thus, in

adolescence, as in the fantastic, the subject's relation to the world is problematised

as Jacksons puts it 'the relation of the individual subject to the world, to others, to

objects, ceases to be known or safe' (*Fantasy* 49). The influence of adolescence is

mirrored in the ambivalence implied in the fantastic; its temporality, like the

fantastic, lies in the perilous and temporary state between a marvellous childhood and an uncanny adulthood.

By means of questioning the boundaries and fixities of the real, the fantastic allows the narrative voice to alternate frequently between the realms of reality and the imaginary without clear distinction between the two. Sometimes, Davie, as well as the reader, is not sure whether in the middle of the night Stephen is calling him from outside the window or whether this is merely a dream: 'Was I hearing things?' Davie asks himself, 'it seemed to echo from deep inside my head' (*Clay* 75). As Jackson remarks, 'the fantastic plays upon difficulties of interpreting events/things as objects or as images, thus disorientating the reader's categorization of the "real"' (*Fantasy* 20). Actually the fantastic relies on the real, as it exists on the peripheries of reality and by 'presenting that which cannot be, but *is*, fantasy exposes a culture's definitions of that which can be: it traces the limits of its epistemological and ontological frame' (*Fantasy* 23). *Clay* creates a recognisably realist world into which the extraordinary elements are introduced. The realist nature of the narrative is strongly established before the imaginary and supernatural occurrences make its way to the real life of the protagonist narrator Davie.

Just before Davie and Stephen create the monster, Stephen attempts to convince Davie that the latter is also able to breathe life into clay, 'it squirmed like there was life in it, there was spirit in it [...] I shook my head. How could I *not* believe?' (*Clay* 130). Davie enters into a realm whereas no rigid boundaries between the animate and inanimate and between the probable and impossible. Almond evokes the infantile sense of animism in putting life into lifeless object;

an approach which works perfectly for young readers. As for the adult readers, these feelings might be surmounted by what Freud calls 'reality testing'. Yet, the text seems to question the nature of reality one claims to know and the predetermined assumptions one makes about the real. This moment of temporary belief in the supernatural for Davie is readily shattered and a new vision appears: 'I laughed at Stephen, at me, at dreams of monsters and angels and illusions of moving clay. Stupid, all of it. Crazy' (132). This hesitation between belief and disbelief by the narrator is one of the defining features of the fantastic mode as Todorov asserts. The reader here may also hesitate between two different interpretations of the incidents narrated; s/he may be inclined to deduce a natural explanation such as that it is Davie's imagination which allows him to see things moving or that Stephen is playing a hypnotizing trick since we are shown how he is able to put his aunt Mary into a hypnotic trance. But the reader may also be allowed to interpret the incident as magically real. After all, towards the end of the novel Davie walks around with the monster on his own, uninfluenced by Stephen's presence. As long as the ambiguity of the situation survives, the reader is in the territory of the fantastic.

The tendency of merging two realms of reality and fantasy in *Clay* is emphasised by a shift in the narrative tense from the past in the first two parts of the book, to the present tense in the third part, and then back to the past tense in the fourth and final part. The chapter conveyed in the present tense relates Davie's ruminations on the night of building the clay monster with Stephen. With the shift from the past to the present, the narratorial voice shifts from one straight-forwardly relating a past real story into the voice of someone reflecting on a

dream. In this chapter, moreover, Davie's narration reveals his estrangement from himself. The boundaries between the self and the other seem to be the most permeable. At the beginning of this chapter, he recounts getting up on the day of his long awaited meeting with Stephen: 'I try to empty my head of everything, try to enter a place where there's nothing: no world, no house, no room, no Davie. But it's Davie, of course, who rises from the bed an hour later, Davie who ...' (170). Davie attempts to distance himself from what he perceives as an actor Davie who helps Stephen in his monstrous deeds. Soon, they build the golem with clay taken from the community garden: 'we kneel and turn the sticky sloppy clay into the shape of a man. And we become engrossed in it, and sometimes I forget myself and where I am, and I forget how crazy this would seem if someone else from Felling stumbled into the quarry tonight (175). Davie is aware that he is doing something 'crazy' that violates the cultural and social codes of Felling. But to see the clay man twitching his limbs is the craziest of all (Davie does not relate whether or not Stephen passes his hands in front of Davie's eyes, to indicate working a hypnotic trick). Having abandoned the scene, Davie attempts to convince himself that the extraordinary creature he has just helped creating is fantasy that never exists. In a mood of self-estrangement he reflects:

> I creep back into my house, back into my bed. I tell myself to tell myself that none of it's happened really but that I've been in bed all this time, that I saw an imaginary boy called Davie doing imaginary things with an imaginary creature out in an imaginary night. (192)

But against Davie's expectations, stepping back from the scene allows Stephen to manipulate the situation to his own advantage. In the morning, Davie's fantasy is shattered and turned into a real nightmare when told that Mouldy is discovered dead in the community garden: "'Here in Felling,' says Mam. 'Who'd believe

it?'" (193). Later in the novel, Stephen reveals (or at least, claims to Davie) that he had killed Mouldy, because the monster disappointingly turned out to be incapable of killing.

One of the significant effects of Stephen's arrival and the creation of the clay monster is to expose how even resistant communities like Felling, can be forced to change in response to external influences. As Wendy Faris suggests, magical realist narratives comment on the ways through which the 'old' of traditional societies come in contact or contrast with the 'new' of colonising worlds.[18] Even though Stephen's practices on clay are more like representations of primitive spirituality than an exercise of more developed outsider, his strategy and disturbing power have the effect of 'colonising' the boys under his influence. Almond's use of magical realism in his novels in general speaks for his north eastern consciousness and clearly marks his literary identity as encoded in his relationship with place. In *The Fire Eaters*, as it will be revealed later, his explorations of the image of place (north eastern England) become a vivid symbolisation of his consciousness.

Jackson suggests that the fantastic narrative is an interpretation of an experience with the boundaries of the real (*Fantasy* 25). There is no doubt that the relationship between what is supposed to be the real and what is not is central to any discussion of the fantastic. More significant is the power of the fantastic to engender scepticism and suspicion towards established versions of reality. Zamora and Faris remark that:

> In magical realist texts, ontological disruption serves the purpose of
> political and cultural disruption: magic is often given as a cultural

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[18] Wendy B. Faris, *Ordinary Enchantment and the Remystification of Narrative* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), p. 9.

corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality, motivation. ('Introduction' 3)

Although Almond believes that his works are realistic given that their settings are real places, he does acknowledge the extraordinary thread running through their narratives: 'I suppose what they do maybe tend towards is to show how extraordinary the world *can* be. Especially for children.'[19] For Almond, unlike adults' 'mechanistic view of the world', children seem to be open to the extraordinary. Almond's words seem to echo Freud's assumption of adults' empiricism once they embrace the reality principle. As Freud suggests literary writing as a means for breaking this empiricism and venturing on pleasure principle, so does Almond express that he undergoes a similar experience that is particularly accessible through writing for children 'there's a lot of room to explore those kind of areas that I couldn't explore as effectively when I was writing for adults. It's a fantastic feeling to write for children. It's very kind of open and experimental'. Therefore, one effect of the magic in Almond's novels which readers are required to 'scrutinize' as Zamora and Faris suggest would be to discover such openness and experimentalism since readers are able in certain ways, as Freud indicates, to re-experience the creative impulse of the writer.

In essence, *Clay* employs the subversive strategy common in adult magic realism which lies, as Bowers suggests, in the alternation of the magical realist narrative between the realm of magic and the realm of reality with the same tone of seriousness.[20] Another important characteristic of magical realism that Bowers refers to is its transgressive trait 'since magical realism crosses the borders

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[19] David Almond, 'Interview with David Almond by Linda Richards' *January Magazine*, February 2002, <http://januarymagazine.com/profiles/almond.html> [accessed 19 April, 2009]
[20] Bowers, *Magic(al) Realism*, p. 67.

between the magic and real to create a further category - the magical real' (67).

Both these two aspects contribute to the qualities that make a magical realist book such as *Clay* appeal to an older age group than the one for which is originally written.[21]

In young adult literature, the intrusion of the fantastic moment into a coherent, seemingly believable realistic world provides an apt narrative space for exploring the unsettling effects of new and emerging identity in adolescence. As magic realism initiates questioning of the real and hesitation on the behalf of the reader between the marvellous and the uncanny, the mode of magic realism could be seen as a temporal transition between a childhood stage, where magic and reality are undistinguishable, and an adult stage of mature reasoning. So, what is definite for the reader becomes questionable at certain stage of reading magical realism. The transgressive quality of magical realism allows the reader to explore free play across boundaries, whether these boundaries are ontological, political, generic or even temporal. Hence, the existence of two worlds, that would be irreconcilable elsewhere, is made possible within the magic realist narrative. As Zomora and Faris remark, 'the propensity of magical realist texts to admit a plurality of worlds means that they often situate themselves on liminal territory between or among those worlds' ('Introduction' 6). In other words, magical realist mode facilitates a sense of dissolution in boundaries between the adult and the child worlds, or between the adult *self* and the child as *other*.

Davie's experience with Stephen is both an attempt to break away from the norms of his society, urged on by his subconscious adolescent rebelliousness

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[21] See reviews the book in 'Key Reviews' <http://www.davidalmond.com/books/review.html> [Accessed 20 November 2006].

and a way to recognise his individual subjectivity. At first, Davie is unable to

relinquish his parental support. Imploring for parental protection against his sense

of estrangement, Davie realises that he has to stand up to the challenge this time:

'I wanted Dad to come out, or Mam. I wanted them to yell out into the street and

send Stephen running back to Crazy Mary's. But they didn't come out' (127).

Though Davie is entirely aware of his 'ordinariness' as a kid, there is still an

attraction of the unknown, of the sphere of Stephen Rose, which Davie is unable

to resist:

> There I was, an ordinary kid. This was home, an ordinary town. I'd
> stolen the body and blood of Christ and wouldn't give them back. I'd
> go further into the darkness with Stephen Rose [...] I moved closer
> to the window, I looked at myself more closely. I was just the same
> as ever, ordinary, just ordinary. (145)

Not surprisingly, the sense of estrangement from the self that Davie experiences at

the moment cannot be reflected in the image of himself in the glass of the

window. In moments of weakness, Davie's language expresses his need to take

refuge from the Other in the shield of the m/other. On the night of creating Clay,

he pretends to be asleep: 'I don't say good night back until she's gone again and

closed the door again and then I want to cry and call out, "Mammy! Come back

Mammy!"' (170) The only place which excludes all that is Other is the semiotic

nurturing zone of the mother.

The narrative of *Clay* allows continuous transgressions of the limits

between matter and mind, the material and the spiritual which as Todorov argues

is typical of the fantastic.[22] At school, in art lesson, the children in Davie's

classroom are encouraged to think about themselves and about the clay they are

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[22] Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 116.

supposed to use to produce clay figures. The art teacher puts his question forwards: 'A lump of muck. Soft, oozy, slimy, slithery, formless stuff. Could it be that we are drawn to it because it reminds us of ourselves – of our human formlessness and muckiness?' (154) The teacher's inquiries pose some philosophical issues to contemplate rather than direct questions addressed to children. He sums up his ontological questioning by 'the thought that we might be doomed simply to return to earth? The thought that we may be dense, solid, heavy, the playthings of our creator...' (158). Hence, the adult in the text echoes the child Stephen's questioning about creationism. This suggests that Davie is pushed to question himself on two levels of thinking, one articulated by a child and another by an adult, a notion that captures the essence of adolescence.

Influenced by these questions, Davie's encounter with the fantastic seems to lead to dissolution of the limits between matter and mind. This dissolution is mostly manifested while Davie and Stephen's wait for the clay monster to move. Davie narrates:

> And time passes and our whispers change and waver and become like weird singing that comes out of us but that's somehow not part of us, but is part of the night, the air, the moonshine, and the words in the singing are no longer like words but are just sounds drawn from somewhere deep inside ourselves, like creatures' cries, like complicated birdsong, nighttime birdsong. And we ourselves become somehow not ourselves, but we turn subtler, weirder, less attached to our bodies, less attached to our names. (*Clay* 179-80)

Davie seems to undergo a mystical experience where distinctive limits between matter and mind are temporarily nonexistent. The flow of his words echoes such a state of dissolution. While attempting to represent his inexpressible sensations, the syntax is apparently dissolving into one long sentence without clear boundaries. Davie's epiphanic moment is expressed with a sense of estrangement

within the self; neither the words nor the singing are familiar. Even the self becomes estranged from itself. Yet, the language here unearths the emergence of a previous self, a self associated with a time when 'names' are not of much importance. This may be understood as a return to a state of undifferentiation which precedes the mirror stage in which the subject 'I' divides from the other. The transition between matter and mind as expressed in Davie's narration, to use Todorov's argument, allows for an effacement of borders between subject and object, where the subject is rationally the individual and the object represents external things and persons. Interestingly, this transgression is common in the world of the child as chronicled by Todorov. Drawing on Piaget, he argues that an infant is unable to distinguish between the physical world and the psychic one. Todorov draws our attention to this: 'we may note once again the proximity of this thematic constant of literature of the fantastic with one of the basic characteristics of the world of the child.'[23] The language of the fantastic, however, in its fluidity and boundless structure, facilities a transition between the self and the other, or more specifically allows the adult reader a space to consider redefinition of individual subjectivity through the psychic space of adolescence. As Faris sums up the point: magical realism reorients not only our habits of time and space but our sense of identity as well.'[24]

A similar tendency to transgress temporal boundaries can be traced in Almond's earlier young adult novel *Skellig* (1998), in which the narrative can create a sphere of the child accessible to the adult reader. *Skellig* relates the story of Michael and Mina who discover an angelic creature, a man with hidden wings,

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[23] Todorov, *The Fantastic*, pp. 117-118.
[24] Faris, *Ordinary Enchantment*, p. 25.

in the crumbling garage of the house that Michael's family has recently moved to. Like *Clay*, *Skellig* displays characteristics of magical realism in mainstream literature. The book itself is inspired by a short story written by the Columbian magical realist writer Gabriel García Márquez's entitled 'A very Old Man with Enormous Wings.'[25] *Skellig* conforms to the criteria stated by Wendy Faris as typical of magical realist narrative.[26] Firstly, the extraordinary existence of Skellig who combines both human and animal features stresses the 'irreducible element' of magic (167). This magic is gradually developed within a realistic atmosphere of everyday life. When the protagonist narrator Michael first catches the sight of Skellig in the garage of his new home, he describes the strange man as a part of the garage: 'he was covered in dust and webs like everything else'.[27] The very realistic picture depicting the garage with great attention to details prepares for normalising the supernatural event. The fact that the fantastic is gradually developed through realistic narrative catalyses the sense of magic as wholly integrated within the real world of Michael. This allows the reader to experience the intersection between the real and the supernatural.

The transgressive characteristics of magical realism in *Skellig* go beyond mere alteration between the real and the un-real. The narrative also expresses a state of liminality manifested in the narrator's transition from a precarious state into a secure one and from a child to a more mature person. Skellig appears at a very critical point in Michael's life; not only is adolescence weighing on him, but

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[25] Don Latham compares Almond's *Skellig* and Márquez's short story in 'Magical Realism and the Child Reader: the Case of David Almond's *Skellig*' in *The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature*, Vol. 10: 1 (2006) <http://www.the-looking-glass.net/rabbit/v10i1/alice1.html> [accessed 10 August 2006]

[26] Wendy B. Faris, 'Scheherazade's Children: Magical realism and Postmodern Fiction', (p. 167).

[27] David Almond, *Skellig* (London: Hodder Children's Books), p. 7. Hereafter cited in the text as *Skellig*.

the early arrival of his sick newborn baby sister and moving house before getting the new home ready have alienated him from his parents and deprived him from the familiar things in his life: school, friends, surroundings and family time. Michael's mum attempts to put his internal anarchy in words: 'everything inside you's changing. The world can seem a wild and weird place' (*Skellig* 115). Because of the rapid changes inside and out, the new home becomes associated, in Michael's mind, with ominous images of death, illness, and wilderness, naming his ailing sister's doctor 'Death' and the new garden 'wilderness'. The atmospheric unfamiliarity accelerates more rapidly when he alone discovers the existence of Skellig: 'nobody else was there. Just me' (1). Interestingly, the existence of the unfamiliar opens new perspectives towards strangeness and helps Michael to reconcile with otherness. In the beginning Michael expresses doubts about the reality of Skellig: 'I'd never seen him at all. That had all been part of a dream' (9). Even when he invites Mina, a child neighbour, to see Skellig, he experiences a state of hesitation between a sense of reality and imagination: 'Maybe Mina would see nothing. Maybe I'd been wrong all along. Maybe dreams and truth were just a useless muddle in my mind' (71). The hesitation between belief and non-belief is also experienced by Mina on the night they move Skellig from the garage into the house of Mina's grandfather. 'We're not dreaming it together?' Mina expresses her doubts, to which Michael adds: 'Even if we were we wouldn't know' (79). Both Michael and Mina seem to experience the interaction of two contrasting realms of reality and illusion, of the physical and spiritual.

The collapse of physical and spiritual boundaries culminates in a carnivalesque scene in which Michael and Mina enjoy a festive dance with Skellig. In this scene all of the three come into a free contact with each other. Michael narrates:

> My heart raced and thundered and then it settled to a steady rolling rhythm. I felt Skellig's and Mina's hearts beating along with my own. I felt their breath in rhythm with mine. It was like we had moved into each other, as if we had become one thing. (110)

The existence of a pre-symbolic child can be sensed in the narrator's symbolic expression. It is a child whose troubled heartbeat is soothed by the rhythmical tone felt when united with the mother. Fittingly, on this night Michael also starts to feel the heartbeat of his little baby sister along with his own inside his chest. Moreover, in this scene social norms are temporarily suspended; children are on their own at night dancing freely with what appears to be an adult stranger. Through their carnivalesque experience, Michael and Mina undergo liberation from established social rules by taking care of an adult. The reversal of roles calls to mind Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival. The space of liminality serves to 'consecrate inventive freedom, to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted'.[28] In this regard, Jackson associates the fantastic with the carnival referring to the carnivalesque features of Bakhtin's *menippea* which is a traditional form of fantastic art (*Fantasy* 16). She also draws an analogy between the grotesque and the fantastic body because of its faculty of combining different forms and inverting elements.

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[28] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 34.

Skellig is a figure of the grotesque who illustrates the tendency of the fantastic to obscure boundaries. Skellig looks like an old man with wings growing out of his shoulder blades: 'beneath his jacket were wings that grew out through rips in his shirt' (89). He eats human Chinese food presented by Michael, but also eats insects and mice given to him by the owls. The grotesque body of Skellig blends human and animal qualities. When asked about his identity, Skellig tells Michael that he is 'something like you, something like a beast, something like a bird, something like an angel' which in a sense defies any discrete self-other boundaries (158) He combines elements which belong to different worlds. The grotesque body, like the fantastic, troubles boundaries and transgresses limits. As Bakhtin notes, 'the grotesque image reflects a phenomenon of transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming.'[29]

This atmosphere of progression and free play in carnival recollects the openness of adolescence, with its continuous troubling of boundaries. Mina expresses such a feeling: 'we're still like chicks [...] happy half the time, half the time dead scared' (132). Michael, however, wonders where the happy half is, which reflects his growing sense of responsibility associated with adulthood. In fact, the narrative of *Skellig* represents a movement from the realm of childhood with its innocence, ignorance and carelessness into a realm of traditional adulthood with awareness, knowledge and sense of responsibility. Towards the end, Michael's adolescent sense of alienation also changes into a sense of harmony with others.

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[29] Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 24.

A significant sign of openness between adolescence and childhood can be detected through Michael's relationship to his baby sister. His attachment to the baby girl grows so strong that he becomes able to hear her heartbeat and to sense her feelings inside himself. The image of the baby starts to occupy a considerable space in Michael's mind, as becomes evident in his artwork. He starts to move into the child's world to imagine how she perceives the world of adults through the glass box she is put in: 'I drew the world as the baby might see it: the long hospital ward filled with lumbering adults, [...], the faces of nurses smiling down. I drew the world twisted into weird shapes by the curved glass case that covered her' (127). The image of the world as such is again a reference to the primary sense of alienation experienced by the pre-symbolic child in the mirror stage. The fantastic mode is similarly predisposed to admit a plurality of worlds where fission and dissolution occur in different spatial zones.

The notion of permeable borders between the space of adolescence and that of adulthood on one level, and between adolescence and earlier childhood on the other has functions that serve the fantastic mode, as defined by Todorov and Jackson. This freedom of moving between these three stages of life can, furthermore, be experienced by the adult reader who can recover, through reading, a space for play on the borders between adulthood and childhood. A fantastic text, such as *Skellig*, enacts the adult reader's desire to transcend boundaries between the symbolic and the imaginary. Jackson suggests that

> the most subversive fantasies are those which attempt to *transform* the relations of the imaginary and the symbolic [...] by making fluid the relations between these realms, suggesting, or projecting, the dissolution of the symbolic through violent reversal or rejection of the process of the subject's formation. (*Fantasy* 91)

Like Freud, Jackson views fantasies arising in adulthood, when the symbolic is supposed to be firmly established, as a reversal towards the pre-symbolic stage. This reversal results in the disruption or temporal halt of the symbolic function. This is not to suggest that an adult is likely to revert to a 'child' position whenever confronted with adult fantasies stimulated through reading. Viewed more constructively, this fantasising constitutes an unconscious encounter with childhood as the fantasies we create through reading are equivalent to those created by the child at play.

This reversion to, or re-encounter with, childhood through reading is demonstrated in Almond's more recent novel, *The Fire Eaters* (2003). This magic realist novel takes on a slightly different mode of presenting the spaces of childhood and adulthood as their interchange is grounded in a double temporal space of past and present, both materialised in the representations of Keely Bay in northern England. The adult's reading experience of this text allows a transition between the space of childhood and that of adulthood through transitory engagement with the fictional past and present represented in the text. This transitory experience can also be sensed through a split in the adolescent narrator's tone which wavers between a child's voice and an adult one.

In *The Fire Eaters*, place is highly valorised through topographical and temporal representations. The passionate description of the visual landscape of Keely Bay, where David Almond himself spent his childhood, indicates the importance of this specific time and place for the novel as a whole. The novel evokes the life of a small community in Keely Bay at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. This 'coaly' place which is described through various views voiced

by the adolescent narrator Bobby Burns becomes a place of collective memory

and magic resonance, for two generations: children and their parents.

Interestingly, this notion of sentimental value endowed to place does not

initially reflect the narrator's perspective; it is derived from adults' views, mainly

his parents. On one occasion, the town seems to Bobby no more than a 'coaly',

old, and unattractive place even to God: "I tried to imagine God looking down at

us from somewhere past the stars. What would he look like? And why would he

look down on this place, this coaly beach by a coaly sea, when there was all the

universe to look at?" (*Fire Eaters* 139) Nevertheless, Bobby reacts with anger

when his town and people are ridiculed by Daniel, a boy from the south, who

echoes his own father's words: "'Dad says they look like ancient devils or

something.' [...] 'Like something from ancient tales. Half human. He says you'd

only find them in a place like Keely Bay'" (115). Not only do Bobby's words

reflect such confusion towards the place; his voice, while narrating adults' views,

also reveals double perspective. On one of their journeys from Newcastle to Keely

Bay, while approaching the town, Bobby narrates his mother's fascination with

the place:

> She said the sky was beautiful, the way its blueness faded into
> countless shades of purple and orange and pink. She praised the
> fields, the hedgerows, the allotments, the pigeon lofts, the silhouettes
> of pitheads to the north. She gasped at the first sight of the distant
> glistening sea, at the rooftops of our Keely Bay. 'It's like...' she
> said. 'but who could catch such beauty?'" (13)

Though Bobby begins by giving a child's, simpler version of his mother's

perspective, his voice seems to become more mature as his mother's words affect

his own lexical register. In fact, Bobby's awareness of the place seems to undergo

a process of maturation until his narrative voice expresses what appears to be a fully adult consciousness:

> The beach was so calm beneath the stars. Rock pools lay like scattered glass and the sea like great mirror. I closed my eyes against the returning lighthouse light. I tried to pray but I didn't know what to pray and the things I whispered seemed so childish. (106)

Captured by a new sensation of the natural beauty of the surroundings, Bobby's metaphorical description echoes a mature impression. It seems like his attachment to his mother is replaced by an intimate relationship to the place similar to an adult's. There is a resonance in Bobby's words that he 'scatters' the 'glass' of his own image reflected in the 'great mirror' of confusion then reaches a stage when he can judge his own 'childishness'. Bobby's growing appreciation of the place culminates in an extreme desire for a unity with nature as a way of escaping the confinement of the boundaries of the body: 'I wanted to break free of my skin, to be the sea, the sky, a stone, the lighthouse light, to be out there in the gathering darkness, to be nothing, unconscious, wild and free.' (125) The narrator seems to undergo a mystical experience triggered by his continuous thinking about humanity's destiny to feel pain. This desire to merge human and natural entities is again a feature of transition between matter and mind, a characteristic of the fantastic in Todorov's definition.

This sense of doubleness towards place also occurs when the narrator describes 'the pines', a place where he and other children play and where his father and his generation used to play in the past. Bobby narrates, 'it was a place where everybody loved to play, and it was a place where lots of kids went to war.' (41) 'The pines' is not only a place which combines the memories of two

generations; it is also a location where children's innocent war games stands in contrast with the real game of war played by adult politicians.

Another combination of different times and places is blurred in the mind McNulty, a mysterious man whose magical ability to endure pain confuses Bobby. Like Skellig, McNulty is a figure of the grotesque whose body bears traces of different times and places: 'he was one of them that'd seen too much, suffered too much. It was like his brain'd been boiled. Too much war, too much heat, too many magic men. The man was such a mess' (15). His body has no clear boundaries as it is still open to suffering and to experiencing the pain of the past as well as of the present. McNulty has no memory of the scars and tattoos that merge on his own body. For Bobby, he represents a site of mystery and magic which grows organically from the reality of life. Thus, the presence of McNulty is central here to the magical realist mode of the narrative. McNulty's characterisation provokes questions about time and place, a significant characteristic of adult magical realism as noted above.[30] Through him, the narrative posits ontological questions about pain and suffering as well as political ones in the way it arouses sceptical views about the motives leading to real wars and human suffering.

McNulty is destined to die on the sands of Keely Bay where people believe in miracles: the miracles of the gypsy's medicine, of holy places and of sacrifice; miracles of love, prayers and dreaming. This miraculous place is depicted as one of the peripheral regions of English culture and of the world. Bobby writes in his notebook: '*It's a tiny corner of the world. It is nothing to the*

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[30] Wendy B. Faris, 'Scheherazade's Children: Magical realism and Postmodern Fiction', p. 173.

universe. A tatty place, a coaly beach by a coaly sea [...] *But it's where I live and where the people I love live ...*' (221, original italics). Bobby's sense of place reveals maturity and his narrative tone about the place is sophisticated. He starts to think of place as a site of childhood memories as adults would remember places related to their past. When Bobby sits on the beach with the people of Keely Bay, he narrates:

> My mind kept slipping, drifting. I saw myself as a little boy again, running to the water with my bucket and spade. I saw myself tumbling and squealing and being bowled over by the waves. I saw Mam picking me up and comforting me and putting me in the water again. [...] I saw Keely Bay as it had been all through my childhood, hardly changing [...]. Maybe all of us saw such things, for all of us kept entering such deep silences. (228)

The narrator here seems to be quite detached from childhood and more attached to the place in which his past memories reside. He even suggests that all of us are likely to enter our past through 'such deep silences'. Throughout the narrator's reconciliation with place, the reader is invited to re-enter places associated with his/her own childhood. This notion of the adults partly retrieving their childhood through the narrative recreation of sites of memories is explored at length in Valerie Krips' *The Presence of the Past*.[31] She argues that books for young readers can be perceived as sites of memory through which adults can recall and desire moments of childhood and precious past. Children's books provoke memory in adults inviting them to think of the past and of the possibility of retrieving it.

Arguably, the development of a strong sense of space can easily be transferred to the reader and particularly the adult. Rawdon Wilson argues that

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[31] Valerie Krips, *The Presence of the Past: Memory, Heritage, and Childhood in Postwar Britain* (London: Garland Publishing, 2000).

readers do read images of space in fiction. This spatial imagery is simply a part of the reader's response to narrative. The readers tend to recall what they read by 'reconstruct[ing] the spatiality of reading experience'[32]. Drawing on Georges Poulet, Wilson suggests that memory works in spatial terms in the way that temporal phases and spatial images invariably interact in structuring memories. In other words the recapturing of lost time is associated with 'the discovery of old places' (216). The magical illusions reinterpret the protagonist's relationship to the cultural ideological context since space is strongly associated with places that intrinsically reflect a sense of collective memory of hard working people in their poor seclusion.

Thus, magical realist narratives presented in children and young adult literature such as Almond's novels offer the possibility of reconciliation with childhood through experiencing the fantastic in the reading experience. The plurality of space common in magical realism in general and specifically featured in a mode of adolescent narration offers the adult reader a temporal experience of occupying an adolescent space between childhood and adulthood. The fantastic, by definition, is disruptive of stability, is subversive of linear temporality, and as argued above is set in the tension between pleasure principle and reality principle, and therefore has all the hallmarks of adolescence.

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[32] Rawdon Wilson, "The Metamorphoses of Fictional Space: Magical Realism" in *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, p. 216.

Chapter Four

J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*

and the Pleasures of Formulaic Fiction

Over the last millennial decade the Harry Potter books have become a monumental landmark within the field of literature addressed to young and adolescent readers. The extraordinary success of J. K. Rowling's seven-book series reflected in her global popularity among young as well as adult readers, has generated proliferating critical interest across the literary arena. Adult readers' embrace of the Harry Potter books has led to a critical recognition of the crossover phenomenon in general. The books have been intensely and extensively examined within a wide spectrum of studies: literary, socio - cultural and psychological, most of which attempt to account for the exceptional cross-generational reception of the story of the orphan boy who becomes a wizard hero.[1] Besides probing into both textual and paratextual aspects of Rowling's books, a number of studies have commented on the accelerating media hype during the decade of their publication from 1997 to 2007. Some of the issues raised include such questions as: What is so extraordinary about the series that makes the books so popular among children? To what extent is this popularity driven by media? What is the impact on children of reading *Harry Potter*? Is the story sexist or too gender-biased for children? In nearly all the studies the child is assumed to be the main implied reader since the adult reader's fascination, much to the disappointment of some, is believed to

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[1] For a select list see Ernelle Fife, 'Reading J.K. Rowling Magically: Creating C.S. Lewis's "Good Reader"', in *Scholarly Studies in Harry Potter: Applying Academic Methods to a Popular Text*, ed. by Cynthia Whitney Hallett (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), pp. 137-58 (p. 137).

epitomise what is derogatorily described as cultural infantilism.[2] Only a few

critical studies have directly addressed the issue of adult readership in its own

right.[3]

The current chapter is a tributary to the argument advanced in previous

chapters regarding the openness of adolescent texts to adult readers. I address the

question of adult readers' responses to serial children's books such as the Harry

Potter series which dramatises, through its progress from the simple and

undemanding plot into more mature and ambiguous plotting, the very shift in the

progressive transformation from childhood into adulthood. I suggest that the

experience of reading the series resembles reading popular fiction in certain ways

especially as the structure and characteristics of romance are unmistakably

featured in the Harry Potter novels. Moreover, as each volume maintains similar

features to the previous one, reading each sequel is implicitly a kind of rereading.

Within the parameters of rereading popular fiction, whose psychological effects

have been usefully analysed by Karen Odden, I will examine the adult reader's

adoption of the Harry Potter books.

Odden's principal approach lies in the notion that the pleasure readers

achieve whilst rereading popular fiction is produced by the psychological re-

enactment of certain childhood dramas, each of which is triggered by means of

identification with the hero or the heroine. But though the novels appear repetitive

and formulaic in one respect, I will suggest that this sense of repetition coincides

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[2] See for example, A.S. Byatt, 'Harry Potter and the Childish Adult', *New York Times* (7 July 2003) <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/07/opinion/harry-potter-and-the-childish-adult.html > [accessed 29 April 2009]. See also Steven Barfield's discussion of Byatt's and other unfavourable critical response to Rowling's in 'Of Young Magicians and Growing Up: J. K. Rowling, Her Critics, and the "Cultural Infantilism" Debate' in Cynthia Hallet, ed. *Scholarly Studies*, pp. 175-97.

[3] See Rachel Falconer, 'Harry Potter, Lightness and Death', *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (New York; London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 43-72.

with a consequent increase of complexity in narrative and themes. As Suman
Gupta suggests, there is a 'progression' which requires a growing awareness from
the reader as s/he moves through the series.[4] In other words, the experience of
reading the books requires a progressive development of reading skills so that the
reading experience shifts the reader from the simple to the complex in a way
comparable to the maturing pattern of reading that we develop as we grow from
childhood into adulthood.

The Harry Potter series has intrigued a huge number of critics and scholars
who have attempted to account for the unprecedented success of the books. For
example, Maria Nikolajeva recognises certain narrative patterns in the Harry
Potter books that appeal to both children and adult readers.[5] While some have
applauded its lightness and classical leitmotifs, the books have also been
disparaged for distorting the canon of fantasy literature and degrading literary
values. Children's literature critic Jack Zipes criticises the Harry Potter books for
being repetitive, predictable and a failed type of fairy tales, and thus certainly
inappropriate for the adult reader's taste and standards of reading.[6] Like many
other critics, Zipes attributes the success of the books entirely to contemporary
forms of commodity production and aggressive media marketing. He denigrates
the phenomenal reception with which such books have been met, since, for him,
they lack the literary merits of serious children's literature. According to Zipes,
though *Harry Potter* is 'a conventional work of fantasy', it strikes the readers who

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[4] Suman Gupta, 'Repetition and Progression', in *Re-Reading Harry Potter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave
Macmillan, 2003), pp. 93-96.

[5] Maria Nikolajeva, '*Harry Potter* - A Return to the Romantic Hero', in *Harry Potter's World:
Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Elizabeth E. Heilman (London; New York:
Routledge Falmer, 2003), pp. 125-40.

[6] See Jack Zipes, 'The Phenomenon of Harry Potter, or Why All the Talk?', in *Sticks and Stones:
The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter* (London;
New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 170-89.

are 'to a large degree adults' as phenomenal (172). Its homogenising effect on popular taste has turned the phenomenon against itself into an ordinary commodity of the consumerist culture. In Zipes's dialectics of the 'phenomenon' there is a paradox as for 'anything to become a phenomenon in the Western society, it must become *conventional*' (175). He goes further to claim that any evaluation is invariably blurred by the predominance of manipulative capitalist marketing of the books. In extensively attempting to account for the phenomenon exclusively as a fetish fostered by the market, he concludes that 'what distinguishes the plots of Rowling's novels, however, are their conventionality, predictability, and happy endings despite the clever turns and phrases and surprising twists in the intricate plots' (175). With still three books to be published at the time, and with Rowling's intention to write seven books in total in his mind, Zipes rather rashly declares that 'if you've read one, you've read them all: the plots are the same' (176).

It is almost impossible, however, to ignore the impact the media has generated on the popularity of the Harry Potter series. The books have become well known to the public through multi-media recognition of the series. The widespread reputation of the Harry Potter series was partly due to TV reports, the intermittent group discussions of the books, fan based web chats and interviews with the author leading up to the release date of each volume. As well as promoting the books, this media-generated popularity individually contributed to attracting new readers to the series. BBC's Newsround, a children's news programme, kept children, and their parents alike, up to date with any new

releases or publications.[7] The Newsround website lists hundreds of entries covering detailed reports of the release of the books, including Rowling's own announcements about the story itself. The success of the Harry Potter books was celebrated and endorsed by the various awards the books received including three Nestlé Smarties Book Prizes for the first three titles for three years in a raw from 1997 to 1999, a Whitbread children's book of the year award in 1999, two Scottish Arts Council Book Awards in 1999 and 2001, four Whitaker Platinum Book Awards awarded in 2001 and the WH Smith book of the year in 2006. The books were shortlisted for several best book lists including the American Library Association, Publishers Weekly and many more, and also for the Guardian Children's Fiction Award in 1998.[8] The popularity of the series was especially broadened by the highly successful popular film adaptations produced by Warner Brothers, all of which became successful narratives in their own right.[9]

Yet, it is reductive to suggest that the success of Rowling's books among both children and adult is exclusively produced by media hype and marketing. Julia Eccleshare's account of the circumstances that accompanied the publication of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in 1997 shows that the book was well received by young readers despite the little media attention given to the series at that time.[10] Winning prestigious awards such as the Smarties Gold Award voted for by children as well as being shortlisted for awards chosen by adults such

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[7] Newsround, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/find_out/specials/2001/harry_potter/default.stm> [accessed 11 November 2007]

[8] Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter> [accessed 28 October 2007]

[9] See <http://harrypotter.warnerbros.com/index.html> for a list of the movies based on the *Harry Potter* novels.

[10] Julia Eccleshare, *A Guide to the Harry Potter Novels* (London; New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 10-14. Hereafter cited in the text as *Guide*.

as the Carnegie Medal, marked the first volume out as a book with potential for popularity among both children and adults (*Guide* 13).

In fact, what strikes Zipes as extremely ordinary in the first books of the series may have provided the allure for a majority of readers. In '*Harry Potter - A Return to the Romantic Hero*', Nikolajeva suggests that the clear-cut plot and straightforward narrative presented in *Harry Potter* may be a welcome change to contemporary postmodern experimental fiction for adult readers.[11] The Harry Potter novels, which seem to be devoid of the dilemmas explored in postmodern narrative, may provide for a release for contemporary readers. Nikolajeva suggests, 'after decades of parody, metafiction, frame-breaking, and other postmodern games, it may feel liberating for the readers, young and old alike, to know where to place their sympathies and antipathies' (138). The very conventionality of the Harry Potter books may instigate a pleasurable reading experience that can work for adults as well as for children. The repetitive fairy tale structure which Zipes criticises most in the series is probably a prudent choice for readers, mainly adults, who like to enjoy a straightforward narrative with happy ending. As Falconer puts it, 'adults are rediscovering the addictive pleasure of a good story, told directly and without any (post)modernist angst about the problems of representation.'[12] Yet this desire for a happy ending and the 'addictive pleasure' of a good story is reminiscent of early childhood's reading experience. In spite of the educational benefits that adults stress as important in children's reading, at an early stage children tend to read merely to enjoy and

[11] Nikolajeva, '*Harry Potter*'.

[12] Rachel Falconer, 'Crossover Literature', in *International Companion Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature*, ed by Peter Hunt, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 2004) I, P. 556-575, (p. 559).

please themselves. The question to be asked is whether an adult can still respond to a story in a similar way as s/he used to respond as a child. While the hesitation embedded in magical realist narrative opens for the adult reader an opportunity for discovering and negotiating an imminent adolescent identity as argued in the previous chapter, in magical fantasy offered in the Harry potter books, the adult reader is invited to surrender to the world of magic in its own terms.

Adults' capacity to rediscover previous patterns of pleasure is well illustrated in another contemporary crossover success: Geraldine McCaughrean's sequel to J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*. In 2004, the Trustees of Great Ormond Street Hospital, which holds the rights to *Peter Pan* handed by Barrie himself, launched a search for a sequel to mark the centenary of the work.[13] McCaughrean was chosen from hundreds of proposers to write the official sequel to Barrie's classic. In Barrie's original version of *Peter Pan*, only children are privileged to fly and have adventures in Neverland. This long-held exclusive right has changed in McCaughrean's sequel *Peter Pan in Scarlet* (2006)[14]. McCaughrean resumes Barrie's narrative one hundred years on from his description of Neverland; the Lost boys are now grown up but have to find a way to get back into the lost childhood paradise. The premise of the sequel is that this exclusive children's world can be accessible to adults if they are willing to imagine themselves as children. The notion that childhood is lost forever for adults and impossible to retrieve is hereby called into question. The story puts an alternative notion forward: if you want to become a child, you must act like one. So the now-grown-up Boys are asked to put on their own children's clothes: 'if you put on the clothes

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[13] See 'Introducing *Peter Pan in Scarlet*' in <http://www.peterpaninscarlet.com/about.php> [accessed 14 November 2007]

[14] Geraldine McCaughrean, *Peter Pan in Scarlet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

of your children, you become their age again' (23). As for the childless Slightly, he has to find a different route through childhood, through his own memory: 'I went down to the foot of the bed, you see! Haven't done it for twenty years! Right down to the end and beyond! I remembered, you see! You can end up anywhere if you dare to go down to the bottom!' (26) Slightly's innovation suggests that in this text, pleasurable earlier experiences such as playing and reading in childhood can be retrieved by adults, whether consciously or unconsciously, through certain acts which reconstruct a child's status from the adult's perspective. Likewise, McCaughrean suggests, the memory of reading in childhood can be retrieved through rediscovering and re-experiencing the recurrent images and patterns of reading once experienced in childhood. *Peter Pan in Scarlet* itself offers a special invitation to adult readers to communicate with their own pasts, in which they would have first encountered Barrie's *Peter Pan*.[15]

I would suggest that an adult reading the early Harry Potter books could be seen as equivalent to metaphorically putting on children's clothes as they rediscover the pleasure of following a children's adventure story. McCaughrean's dramatisation of adults' propensity to adopt a child's-eye view is closely related to the experience of reading the first three books of Rowling's. Like her readers, Rowling embraces the accessibility of childhood to an adult. When asked how can she think like an eleven years old child in creating her fictional characters, Rowling states clearly: 'Because I find it phenomenally easy to think myself back to that age'[16] The child's-eye view adopted early in the series, however, gets more

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[15] See for example Christopher Middleton, 'Creating a Peter Pan Sequel was a Daunting Task', *Daily Telegraph*, Family Book Club, 2 December 2006, p. 11.
[16] [16] J.K. Rowling, 'The Surprising Success of Harry Potter.' Interview by Larry King. *Larry King Live!* CNN. October 20, 2000.

complex with the later books. In her later volumes Rowling does take the adventure beyond the simple reiteration of her first book. Unlike McCaughrean's novel, which closely follows the plot-structure and style of Barrie's text, Rowling's novels progressively develop in terms of their narrative complexity from undemanding plots with clear-cut moral perspectives in the early books into a more complicated plot structure and a more ambivalent vision of human nature. More importantly, in Rowling's books the protagonists grow up over the series and gradually become more conscious of themselves as they develop different perspectives from the naïve views they may have adopted earlier in the series.

In his developmental model of reading represented in *Becoming a Reader*, J.A. Appleyard recognises five patterns of reading, which loosely correspond to five stages in an individual's psychological development: the reader as a player in early childhood; the reader as hero and heroine in late childhood; the reader as thinker in adolescence; the reader as interpreter in late adolescence and early adulthood; and the pragmatic reader in mature adulthood.[17] While asserting this as a common pattern of progress, Appleyard does not make sharp distinctions between each reading phase, since each role develops from an earlier one and thus shares connections with, and is rooted in, previous roles. Most importantly, the adult reader may choose 'consciously and pragmatically' to shift among these different ways of reading: 'the adult reader may read in several ways, which mimic, though with appropriate differences, the characteristic responses of each of the previous roles' (15). Hence, the pragmatic role of the adult reader may bear traces of any of the previous ways of reading.

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[17] J.A. Appleyard, *Becoming a Reader: The Experience of Fiction from Childhood to Adulthood* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

One of the reading patterns which involve previous reading roles can be evidenced in tracing actual adult readers' over-identification with the fictional characters and situations in the Harry Potter books. Hollie Anderson, a Navajo graduate student at a university in Indiana, describes her reading experience of the books as reminiscent of her sense of isolation and of her parents' memories in assimilationist boarding schools. She argues that, like Harry who is severed from anything to do with magic in the Dursleys, her parents were denied their own Navajo culture in white American schools, 'I felt that many of the themes were pertinent to me personally as an alien student disconnected from the familiar and also to the experiences of my parents, both of whom attended boarding schools.'[18] The theme of discrimination against non-pure blood wizards at Hogwarts is, in her views, very relevant to her personal sense of cultural seclusion and misunderstanding in American schools. Not only does she relate to Harry's experience of alienation, but magic and animagi transformation which are parts of the fictional world of Harry are also recognised rituals of the Navajo culture and beliefs. This sweeping effect of the fictional construct can also be glanced in a number of Jewish journals that pose a question about Harry's Jewish identity. During a conference dedicated to discussions about the wide influence of the Harry Potter series at Reading University, Cia Sautter presented a paper about such Jewish affinity with the books. With spells resonant of rabbinic blessings and 'the Jewish mystical kabbalah', Sautter argues that 'magic [is] presumably serving

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[18] Hollie Anderson, 'Reading Harry Potter with Navajo Eyes' in *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives*. pp. 97-107 (p. 97).

as a symbol of spiritual reality amidst the material world.'[19] Interestingly, the papers presented on the question of Harry's Jewish identity had generated interest and lengthy discussions from Harry Potter's adult enthusiasts. The illusion of effaced boundaries between readers and the fictional world is one of Holland's dynamics of literary response which unconsciously recall primitive defences of our archaic psyche, but as I will argue the experience of reading the Harry Potter books and the issue of identification may develop in more complex ways.

Adopting previous reading roles is pertinent to Karen Odden's study on rereading popular fiction.[20] For Odden, rereading does not necessarily involve rereading the same text; the same process is involved in reading formulaic and serial fiction, in other words, texts of the same type and pattern as those we have become familiar with. Odden claims that our desire to repeat is rooted in childhood psychic development. Children tend to reread their favourite books from adventure books to fairy tale and romance, as part of their structuring of identity (131). Rereading popular fiction however, evokes specific emotional and psychological states such as the sense of security and comfort experienced in childhood or in infancy. Odden identifies six of these states which she calls 'dramas' of childhood. These are:

> (1) learning to trust the world as a safe place, (2) symbiotic bonding through identification, (3) controlling separation anxiety, (4) shifting from absolute egocentricity to the state of being able to acknowledge the world, (5) mastering object relations, and (6) managing anxiety. ('Retrieving' 129)

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[19] Cia Sautter, 'Blessed are you for Creating Harry: Jewish Affinity with Rowling's Tale', see also Amy O. Miller, 'Is Harry Still a Nice Jewish Boy? A Jewish Perspective on Harry Potter' in *Accio* Conference July 2005<http://www.accio.org.uk/>
[20] Karen Odden, 'Retrieving Childhood Fantasies: A Psychoanalytic Look at Why we (Re)read Popular Literature' in *Second Thoughts : A Focus on Rereading*, ed. by David Galef (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), pp.126-51. Hereafter cited in the text as 'Retrieving'.

Though these dramas recall to some extent Holland's Freudian model of literary response examined in chapter one, the dramas indicated by Odden are particularly associated with a specific type of reading: that is, rereading popular literature. Odden looks in particular at popular romance, but it is possible to extend her analysis of psychological dynamics of reading to the adult engagement with the Harry Potter novels. As I noted above, the Potter novels in any case conform to the general pattern of the romance structure. Odden cites the most important characteristics of romance as defined by Northrop Frye: its three main stage are: 'the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures [...]; the crucial struggle [between hero and enemy]; ...the exaltation of the hero; ... and the reward of the quest'[21]. The genre of romance thus, explains Odden, encompasses adventure novels, detective and mystery novels, science fiction and possibly extends to include fairy tales. The Harry Potter novels can be located within the generic boundaries of romance, as defined by Frye. Each novel takes one year starting with a relatively secure position for Harry at the Dursleys'; soon Harry moves into a realm of adventures once the school year starts at Hogwarts; events accelerate into a climax where Harry experiences a crucial struggle with the ultimate evil represented by Lord Voldemort, in which Harry triumphs over evil and ultimately everything goes back to the initial order. Though Harry must wait until the end of the series to receive the reward that traditionally concludes a romance, there are emotional and psychological rewards or collective recognition of Harry's efforts at the end of each novel. This is mainly enacted in words of

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[21] Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p.187, p. 193 quoted by Odden in 'Retrieving Childhood Fantasies', p. 131.

praise for Harry from Dumbledore, Hogwarts' headmaster and Harry's surrogate father-figure.

As the psychological dramas put forward by Odden epitomise an innate desire for security and thus assume less challenging forms of reading, I propose that they can operate only in part for the reader of the Harry Potter books. In the following analysis, I argue that these childhood dramas can be enacted through the adult reading of the early books of the series, but in the course of reading further along the series these psychological states do not conclude satisfactorily. They are either disrupted or modified by a number of potential psychological challenges that threaten the previously and presumptuously held sense of security giving way to much more complex and less secure, and consequently less repetitive patterns of reading in the latter volumes of the series. Certainly, there is a sense of repetition evoked by the structural and thematic repetitions in the series on one hand and the recurrence of mythical and literary references that are recognisable within the literary lexicon of the adult reader on the other. Yet, until the final volume, Rowling does not fail to enhance her readers' curiosity by her original twists and loose ends, an aspect which redeems in a way her tendency to replicate a few structural aspects of the narrative. Moreover, she also uses her own inventiveness to add to her magical world, from the complicated game of quidditch to new magical creatures including dementors and thestrals besides the traditional mythological creatures such as centaurs and unicorns. Hence, for many reasons as I will argue, the experience of reading the Harry Potter books meets and intersects with Odden's schema, but diverts or problematises it; the outcome

of this will help us to view Rowling's books rather differently from the oversimplifying viewpoint of the conventional and mediocre.

In Odden's proposed schema, the psychological dramas entail acting out the losses of certain fantasies of childhood that are necessary to relinquish as we grow up. These fantasies include romantic dreams and illusions of power and freedom (Retrieving 130). Odden claims that in the process of growing up, we replace such fantasies with real life versions that we accept provided that a nurturing environment is available, otherwise such losses may result in traumatic experiences. Children read fairy tales and other childhood romances in order to 'master the drama of trauma and survival', which is not dissimilar to the need that precipitates adults to repeat their reading of popular literature (Retrieving 132). Certain elements of popular fiction replay the fantasies that we have had to sacrifice as we grow up. When we reread popular literature

> [We] return to childhood dramas that may not have been acted out as we wished or that were not worked through appropriately (and therefore became traumas) in order to recover our belief in the fantasies *before they were destroyed*. (132)

The experience of reading the Harry Potter novels echoes this repetitive pattern, not only in the sense that the structure of each of the subsequent novels in the series is more or less a replication of the structure of the first, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, but also because each of them combines elements that can be recognised as familiar from former readings of children's literature.

Several critics have recognised that the Harry Potter novels borrow many of their characteristics from earlier children's stories or classical tales. For example, in her valuable study of the first four books of the Harry Potter series, Julia Eccleshare explores the similarity between the environment of Hogwarts and

that of the boarding school in Dean Farrer's classic *Eric* or *Little by Little* and in Enid Blyton's *Malory Towers* stories among other children's books (*Guide* 38). She also recognises in Hogwarts some familiar features of the magical schools in Ursula Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* and Jill Murphy's *The Worst Witch* (41). Furthermore, like John Granger, Eccleshare discerns a resemblance between the fantasy world of Harry Potter and C.S. Lewis's Narnia and J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth (*Guide* 42)[22]. Furthermore, some critics point out that the Harry Potter novels are inherently intertextual in terms of their use of classical mythology such as the phoenix legend.[23] In this sense, reading the Harry Potter novels will induce a sense of a structural repetition for the adult reader as well as a thematic one. In these different ways, reading *Harry Potter* constitutes a re-enactment of the childhood psychic dramas discussed by Odden.

For example, one of the significant fantasies that can be constructed through reading *Harry Potter* is the fantasy of trusting the world as a safe place. In the Harry Potter books, mainly the first three in the series, we can predict a safe return for Harry after his confrontation with Voldemort, not only because of its circular romance structure, but also because we already know that there will be further books in the series, so Harry must survive. The structure of Harry's adventure and his safe return echoes 'our earliest visions of ourselves confronting danger and emerging successfully'.[24] In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, it is not yet revealed that Harry is destined for a deadly meeting with Voldemort. The quest here, however, is absolutely unmistakable: to prevent

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[22] John Granger, *The Hidden Key to Harry Potter: Understanding the Meaning, Genius, and Popularity of Joanne Rowling's Harry Potter Novels* (Wayne: Zossima Press, 2002).
[23] See for example, Sarah E. Gibbons 'Death and Rebirth: *Harry Potter* & the Mythology of the Phoenix' in *Scholarly Studies in Harry Potter*, pp. 85-105.
[24] Appleyard, *Becoming a Reader*, p. 170.

Voldemort or his evil forces from possessing the philosopher's stone which is said to secure eternity to its possessor. The struggle to accomplish the quest occurs alongside a continuous test of true friendship and shared values. A Cinderella-like pattern becomes discernible as the reader learns about the adversity Harry is experiencing at the Dursleys', his cruel foster relatives, then traces the possibility of escape at his eleventh birthday, in the form of an invitation to the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry delivered by its keeper Rubeus Hagrid,. Having been severed from any connections with the world of magic by the Dursleys since his parents' death, as soon as the school adventure begins and the magical world is laid open, Harry starts upon a journey of self discovery uncovering more about his lost past identity. Together with his new friends Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, he explores the school of Hogwarts discovering its secret passages, mazes and puzzling stairs. Along with Harry and his friends, the reader also learns about this world, its rules, its moral codes. Like Harry, the reader sifts through the available clues to anticipate a climactic confrontation with either Professor Snape, who does not spare any chance to express his hatred of Harry, or Voldemort, who operates surreptitiously behind the scenes. The resolution turns to be both morally clear and satisfying as Harry triumphantly overcomes Voldemort disguised in Professor Quirrell's body. For the reader, this structure dramatises the fantasy that '*The world is eventually secure and in balance. Happy endings are usual. I will be safe and happy eventually. I will survive trauma*' ('Retrieving' 134). Since the initial structure of the romance in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is duplicated in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and yet again in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*,

the reader learns to anticipate and expect happy endings in subsequent volumes. Up to this point, the fantasy dramatised is that '*the world is always (as opposed to eventually) safe, even when it appears not to be*' ('Retrieving' 134). In this regard the enactment of the fantasy is associated with the reader's anticipation of order being reinstated and encouraged by encountering now familiar patterns.

In one of the hypotheses that Appleyard puts forward to account for the adult reader's desire for escapist reading, which he directly associates with reading romance, is that 'escapist reading represents a necessary therapeutic regression, temporary or habitual, to childhood forms of pleasure'.[25] In a sense, Appleyard's proposition of escapist reading mirrors a tendency to satisfy childhood fantasies of security and reassurance. In a more conscious form of this process, Kathleen F. Malu, a mother and a teacher, who had attempted to get her eleven years old son interested in reading the Harry Potter books but instead fell for them herself, narrates her own reading experience:

> Reading late into the nights with Harry Potter, I was transported back to my childhood home, recalling a powerful reading memory I hold vividly today. I recall as a child in seventh grade reading *Jane Eyre* late into the night, aware that I was the only one awake in our dark, creaky house. I was scared of the night but desperate to follow Jane's story. It was a kind of becoming-of-age experience in which I deliberately stayed awake to read long after my parents were asleep, wilfully disobeying their sleepy calls to 'turn out the lights and go to sleep [...].[26]

Malu's response to the Harry Potter books is clearly rooted in a previous experience of reading as a child. In allowing herself to indulge into what is supposed to be a child's literary experience, she would be able to retrieve a pattern of reading she used to enjoy as a child. She recognises that wherever the

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[25] Appleyard, *Becoming a Reader*, p. 170.
[26] Kathleen F. Malu, 'Ways of Reading *Harry Potter*: Multiple Stories for Multiple Reader Identities', in *Harry Potter's World*, pp. 75-95.

adventure of the book takes her, the romance structure will not permit any disruption of the anticipated safe return journey of the hero or the heroine.

This fantasy of trusting the world as a safe place which can be evoked through reading the first three books of Rowling's series, however, is threatened in the later novels. The reader is forced to recognise that Harry's power is not absolute, even though he still thinks of himself as invincible. The security evoked in reading the second and third books is shattered at the end of books four, five and six. While reading the second and the third book, the reader may internalize the fantasy of the world as a secure place derived from the reader's belief that Harry is powerful and that his antagonist the evil wizard Voldemort will be defeated each time he comes into confrontation with Harry. The reader may also believe that none of the major characters known to the reader as morally good is going to suffer or to get hurt, but this does not always turn out to be the case as we progress into reading the later books. The formulaic opening of Harry suffering from neglect and ill-treatment at the Dursleys' in the first three titles is replaced by a more globally threatening picture that reflects the growing evil power of Voldemort in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. At the end of this volume, Harry shockingly witnesses the horrible and sudden killing of the honourable and innocent Cedric, his friend and worthy rival in the Triwizard Tournament. Likewise, Harry feels utterly helpless about and somehow responsible for the sudden death of his godfather Sirius Black during their battle against the Death Eaters towards the end of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. And most devastatingly, at the end of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Harry experiences the unexpected and perplexing loss of Professor Dumbledore, his

guardian and teacher. The reader's sense of security is also threatened while reading the very last book (a sense which can be overcome by rereading), because Harry's survival, as well as that of his friends', can no longer be taken for granted, among all the unpredictable twists of the complex, epic plot. The magical enchantment of the romance structure which restores the initial order does not exist anymore. The reader hence becomes hesitant to believe in Harry as a traditional Romantic hero who will inevitably return home safely.

The fantasies re-enacted in the Harry Potter books are, thus, gradually replaced by more realist uncertainty as we move from one book to the next. This replacement constitutes a significant sign of development in the way children receive and interpret the world around them as they grow up. The fourth book represents a turning point not only on the level of the characters' emotional maturation, but also in terms of narrative and thematic development. While there is no remarkable change from one novel to another in the first three titles, when we get to the fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,* the elaboration of plot happens on a large scale.[27] The confined world of magic at Hogwarts stretches its boundaries and takes on a greater social scale, initiating the characters' interaction with the world through grand events such as the World Quidditch Cup and the Triwizard Tournament. The introduction of such events adds to the richness of the plot and together with Rowling's meticulous attention to details, results in a book of voluminous size. Most significantly, the children's world of the protagonists intersects and becomes more entangled with a wider world controlled by adults. The Ministry of Magic is one of the new inventions

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[27] See Suman Gupta critique of Jack Zipes response to the *Harry Potter* books in 'Children's Literature' in *Re-Reading Harry Potter*, pp. 40-54.

that stress the role of the adult in the plot of this volume and all succeeding ones. Rowling mainly caricaturises bureaucracy and institutional corruption that affect both children's and adults' worlds. In other words, it highlights the transition of the children from secure surroundings into a more challenging adult environment. The reader of this volume, thus, is moved out of the comfort zone offered in previous books. This book also marks the rebirth of the evil Dark Lord, and deepens the reader's sense of Harry's vulnerability. From now on, we witness Harry's wrath and despair, jealousy and sense of moral ambivalence. In this book, the reader starts to come across highly abjected experiences of horror and pain and more sinister facets of evil. The end of the book also represents the first intrusion of Harry into the wider adult world, epitomised by his first confrontation with the newly revived Lord Voldemort and the Death Eaters. For the first time in the series, Harry is left alone in a direct battle against Voldemort, unprotected by Dumbledore or any of the teachers and unaccompanied by his friends Ron and Hermione. Harry's excruciating experience of pain leads to feelings of despair and pending death, emotions which the reader is invited to share in detail:

> It was pain beyond anything Harry had ever experienced; his very bones were on fire; his head was surely splitting along his scar; his eyes were rolling madly in his head; he wanted it to end ... to black out ... to die...[28]

At this point, Harry's conflict with evil is brought into a new extremity. On one hand, the enemy is no longer a child like Dudley or Draco Malloy, but a fully adult human being, and on the other, the emotions which Harry undergoes are not those we usually attribute to a child's consciousness. Harry has no choice but to fight courageously and defiantly even though he is aware that this may cost him

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[28] J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), p. 570.

his own life. As he himself states, he is driven to behave like an adult by the seriousness of his dilemma. Humiliated by the sarcasm of Voldemort and his followers, Harry consciously decides to '*grow up*' and to behave like a responsible adult: 'he was not going to die crouching here like a child playing hide-and-seek; he was not going to die at Voldemort's feet' (575). The situation, thus, initiates a non-child response from Harry in which he willingly defies Voldemort and battles with him. The hero returns home, clearly not victorious, but horrified by the rebirth of the evil, while carrying in his arms the dead body of his friend Cedric. Thus, the resolution at the end of *The Goblet of Fire* becomes less satisfying for the reader and opens up possibilities of even darker acts of evil in subsequent volumes. Hence, for the reader, the comforting reassurance that the world is safe and the desire to believe so are hereby troubled. The drama which is supposed to be re-enacted through rereading is not resolved successfully. The related fantasy that the world is always safe which should be relinquished as we grow up is already dismantled. Rowling is dramatising the abandonment of this fantasy at adolescence as she once suggests in her response to children's inquiries: 'at fourteen, you really do start realising that the world is not a safe and protected place — or not always'[29]. Therefore, the narrative structure here only recalls or re-enacts a distorted version of the fundamental drama desired by readers upon rereading popular fiction. The real life version of the fantasy harshly imposes itself on the psyche of the reader, disrupting his/her attempts to fantasise childhood satisfaction. Instead, it pushes the reader into abandoning the fantasy and embracing a version of harsher reality.

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[29] J.K. Rowling, 'Live Interview', *Scholastic.com*. Oct16 2000
<http://www.scholastic.com/harrypotter/books/author/interview2.htm> [accessed 22 May 2009]

The second fantasy that can be maintained through rereading is the fantasy of symbiotic relationship through identification with the protagonist. This fantasy features a desire to slip back into a state of primary identification through a 'merge' between the reader (subject) and the hero (object). This sense of merging is reminiscent of a feeling at a younger age of being 'intimately connected' (therefore symbiotic connection) both 'physically and intellectually' with another person: 'cuddled into one figure, on the parent's lap, the child experiences the same story as the parent' ('Retrieving' 36). According to Odden we reread popular literature because we feel that the symbiotic bonding we develop with the hero or the heroine through reading has been broken by the end of a book. Through the first reading of a novel the reader gets to be on good terms with the protagonist through strong identification with him/her, and subsequently a desire to renew this relationship emerges as soon as the book comes to an end. The reader of *Harry Potter*, presumably especially the child reader, maintains this bonding or emotional involvement by renewing his/her relationship with one of the protagonists, mainly Harry or Hermione in subsequent books. This is particularly true for readers of the second and the third books in the Harry Potter series, as these repeat without disturbing the patterns established by the first. In Sharon Moore's collection of children's responses to the series, we encounter children who are eager to be part of the wizardry world of the novels and express their passion to read more about Harry's adventures. Molly, an eight years old girl, states after reading *The Philosopher's Stone*:

> The only bad thing about the book is that you wish you could do the stuff they do in the book, or you which that you could actually be one of the people in the book, but you can't [...] I kept thinking how

I would feel if my parents were dead. I think I felt worse than Harry did!'[30]

In this reaction, we can witness that a kind of emotional bond has been created between the child reader Molly and Harry.

The adult reader's desire and ability to identify with one of the protagonists depend on how prepared is he or she to put on children's clothes in McCaughrean's sense. As a child reader such as Molly would likely do, the adult reader may jump into a different but somehow familiar temporality of a child reader and share the protagonists' excitement, fears and exotic adventures. The possibility of adult identification with Harry becomes even more likely in the later volumes when the character's emotional complexity and ambivalence become more evident, yet this process has its drawbacks, as I will argue later. Moreover, the possibility of the adult reader identifying with the serious and cautious, adult-like tone of Hermione is also not completely out of the question. Hermione is able to solve puzzles as the one faced in the trapdoor, has extensive general knowledge through her wide reading, and is famous for her continuous lecturing of Harry and Ron about breaking rules. On several occasions, Rowling herself has stated that she identifies with Hermione who reflects aspects of Rowling's own personality. In an interview with Larry King, Rowling admits that '[Hermione] was most consciously based on a real person, and that person was me'.[31] Rowling has also suggested that Hermione has been a means through which an adult consciousness

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[30] Sharon Moore, *We Love Harry Potter!: We'll Tell You Why* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999), p. 64.
[31] J.K. Rowling, 'The Surprising Success of Harry Potter.'. See also 'Interview with J.K. Rowling on Deathly Hallows' (30 July 2007) <http://greenbande.wordpress.com/2007/07/30/new-interview-with-jkrowling-on-deathly-hallows-pt4/> [accessed 8 May 2009]

can be expressed 'if you need to tell your readers something just put it in her [Hermione]'.[32]

As I suggested above, the adult reader's identification with Harry is more problematic. At times, the reader's views fail to synchronise with Harry's vision. The reader, for example, may not identify with Harry's against Snape whose enigmatic character becomes even more ambiguous with killing Professor Dumbledore later in the series. The reader may also doubt Harry's assumptions about other characters such as Sirius Black who up to the climatic end of the third volume remains for Harry the only suspect of the conspiracy fabricated against his parents which ends in Voldemort killing them. In the later books, when Harry starts to undergo bursts of anger and sometimes appear as irrational and less considerate to his friends' feeling, there is a great possibility that the reader loses sympathy with him. Harry's ambivalent moral codes become evident as his soliloquy in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* betrays his division between seeking for the Horcruxes as asked by Dumbledore and hunting for the Hallows which can apparently yield him the ultimate power. At the end of the final book, the reader goes beyond any possibility of symbiotic relationship when Harry steps into the role of a Christ-like figure by sacrificing his body to save innocent people and by his apparent journey to the world of the dead and later resurrection. The fantasy of symbiotic bonding is thus disrupted, and the assumption of simplistic identification with the hero of the romance is equally problematical.

I would suggest, however, that there are other ways in which the symbiotic bonding for an adult materialises more satisfactorily. The adult reader may

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[32] J.K. Rowling, 'Chamber of Secrets DVD Interview with Steve Kloves and J.K. Rowling', Lizo Mzimba < http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2003/0302-newsround-mzimba.htm> (Feb 2003) [accessed 8 May 2009]

identify with Harry's (or his friends') detective experience of solving the mysteries dispersed within the books rather than identifying with one of the characters. The adult reader, like the younger one, is propelled by a desire to complete the puzzle and solve the mysteries posed in the series. Rowling successfully draws on some generic features of the detective novel enticing the reader into an active engagement with her texts. The adult reader's experience of reading the Harry Potter books is shaped by the pleasure of discovering and decoding the clues planted in the narrative in order to accomplish a whole and coherent story or a clear resolution which eventually falls back into the romance pattern of cyclical return. But this process is continually disrupted by the reader's recognition through further reading that s/he is misled by false clues and by constant correction and re-correction of previous discoveries. The reader's inquisitiveness may be partially satisfied with a partial revelation of some sort at the end of a book such as the discovery of the mysterious appearance of Peter Pettigrew on the Marauder's Map in spite of his apparent death at the end of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Yet, on the whole the open threads of the fictional construct left hanging at the end of each of the books and the red herrings that the reader is invited to make guessing and re-guessing about are not noticeably resolved until the final book.

Hence, the reader's drive to follow the series is strongly embedded in the way the plot is weaved and the way the threads are left open in the previous ones. Furthermore, the plot becomes more intricate in the later books and the threads of · the story become more entangled. This necessitates more effort from the reader who is interestingly ready to undertake more demanding interpretative tasks as

s/he develops a special 'relationship' with the series. Decoding the mysteries of the plot proves challenging even for an adult reader, and it is this challenge that provides the further attractions of the detective story. On probing some of actual readers' reviews in the web-based fan sites dedicated to the discussions of and about the Harry Potter books, one can notice the adult reader's interest in figuring multiple nuances and levels of meanings through tracing available clues. One significant example of the adult's clue-tracing experience of reading the Harry Potter's novels can be detected through readers' discussions of Snape's complex character. The ambiguity of his character dates from the beginning of the series, unlike others who begin as rather two-dimensional. Kimberly, an adult reader, specifies that the appeal of Snape's character lies in her attempt to uncover the dark side of his personality: 'A VERY complicated man indeed. That's the reason I love trying to figure him out.'[33] Another adult reader states that it is quite unfair to Snape that the reader recognises his hatred of James (Harry's father) in the first volume, and has this confirmed by Snape's behaviour in the fifth volume, because it is then difficult to revise this view in the last volume. She discerns, 'that holding a more moderate view of this aspect of Snape's character before OoP [*Order of the Phoenix*] requires being a far better guesser than I could ever be'[34] The discussion of Snape's character as if he were a real person rather than a textual construct marks a strong dedication of the adult readers to the magical world of Rowling's texts. The latter reader adds that every detail in Snape's story from the

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[33] Kimberly, *Harry Potter for Grown Ups*, Oct 25 2007
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HPforGrownups/message/178477> [accessed 22 November 2007]
[34] Zara, *Harry Potter for Grown Ups*, Oct 24 2007.
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HPforGrownups/message/178404> [accessed 22 November 2007]

very beginning until the revelation of his reality is added to darken his image, 'presumably so that we, *like Harry*, can be surprised by the revelations of "the Prince's Tale"', (emphasis added).[35] Such comments posted abundantly on the Web by adult readers show that some readers are captivated by the detective design of Rowling's books. It seems that a considerable component of the appeal of the Harry Potter novels to adult readers lies in their engagement in deciphering the veiled links of the plot and significantly in their credence which allows them to be, 'like Harry', surprised. Since each act of revelation gives fresh perspectives on earlier events, but simultaneously gives way to new questions to be pondered, the reader is invited to reflect back and to anticipate more elucidations to come. The adult reader here, however, does seem to connect with Harry as a hero as much as an inquisitive focaliser through which the detective instinct of the reader can be satisfied. In other words, the adult reader's fantasy of symbiotic bonding lost by the problematical nature of identification with the hero is redeemed by a detective engagement with the texts.

Relevant to the notion of symbiotic bonding is another drama that can be re-enacted through rereading: that is, controlling separation anxiety. Through the recognition that the symbiotic relationship between the reader and one of the protagonists will be terminated by the end of the book, the reader reactivates the drama of learning to control separation anxiety ('Retrieving' 139). This drama originates in childhood when the infant is left by the mother and gradually learns that s/he is not abandoned forever and that the mother will eventually return. The "fort/da" game described by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is played by

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[35] Ibid.

the infant in order to master this anxiety. According to Odden, when rereading a text, we are re-enacting this game since it is at our will that we invite the protagonist (who has left us at the end of the book) back into our own life whenever we reread the book (140). In reading the Harry Potter books, the child reader trusts that even after completing a volume, the world of Harry will be brought into life again in a sequel. If the drama of controlling the separation anxiety merely works for the child reader because s/he is more prone to identify with the protagonist particularly in the first three novels, the adult reader's version of this drama, I would suggest, is activated through similar dynamics of active reading role of the detective story. Every time an adult reader starts a sequel, he or she regains the control of separation from the detective eye or the clue decipherer with which s/he develops the strongest identification. Once the detective plot is resumed in the new title, the adult reader resituates him/herself in the active position of control. With the building up of more threads in the later titles and shifting in temporality between the past and the present side stories more clues come into play. The reader's challenge is to stay in control while following the trail of the clues left unresolved from previous books and put it to test with the new events of the sequels. For example, the prophecy of Professor Trelawney first mentioned in book three about a fatal meeting between Harry and Voldemort is revisited multiple times and retold from different perspectives in subsequent volumes. The reader has to balance Trelawney's prophecy against other details and assumptions revealed each time it is retold or talked about. It is this anticipation of resolving the plot partially or totally in a subsequent book that dramatises the fantasy of controlling separation anxiety. In this sense, Odden's

drama which fantasises a reunion in the form of re-identification with the protagonist in a sequel is modified in the way it is enacted in the Harry Potter books.

Closely related to this dynamic of control over potential loss is another significant drama which is staged within the reader's psyche through rereading popular fiction: 'shifting from absolute egocentricity to the state of being able to acknowledge the world'. This drama occurs when the infant starts to learn that the world does not revolve around him/her, and thereby permits his/her parents to shift attention elsewhere. The child then undertakes the challenge to accomplish things on her/his own, relinquishing the fantasy that '*I am at the center of the (my) world, I am the most important and special object in it*' ('Retrieving' 140). Odden discerns that this fantasy is implied to a great extent in popular literature which involves the central disposition of an easily identified protagonist with whom we are invited to identify (140-41). In contemporary culture, individuals feel ignored and less valued than commodities and tend to seek attention and centrality. It comes as no surprise then, as Odden claims, that people are inclined to read popular literature when they feel stressed. This is due to the fact that popular literature usually situates the protagonist at the centre while endowing him or her with extraordinary qualities which allows the reader, through identification, to exist at the centre as well.

Since it is difficult to identify clearly with Harry because he slips into an ambiguous role that challenges the notion of a single identifiable hero which exists at the centre of the events in the literary romance, it becomes equally plausible that the reader of the Harry Potter books has difficulties in relating to a

sense of centrality and self-importance that can be attained through identification

with the extraordinary Harry. In considering this fantasy in the way readers relate

to the hero, we can trace how readers may reflect upon the centrality of Harry

Potter in the series. Harry is undeniably central to the plot; he is the title character

of Rowling's seven books. In spite of his miserable situation of living with his

heartless relatives through which the reader at first comes to know Harry, soon the

reader (and Harry himself) learns that Harry is rich, powerful and famous,

qualities that apparently pertain to the taste of the reader in Western capitalist

culture. Harry's resilience towards the adversity of his situation is rewarded in a

Cinderella-like pattern.[36] Since identification entails developing a relationship

with another person and temporarily appropriating his or her traits, the reader of

the books appropriates a sense of self-esteem and superiority. Undoubtedly,

Harry's centrality to the plot and to the world around him fully emerges through

his transition to the magical world of Hogwarts. At the school, he learns that while

still an infant he becomes the only known person to have survived the Killing

Curse issued by the Dark Lord Voldemort and for this reason his name is

mentioned in the history of magic books. As soon as he started his magical

education his state as a famous wizard is mocked by Professor Snape "'Ah, yes',

he said softly, "Harry Potter. Our new—celebrity"'[37]. Celebrity culture is further

ridiculed in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* when the celebrity author

and professor Gildroy Lockhart, featured signing his own pictures and smiling to

press photographers, turns to be fraud and a literary thief. The cynical tone in the

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[36] Jack Zipes suggests the Cinderella-like motif in reference to Harry as well as to J.K. Rowling.
See 'The Phenomenon' in *Sticks and Stones*.
[37] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), p. 101.
Hereafter cited as *Stone*.

narrator's presentation of celebrity culture invites the reader to be critical of rather than impressed by the notion of vacuous fame.

Harry's sense of superiority and self-importance is sometimes confused and mixed up by his arrogance. Fortified by his knowledge that he defeated the greatest sorcerer by inadvertently reversing his curse, Harry becomes insistently more adventurous, paying less attention to the cautionary advice offered to him by Ron and Hermione. A foretaste of his erratic temper is uncovered in "Through the Trapdoor" towards the end of *The Philosopher's Stone* when Harry's becomes unable to control his egocentric tendency to ignore his friends. Convinced that Snape is attempting to get hold of the philosopher's stone, Harry wants to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands. When reprimanded by his friends, who are worried about him getting expelled, Harry speaks angrily to them: "'SO WHAT?' [...] 'If Snape gets hold of the stone, Voldemort's coming back!' [...] 'I'm going through the trapdoor tonight and nothing you two say is going to stop me!'" (*Stone*, 196-97) While Harry's determination to undertake the challenge reveals his bravery, his overconfidence surely marks a turn into a more self-centred individual who can be inconsiderate to his friends. So from the start the centrality of Harry is presented in a negative light, which is less characteristic of the flawless hero of popular literature with whom the reader can more comfortably identify.

Harry's centrality is called into question when momentarily Harry's leadership is overshadowed by his friends taking on lead roles in developing and resolving the plot. Ron and Hermione's leading roles are noticeable from the start of the series. It is Hermione's intelligence and wide knowledge that help Harry to

go through the Trapdoor and to save Sirius from death at the end of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Ron's courage and sacrifice are also indispensible for Harry's progress in his quest. Harry's relationship with his friends undergoes ups and downs throughout the series. The gulf between himself and Ron, for example, grows wide when Harry's name is revealed as a champion contestant for the Triwizard Tournament in *The Goblet of Fire,* igniting Ron's jealous resentment. He also becomes estranged from his friends through his erratic bursts of anger and his changeable mood in the *Order of The Phoenix* and the *Half Blood Prince.* The breaking point becomes evident in the final volume, when the three friends set off in search for the Horcruxes, slivers of Voldemort's soul. Their journey attests to the central roles assigned to his friends. As it is a journey unintentionally designed to test their physical and mental abilities, it is also a search for the meaning of humanity and friendship which Harry almost fails to recognise. Though Harry warns Ron and Hermione about the nearly impossible task ahead about which he himself has certain doubts, Ron cannot stand living for long in temporary shelters suffering from cold, hunger and exhaustion. Harry unsympathetically reprimands the breaking down of Ron: "'So what part of it isn't living up to your expectations?' [...] 'Did you think we'd be staying in five star hotels? Finding a Horcrux every other day? Did you think you'd be back to Mummy by Christmas?'"[38] The argument between Harry and Ron results in Ron splitting up from the group for a while to rejoin back later. This is a severe break from the established pattern of earlier books in which Harry is always accompanied on his dangerous adventures and missions by his faithful friends

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[38] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 252. Hereafter cited in the text as *Hallows*.

Ron and/or Hermione. Though self-absorbed and unable to read Voldemort's thoughts, Harry cannot help but notice that upon his return, Ron steps into a leading role of the group, 'perhaps because he was determined to make up for having walked out on them: perhaps because Harry's descent into listlessness galvanised his dormant leadership qualities, Ron was the one now encouraging and exhorting the other two into action' (*Hallows* 354). Harry's sense of losing the piloting position calls his centrality into question and by turn disrupts the reader's sense of centrality. Harry eventually understands that he together with Ron and Hermione have been assigned by Dumbledore to the task of destroying the Horcruxes, so in the final book, he gradually becomes more accepting and secure in his relationship with them even though he appears less able to acknowledge a wider collective effort proposed by Neville and the loyal Dumbledore Army members. Neville seems to have achieved heroic deeds while Harry has been away from Hogwarts. But in spite of the efforts Neville has made to reorganise the Army and to call its members upon Harry's appearance, Harry fails to credit this effort and seems extremely irritated to find a great number of students showing up. Always a check to his egotism, Ron and Hermione encourage him to recognize the significance of the offered collaboration. They urge him to relinquish the solitary hero's role: "'you don't have to do everything alone, Harry'" to which perspective he finally yields (*Hallows* 469).

Throughout the series, Harry's egocentricity often manifests itself as feelings of guilt for the loss of close people. Such feelings can be identified as both expressions and unforeseen outcomes of Harry's embracing on a solitary role featured for the most part in latter titles. In book four, Harry first feels partially

guilty about the death of his friend Cedric, because he is unable to defend him against Voldemort. In the subsequent volume, Harry feels even a greater sense of guilt over the death of his godfather Sirius. He believes that his rashness and presumptuous overconfidence have lead to Sirius's death: 'It was his fault Sirius has died [...] there was a terrible hollow inside him he did not want to feel or examine.'[39] Harry's feeling of guilt springs from a greater sense of responsibility towards other people; a sense that betrays his egotism and impressions of centrality. Harry's feeling of guilt also materialises in the last volume when he glimpses the bodies of Lupin, Tonks and Fred whose death could have been avoided had he given himself up to Voldemort. Harry's sense of guilt, however, recedes as he becomes more heroically focussed on the necessity to fulfil his greater quest. When Harry leads Ron and Hermione through the Whomping Willow tunnel, he believes that he is leading them to 'a trap' and yet, he reasons, 'the only way forward was to kill the snake, and the snake was where Voldemort was, and Voldemort was at the end of this tunnel...' (523). Harry shifts his evolving sense of guilt for fear that he would unnecessarily implicate his friends in his self-assigned mission, towards acknowledging the necessity of their collaboration in his quest. The adult reader may comprehend Harry's ambivalent feelings much easier than the younger one, but this does not make it any easier to identify with his flawed nature with which Harry seems to be taking on the features of a classical hero. The earlier sense of self-esteem derived from the temporary appropriation of Harry's powerful status is rather disrupted by his transient passivity and by the reader's doubts whether or not he remains

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[39] J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004 [2003]), p. 723.

empowered throughout. Hence, Harry's centrality, which is commonly a desirable feature for readers to appropriate in their identification with the romance hero, is interrogated since it is not constantly featured as such in the Harry Potter books.

Throughout the series, Rowling attempts to show that her young protagonists Harry and his friends (and supposedly the reader as well) are growing up along the series. Though there are only slight changes in their personalities in the first three titles, their erratic moods and romantic interests featured in books four and five mark the onset of their adolescence. Part of the featured growing up, however, can be reflected in the growing ambivalence of human nature and the difficulty in establishing concrete borders between good and bad entities. This notion leads us to the final drama that Odden believes to be enacted as we reread popular fiction: mastering object-relations (144-45). An infant tends to see the world in terms of contrasted good and bad objects whereas it internalises the good and externalises the bad through processes known to psychoanalysts as introjection and projection. The fantasy that good and bad are separate and easily identified must be relinquished in the process of growing up. It should be replaced by an understanding that 'good and evil are mixed, people are ambivalent and conflicted, and emotions are more complex than love and hate' ('Retrieving' 144). Popular literature tends to establish clear boundaries between the two categories, and our questions about which is which are usually answered during the first reading. Similarly, in reading the early Harry Potter novels, the reader becomes involved in questions about whom to trust and whom to believe. In the second and the third books and because of presumably secure knowledge provided by reading the first book the reader becomes more confident about making distinctions

between good and bad categories: Harry and Dumbledore, for example, are easily classed as good characters, while Voldemort is essentially bad. Though the distinction between good and bad appears to be easily made in the early books (with the exception of Snape), the boundaries tend to blur with the development of the series. From the beginning, the character of Snape appears to be morally ambiguous. The reader first identifies Snape as a bad character considering his evil treatment to Harry, but Harry receives continuous assurances by Dumbledore to the contrary. When Snape kills Dumbledore he becomes apparently evil. The reader only discovers at the end of the final book that Snape has been a greater protector to Harry than even Dumbledore because of his undying love for Harry's mother. In a recalled conversation between Snape and Dumbledore, Snape is horrified by the idea that Harry should die in order to defeat Voldemort:

> I have spied for you, and lied for you, put myself in mortal danger for you. Everything was supposed to be to keep Lily Potter's son safe. Now you tell me you have been raising him like a pig for slaughter. (*Hallows* 551)

By this late stage the reader is no longer as certain about constructing distinctive boundaries between good and bad characteristics as s/he has been earlier in the series. Along the way, the reader has had to continually readjust his or her conceptualisation of the characters within the series' moral schema. Not only does Snape's ambivalence contribute to the reader's confusion, but even Dumbledore's goodness is called into question. In Snape's emotional reaction, Dumbledore is seen in a role quite unlike the good patriarch and guardian presented in the early books. In a retrospective side story about young Dumbeldore, the reader learns that Dumbledore was like Voldemort in his prejudice against mixed blood people and in his pursuit of absolute power.

The most significant example of the ambivalent nature of good and evil in later books is the seemingly unholy connection between Harry and Voldemort. Though there are subtle references to this connection early in the series, it develops more clearly from the fourth book onwards. Early in the series, the connection is presented in Harry's feeling of pain whenever Voldemort approaches. The pain is usually experienced through the scar mark left on Harry's forehead when Voldemort attacked him as a little boy. Like Lord Voldemort, Harry is able to speak Parseltongue, a language associated with 'Dark Magic' and with Salazar Slytherin the founder of the Slytherin house to which Harry is initially offered a place by the Sorting Hat before being admitted to the house of Gryffindor in book one. Later in the series, this mysterious kinship begins to manifest itself in more ambiguous ways. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Harry envisions Voldemort murdering an old man in the Riddle house. Though the vision takes the form of a nightmare, it seems 'so real' to Harry (20). When Harry asks Dumbledore about the pain accompanying by the vision, Dumbledore states his theory: "'it is my belief that your scar hurts when Lord Voldemort is near you, and when he is feeling a particularly strong surge of hatred' [...] 'because you and he are connected by the curse that failed'" (*Goblet* 521-22). In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Harry's link to the evil power becomes even stronger. Harry dreams that he inhabits the body of a fanged snake who nearly kills Mr. Weasley; but this dream is materially felt as real: 'his body felt smooth, powerful and flexible [...] Harry put out his tongue...he tasted the man's scent on the air [...] he [...] struck [...] plunging his fangs deeply into the man's flesh' (*Order* 409). Harry's visions now exceed nightmarish hallucinations

in which he finds himself helplessly looking through Voldemort's eyes; he now begins to share Voldemort's emotions and world view. Thus, he temporarily feels the hatred Voldemort has while inhabiting the snake's body: 'there rose within Harry a hatred so powerful he felt, for that instant, he would like nothing better than to strike - to bite - to stink his fangs into the man [Dumbledore] before him' (*Order* 419). In failing to take Occlumency seriously, Harry is accused by Snape of having enjoyed this special connection with the Dark Lord (521). Similarly, in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Hermione also questions Harry, 'do you like having this special connection or relationship?' to which Harry answers: 'I hate it [...] But I am going to use it' (192-93). At one level, the reader is disturbingly aware that Harry involuntarily connects with Voldemort allowing him to vicariously experience the sadistic emotions and coldblooded murders of the Dark Lord as if they were his. At another level, the reader distrusts Harry's conscious desire in *Deathly Hallows* to mind-read Voldemort because it temporarily blurs the heroic goodness with evil.

The climatic point at which it becomes clear that Harry is not uni-dimensional occurs at the moment he learns about the Deathly Hallows. Knowing that they yield, if united, unsurpassable powers to the person possessing them, Harry starts to imagine himself as '[the] master of death... master... conqueror... vanquisher' (*Hallows* 348). At this moment the choice between seeking the Horcruxes to destroy Voldemort on the one hand and seeking the Deathly Hallows to attain invincibility on the other becomes a very significant question for Harry. It is also an issue for the reader who is invited to question whether deep in his or her own psyche attaining absolute power is not a tempting idea – and perhaps one

of the reasons for reading romance, to indulge in fantasies of power. This fantasy, however, is threatened as suggested earlier by the hero's inconsistent assumptions of power through the series. The fantasy of power is subsidised by the reader's awareness of the possible delusion of the hero and by the substantial threats of suffering and death that Harry has undergone and may have to undergo. Harry knows that even the young Dumbeldore had succumbed, and now he realises that 'for the first time ever, he [Harry] and Voldemort were united in wanting the very same thing' (*Hallows* 352). The contradictory impulses struggling within Harry's psyche do not only deconstruct the clear distinction between good and bad, but also disrupt the possibilities of the reader's easy identification with the protagonist which recalls the fantasy of centrality in rereading popular literature. Though Harry at one point seems so 'worried that the connection between himself and Voldemort had been damaged, a connection that he both feared and, whatever he had told Hermione, prized', he is supposed to choose (*Hallows* 354). In this context the adult reader's desire to re-enact the drama of mastering object-relations through identifying with the hero becomes impossible. Rather, the reader is invited to question the possibility or impossibility of absolute goodness and badness and to ponder the need to adopt more mature way of viewing and interacting with (real) people.

Conceding to the notion that opposites such as the good and bad are not entirely separate is concurrent with the child emerging from a sphere overwhelmed by the mother to a more subject-oriented sphere. It is also possible to view this development as reconfirmed in a psychologically parallel transition from childhood to adulthood. Throughout the Harry Potter books the reader's

view evolves from simple labelling of good versus evil into an understanding of the world as composite of good and evil. Rowling invites the reader to abandon the fantasy of viewing the world in terms of binary oppositions as popular fiction normally involves. In other words, at the end of the series the reader may have mastered object-relations in the same way a growing child would do in normal circumstances.

Rowling commits her protagonists to growing up as they seem to progress from childhood through adolescence into adulthood. At the end of the *Deathly Hallows*, Harry is seen as a mature person whose qualities are sharply contrasted with two of the most powerful wizards: Dumbledore and Voldemort. Implicitly, Rowling draws a reversal of roles between children and adults presented towards the end of the novel. In the chapter 'King's Cross', Dumbledore, who appears to lament his temptation by the Deathly Hallows, seems to be 'like a child seeking assurance' from Harry (571). Harry who becomes the master of death through his wilful sacrifice is saluted by Dumbledore's words, 'you wonderful boy. You brave, brave man' which in itself sums up the transition enacted in the whole scene (566). Harry reaches the crying Dumbledore to support him 'and was glad to find that he could touch him: he gripped his arm tightly, and Dumbledore gradually regained control'; Harry thus 'parents' Dumbledore, for the first time in the series (574). In the same chapter, a mysterious child figure appears at the station, 'it had the form of a small, naked child, curled on the ground, its skin raw and rough, flayed-looking [...] unwanted stuffed out of sight, struggling for breath' (566). The fragile child seems repulsive to Harry, but it is beyond any help as Dumbledore states. We only learn in the succeeding chapter that this child is a

possible distorted image of Voldemort when Harry addresses the adult Voldemort in a threatening tone: 'it's your one last chance [...] I've seen what you'll be otherwise...be a man...try...try for some remorse...' (594). Harry's mature stance becomes more evident than ever; he is now standing alone defying Voldemort who now appears to him as a child. Harry also recognises Voldemort's fragility when the latter seems to pass the time expecting Harry to hand himself over: 'he [Voldemort] might have been praying, or else counting silently in his mind, and Harry, standing still on the edge of the scene, thought absurdly of a child counting in a game of hide-and-seek' (563). Harry, who at the end of the Tri-Wizard Tournament refuses to play such a childish game, is now watching his greatest adult enemy playing one. The maturity of Harry is easily visible to the reader. The reader now observes an adult who is completely different from the child encountered in the *Philosopher's Stone*. Thus the possibility of an adult reader identifying with Harry gradually grows stronger through the series. Nevertheless, even if Harry appears to have reached emotional maturity, the adult reader may struggle to identify with him as he takes on the mantle of an invincible, even god-like hero.

Harry's heroic task is to affirm what is expressed in Lupin's words that 'the "Boy Who Lived" remains a symbol of everything for which we are fighting: the triumph of good, the power of innocence, the need to keep resisting' (*Hallows* 358). But as he comes to fulfil his mythical role, the reader's identification with Harry becomes more complicated and more difficult. The distance between Harry and the reader grows greater when Harry moves to a death-like state in which he meets Dumbledore who continue to fill in the gaps in the narrative. The reader,

who is unable to decide whether Harry has survived or not, becomes scarcely certain about whether or how to identify with this otherworldly hero.

The experience of death-like state of the hero's creates a strong separation between the reader and the hero. The hero has also been elevated to a higher status than the reader. Harry appears much related to a Christ figure in resurrection from temporary death and his willingness to sacrifice himself for others. He emerges less as a traditional everyman hero than as a miracle maker from whom everyone is seeking to be blessed: 'all of them determined to touch the Boy Who Lived' (596). Harry's status is also raised high above his friends, despite their part in winning the war against Voldemort: 'Harry was an indispensable part of the mingled outpouring of jubilation and mourning, of grief and celebration. They wanted him there with them, their leader and symbol, their saviour and their guide' (596). Though, for the reader, the centrality of the hero is more stressed here, it is also entwined with superiority and distance. Only in the epilogue does Harry return to an ordinary status as he appears a middle aged man with a wife and children.

Reading the Harry Potter novels, therefore, does not simply re-enact childhood psychic dramas common in rereading popular fiction. The working-through of such dramas works in a different way in the Harry Potter series, as my analysis has shown. While in Odden's model these dramas are revived and re-enacted through secure channels of predictable reading, for the reader of the Harry Potter novels, the prospect of such dramas, as we have seen, entice the readers only temporarily in the early novels, and the perspective then opens out into more complicated patterns of dramatization and reader engagement. The partial

fulfilment of Odden's psychological parameters of pleasurable reading of popular fiction suggests that though the Harry Potter novels appear to belong to the romance genre they are, as a whole, more generically and psychologically sophisticated. Hence, the reader's sense of growing complexity and subtleties along the series capture the effect of progression in reading patterns that we experience in the transition from childhood into adulthood. Accordingly, like young adult fiction discussed in previous chapters, reading the Harry Potter books epitomise one aspect of transition experienced in adolescence.

Chapter Five

Good Enough Parents and Transitional Objects

Growing Up in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*

In rewriting the story of the Fall, one of Philip Pullman's significant motifs is to express the reality of growing up into maturity by means of fantastic narrative. Many critics have highlighted the apparent contradiction implied in Philip Pullman's addressing and insisting on the necessity of realism in his fantasy work *His Dark Materials*. Pullman attempts to overturn fantasy using the very language he seeks to undermine. From this perspective, Pullman presents a fantasy text that rejects its own genre. If fantasy is a dangerous enterprise, he is still writing fantasy literature, still authorising that fictitious creativity and imaginative reconstruction of myths. In this chapter, I interpret this apparent contradiction by viewing Pullman's fantasy less as a secondary world in the sense of J.R.R. Tolkien than as a psychological transitional space for moving towards and accepting realism. Fantasy is thus conceived as a medium for exploring possibilities and possible identities through viewing the other and the self vis-à-vis the other. In so doing, I disagree with the implications of Pullman's shift of genre enacted in the final book of the trilogy: that fantasy is a childly genre that should be left behind as we grow up. In my reading of the trilogy, realism does not replace fantasy; they coexist side by side, just as the conscious and the unconscious endlessly interplay in the human psyche. The current chapter explores how *His Dark Materials* enacts the transitional nature of fantasy through

the transitional space of adolescence. The potential space offered by fantasy allows the protagonists (and by extension adolescent readers) negotiations of their transitional stage of adolescence to consciousness (and to realistic readings). For adult readers, the potential space of the fantasy genre recovers a sense of potentiality and envisions ways of life. Like adolescence itself, fantasy is a psychological space that is open to individuals of all ages. If Pullman insists that his trilogy is realistic in the psychological sense, I argue that it is also a psychological fantasy of adolescence which works as well for adult readers as for its young protagonists and adolescent readers.

As discussed in chapter three, Freud argues that when creating a fictive world a writer, just like a child in play, takes his fantasy world seriously in a way that the writer suspends disbelief.[1] In his study of Victorian fantasy, U. C. Knoepflmacher notes that fantasy written for children depends on the writer's ability to 'tap a rich reservoir' of childhood yearnings.[2] According to Knoepflmacher such works of fantasy hover between two states of perception described by William Blake as innocence and experience. If the implied (apparently adult) author is invited to such intermediary realm which Pullman himself, inspired by Blake, enacts in *His Dark Materials* as a space between childhood and adulthood, we may allegorically view his fantasy genre as a bridge between pleasure and reality principles that may be re-experienced in adolescence and other metamorphic stages of psychological development. As Knoepflmacher contends: 'an adult imagination re-creates an earlier childhood self in order to

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[1] See Freud, 'The Poet and Day- Dreaming'.

[2] U. C. Knoepflmacher. 'The Balancing of Child and Adult: An Approach to Victorian Fantasies for Children', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 37, 4 (March, 1983) 497-530 (P. 497). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3044681> [accessed 13 June 2009]

steer it towards the reality principle'.[3] Since adolescence repeats earlier

manifestations of subject formations, it can be said that an adult reader recreates

this adolescent self to celebrate a myriad of possibilities before eliminating those

by the demand of reality testing in adulthood.

In *His Dark Materials*, fantasy is used as a means for negotiating

prescribed routes to adulthood, which child and young adult characters find

inhibiting and destructive. The adolescent's desire for 'adult' autonomy drives the

subject to escape from childhood identifications and move towards adopting a

sense of responsibility that limits rather than abolishes free choice. In Pullman's

philosophy, growing up from innocent childhood into wise and self-conscious

adulthood is symbolised by the positive notion of the Fall. While traditionally

associated with Adam and Eve's sinful act of eating from the tree of knowledge

which led to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, for Pullman the 'Fall' is

furnished with contrasting and revisionary meanings. Pullman's notion of the fall,

however, is not theological or metaphysical, in contrast to the Fall represented in

Milton's *Paradise Lost*. However, as for Milton, the psychological 'fall' in

Pullman's trilogy also involves a fall in language. Since it is a fall into self-

consciousness that is accompanied by embarrassment, the fall often occurs in

literary enterprise when a writer becomes aware of the act of writing. Pullman

claims that 'a great deal of the tricksiness and games-playing of modern and post-

modern literary fiction' which draws readers' attention to its 'fictionality' and

'narrativity' are some ways of 'coping with embarrassment [...] with the self-

consciousness that arises when we lose our innocence about texts and about

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[3] Knoepflmacher, 'Balancing', p.497.

language'.[4] One may assume then that those adult readers who are aware of the intertextual aspects of *His Dark Materials* and hence of the 'fictionality' and 'narrativity' of the text, are drawn to recognise by the end of the trilogy similar awareness of what they are reading. Thus, as readers we are compelled to experience a new consciousness of literature and its language. But if the fall into self-consciousness is not concomitant with a certain, fixed stage of biological development, so is the fantasy that precedes the fall.

In an endeavour to defend the 'fantasy' of *His Dark Materials*, Pullman often contends that he is writing 'stark realism', a notion that he would hope to place his trilogy at the extreme opposite of Tolkien's fantasy genre.[5] According to Pullman, his novels do not lack realism in the sense of the material texture and psychological depth endowed to his characters. Yet, by presenting a young girl who has to abandon fantasy in order to grow up, he is perforce inviting his implied readers to grow out of the genre. Various critics have proffered diverse interpretations to reconcile this apparent contradiction in Pullman's trilogy. For example, Rachel Falconer argues that Pullman presents two irreconcilable and conflicting trajectories for moral education in his bildungsroman trilogy: the first is associated with children's intuitive abilities to recognise moral codes, while the second is presented by totally reversing the imaginative qualities appreciated in the first in favour of an adult consciousness and proposing a greater appreciation

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[4] Philip Pullman, 'Writing Fantasy Realistically', The Sea of Faith National Conference (2002). <http://www.sofn.org.uk/conferences/pullman2002.html> [accessed 17 May 2008].
[5] David Weich, 'Philip Pullman Reaches the Garden', Powell's Interview with Authors, (31 August 2000). <http://www.powells.com/authors/pullman.html> [accessed 22 June 2009]

of reality against fantasy.[6] By contrast, I reconcile the contradiction by arguing for a psychoanalytic reading of fantasy; rather than seeing fantasy as a secondary world, I interpret it as a psychological transitional space for moving towards and accepting a realistic framework for interpreting experience; this psychological shift is presented in terms of a shift of literary genre from fantasy to realism in the trilogy.

Pullman's epic adventure unfolds across a rich number of fantasy worlds through which two preadolescent children take an action-packed journey on their quest for self discovery. In *Northern Lights*, twelve-year-old Lyra Belacqua flees home in search for her kidnapped friend Roger after she has realised that he may be caught by a corrupt Church organisation conducting horrific scientific experiments on children with the help of her biological mother Mrs. Coulter. With the help of her allies and the alethiometer (a magical truth teller), Lyra confronts adversities, reaches the North and helps her friend escape the suffering only to watch him being sacrificed to death by her father Lord Asriel, an experimental scientist, to unleash the energy required to build a bridge to another world. In *The Subtle Knife* Lyra meets young Will Parry who is on the run after accidently killing a man. The boy's father has mysteriously disappeared during one of his expeditions in the North the result of which is traumatising Will and causing his mother's mental instability. With his gift of bridging worlds by means of the subtle knife, Will searches for his father and helps Lyra in her attempts to discover the truth about Dust which is equivalent to original sin, for the Church,

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[6] Falconer, *The Crossover Novel*, pp. 73-94. See also Julia Eccelshare, 'Rational Magic', *Guardian*, (28 October 2000)
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2000/oct/28/booksforchildrenandteenagers.philippullman> [accessed 6 July 2009]

and to dark matter for scientists. Only at the end of the third volume, *The Amber Spyglass*, are they able to discover the nature of the Dust together with the nature of their own mythical quest. Pullman draws on multiple sources from physics and philosophy to theology and literature. Notably he revises John Milton's Puritan interpretation of the Fall from Eden (it is by no means pessimistic, though Pullman interprets it that way) by celebrating what Milton views as the most tragic failing of humanity. The multilayered meanings of Pullman's resourceful trilogy have gripped readers of all ages. The success of *Northern Lights* in 1995 certainly helped to draw critical attention to the rising quality of children's fiction. Jane Nissen, a former editor at Penguin, goes further to contend that without Pullman's acceptance speech of the Carnegie Medal for his novel in which he reviewed fantasies, the *Harry Potter* books would not have been such a phenomenal success.[7] Pullman reaped literary prizes for his novels, most notably the award, unprecedented for a children's book, of The Whitbread Book of the Year award in 2001 for *The Amber Spyglass*.[8] In 2003 the trilogy came third in the BBC's Big Read poll after J. R. R. Tolkien and Jane Austen.[9]

Here I wish to focus on the ways in which *His Dark Materials* articulates the transitional state of adolescence and growing up into adulthood within the bounds - or rather, the boundlessness - of epic fantasy adventure. In their adventure in a multiverse of parallel worlds, Lyra and Will constantly experience

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[7] See for example Amanda Craig's 'Children's Classics' in *Amanda Craig* <http://www.amandacraig.com/pages/childrens-book-reviews/articles/classics.htm> [accessed 5 June 2009]

[8] David Lister, 'Children's Book Wins Whitbread Top Prize', *The Independent*, 23 January 2002 <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/childrens-book-wins-whitbread-top-prize-665992.html> [accessed 12 June 2009]

[9] 'Rings Triumphs in Big Read', *British Broadcasting Corporation*, 14 December 2003 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/3317081.stm> [accessed 12 June 2009]

psychological struggles and fluctuating emotional impulses during their transitional journey into maturity. The two protagonists are allowed a space, both physical and psychical, in which they can test their abilities and attitudes, and experience the paradox of their inner and outer realities, realising through this experience, the possibility of opposites co-existing, as they grow into their conscious adult personalities. Because the concept of such a space is intricately essential to the eventual maturation of the hero and the heroine, the role of fantasy space in Pullman's trilogy will be examined in the light of certain psychological notions of space. I will be drawing on the concept of 'potential space' developed by D. W. Winnicott and his influential clinical associate Melanie Klein. The notion of potential space is introduced to refer, in an abstract sense, to the area located in the psychological experience between fantasy and reality. It is the hypothetical locale of the transitional phenomenon which initiates the differentiation of the self.[10] Both Winnicott and Klein's views on the little child's development in relationship to its first encountered environment represented by the mother, the disposition of which determines the degree of success in the transition of the child into independence, is valuable for understanding the psychological progression of both Lyra and Will through their experience of a diversity of worlds. Since phantasising is the main aspect of the potential space, it is embedded in negotiating subjective and objective realities and eventually of the dynamic of the growth process, it is inherent in any intermediate experience or activity and is likely to reappear through transitional stages of life, a prominent

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[10] Bram, Antony D. & Gabbard, Glen O., 'Potential Space and Reflective Functioning: Towards Conceptual Clarification and Preliminary Clinical Implications', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 82 (2001), 685-699 (p. 686).

example of which is adolescence. In this sense the potential space ceases to be restricted to childhood development and becomes an experience for inaugurating other significant adjustments in the entire life cycle. This notion makes Winnicott and Klein's observations especially relevant to the theme of growing up in Pullman's novels. Most importantly, the significance of the potential space for initiating transitional phenomenon is implicated in what Winnicott calls 'transitional objects' as explained below, the notion of which has a considerable echo in the trilogy as each of the protagonists develops a special relationship to one object. Lyra's alethiometer and Will's subtle knife play integral roles in the development of the plot as well as in initiating the potential space required for the differentiation and development of their characters.

Before going into further interpretations of Pullman's trilogy, it is important at this stage to outline Winnicott and Klein's views on 'potential space' and transitional objects. Requisite for the healthy 'differentiation' of a child, Winnicott's 'potential space' is the term given to an area between subjectivity and objectivity. This space allows free interplay between ourselves and the external world whether it is represented by persons or objects. Thus, the potential space provides a respite for an individual for keeping inner and outer realities separate yet interrelated.[11] In the potential space we relate to the external world through symbols which Winnicott calls 'transitional objects'. His conceptions of this notion were conceived through his observations of very little children for whom a teddy bear or a blanket may represent such an object. The transitional object is neither a substitute for the mother though it retains some of her characteristics, nor

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[11] D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Tavistock; Routledge, 1971), p.2. Hereafter cited in the text as *Playing*.

is it a functional object in itself. Rather, it represents both the child's unity with the mother and their separateness. The emergence of such an object occurs at a time when the child begins to recognise his/her mother as an external reality but is still not completely detached from her as an internal reality. Hence, the transitional object appears in the space between the two realities. It is through the little child's relationship to the transitional object recognised within the potential space that the child first learns to separate him/herself from external objects while developing a sense of the self and the 'other'.

Klein's theories on the development of children are not totally in synchronization with Winnicott's in spite of the great influence Klein had on Winnicott's psychoanalytic theories. Though both stress the significance of play in uncovering the shadowy sides of children's development, Winnicott's notion of the transitional object is distinguishable from Klein's internal object in key respects. Winnicott's transitional object, though represented by a possession, is neither a Kleinian internal object nor an external object for the little child. In fact, Klein places much stress on the inner world at the expense of the outer world, leaving little in between. Yet Klein's views on a child's relationship to the mother symbolised by his/her use of toys in playing are of a considerable value in psychoanalytically analysing children's development. According to Klein, children's toys or objects have symbolical meanings associated with their phantasies and wishes at the time of playing. Having attributed such importance to symbolisation, Klein theorises her conclusion on symbol formation. Her analysis shows that 'symbolism enabled the child to transfer not only interests, but also

phantasies, anxieties and guilt to objects other than people.'[12] This notion, however, is not far from Winnicott's view of a child's relation to the transitional object in which the object acquires its value through the phantasies and desires the child associates with the object. It is significant to note here that Klein deliberately distinguishes between phantasy and fantasy whereas 'phantasy' is used to represent unconscious mental processes while 'fantasy' denotes conscious mental images.[13] A considerable evolvement of Klein's psychoanalysis and psychotherapy is her proposition of two positions in the life of a little child which mirror its relationship to the mother and environment. These positions are the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position. The first one is characterised by the little child's relationship to persons as part-objects, while in the second position the child tends to recognise the mother as well as other persons as whole objects. Each of these positions is marked by the prevalence of certain defence mechanisms and anxieties through the development of the ego. What validates Klein's theories on little children's psychoanalysis in the following argument is their association with the human psyche in general. In fact the above mentioned positions remain active within our personality and psychological life, as Juliet Mitchell argues in her introduction to the work of Klein.[14] Hence, moving from one position to another determines either development into a higher state of independence or falling into a lower one. Furthermore, Klein's choice of the term 'position' indicates that it is not merely a passing stage in early childhood in the way Freud describes his stages of

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[12] Melanie Klein, 'The Psycho-analytic Play Technique: Its History and Significance' (1955) in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed., by Juliet Mitchell (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. 52.
[13] Juliet Mitchell, 'Introduction', *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed., by Juliet Mitchell (New York: The Free Press, 1986), pp 9-32 (p. 22).
[14] Mitchell, 'Introduction', p. 21.

psychological development. Hanna Segal sums up that '[Klein's] term implies a specific configuration of object relations, anxieties and defences which persist throughout life.'[15] In other words, the way we relate to and perceive people or the world around us, whether as external objects or as integrated with ourselves, defines how emotionally and psychically developed we are.

Hence, both Winnicott and Klein's views seem to be valuable in exploring the transitional status of development in one of the most critical stages of life that is adolescence.[16] It is known that adolescents experience a dramatic transition physically, psychologically and socially which requires a good enough environmental provision to secure the simultaneous emotional growth (*Playing* 138-50). In Pullman's trilogy, the two adolescents' transition into adulthood is concomitant with a much wider and richer range of themes such as power, religion, fantasy and dogmatism. At the same time, this transition should be viewed as intricately associated with the crisis they experience in terms of their relationship to their parents. In other words, Pullman's novels chart what adolescents in general undergo when they seek differentiation and individuation from negotiating stereotypes to rebelling against family and other social institutions. It is not difficult to speculate that in our days that young adults tend to cherish personal items such as personal Walkmans, DS consoles and video games as they used to cherish teddies and dolls when they were little children.

In *His Dark Materials*, Lyra and Will are each given an object which plays an important part in their transitional phase. Psychoanalytically speaking, Pullman

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[15] Hanna Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein* (London: Karnac Books, 1988 [the Hogarth Press 1973]), p. ix.

[16] See Dr Laurence Steinberg and Stephanie Dionne Sherk, *Encyclopedia of Children's Health*, 1 May 2006.
<http://health.enotes.com/childrens-health-encyclopedia/adolescence>

substitutes the lack of permanent supporting parents in general and the mother in particular with objects that allow their carriers, or better the assigned persons, power, mastery and control and consequently security. The transitional phenomena, hence, appear in a reparative space filling a lack or absence of some sort. Despite the fact that the notion of transitional objects is associated with childhood, both Lyra's alethiometer and Will's subtle knife seem to have, in their own different ways, similar effects in assisting the two adolescents to attain an adult sense of reality and of personal development. Pullman thus appears to have introduced the perfect equipment in order to encourage the facilitating environment which is essential for a healthy growing up. Winnicott himself does not ignore the possibility of the need for a transitional object at later stages of our lives as he clearly states: 'a need for a specific object or a behaviour pattern that started at a very early date may reappear at a later age when deprivation threatens' (*Playing* 4). Because Winnicott's theory of transitional phenomenon and Klein's psychological positions both take off from the infant's relationship to mother, it is also significant to view Lyra and Will's relationships to their mothers in terms of the way these relationships affect their progression into a state of maturity.

The alethiometer ('the golden compass' of the title of the American edition) presented to Lyra by the Master of Jordan College characterises her penchant for inventing stories. With her innate intuition she is able to read the alethiometer; each of the engraved symbols enlivens an image inside her head helping her to divine forthcoming events by interpreting the needle's signals to these symbols. Just as reading her alethiometer gives Lyra a sense of control over future events, so too does weaving fabricated stories give Lyra a sense of control

over the flux of experience. Thus she enjoys a feeling of power over Mrs. Coulter when she tricks the older woman into believing her invented explanation for her sudden disappearance:

> With every second that went past, with every sentence she spoke, she felt a little strength flowing back. And now that she was doing something difficult and familiar and never quite predictable, namely lying, she felt a sort of mastery again, the same sense of complexity and control that the alethiometer gave her.[17]

The alethiometer may thus be interpreted as an extension of Lyra's 'childly' instinct to fantasise and invent stories. In psychoanalytic terms, it functions as a transitional object. Though the alethiometer is a material possession, it allows Lyra a space of her own in which she is able to fantasise in a state of omnipotence her wishes and abilities of control and mastery. Like a little child developing a special relation to the transitional object, Lyra does certainly become emotionally attached to her alethiometer even before she recognises that she can intuitively read its symbols, 'whenever she was alone, Lyra took out the alethiometer and pored over it like a lover with a picture of the beloved [...] and although she understood nothing of it, she gained a deep calm enjoyment from it, unlike anything she'd known' (*Northern Lights* 133-34). As soon as it comes into her possession, Lyra is eager to protect her alethiometer by keeping it folded up in black velvet in the pocket of her coat. According to Winnicott, it is natural that the child's attachment to the transitional object becomes so strong that any attempt to deprive the child of the object is a threat to his/her integrity and existence. At some stage, Lyra is perceived to have such sense of deprivation when Sir Charles temporarily possesses her symbol-reader by stealing it in Will's world: 'they had

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[17]Philip Pullman, *Northern Lights* (London: Scholastic Children's Books, 1998 [1995]), p. 282. Hereafter cited in the text as *Northern Lights*.

robbed her of her only guide. Without the alethiometer, she was...just a little girl, lost' (167). With the alethiometer then, Lyra becomes certainly more than 'just a little girl'; it helps her feel slightly less dependent and more grown up: 'it was a sensation of such grace and power that Lyra, sharing it, felt like a young bird learning to fly' (*Northern Lights* 152). The object thus becomes a means of empowering Lyra, of allowing her to make sense of her own self, and of her relationship to the world, that is to say it initiates her transformation.

The alethiometer comes into Lyra's hand only when she is about to leave Jordan College, the place where Lyra has spend most of her childhood, to accompany an apparent stranger Mrs. Coulter. In other words, it emerges at a point of time when a sense of deprivation of her familiar milieu is likely to emerge. This potential sense of loss may explain why Lyra starts to identify herself with this object as much as a child seeking security by holding onto a teddy would do in Winnicott's conception of the transitional object. Describing a transitional object, Winnicott points out that it has 'to do something that seems to show it has vitality or reality of its own' (*Playing* 5). Lyra's alethiometer features such qualities for her by creating a special atmosphere in her mind: 'she could sink more and more readily into the calm state in which the symbol-meanings clarified themselves, and those great mountain-ranges touched by sunlight emerged into vision' (*Northern Lights* 151). As Lyra enthusiastically explains to Fader Coram, '"it's almost like talking to someone, only you can't quite hear them, [...], only they don't get cross or anything"' (151). Lyra's words show that when using the alethiometer, she creates such an illusion, an area between herself and the outer world similar to the 'potential space' created by a child while

playing. This is marked by her first reaction towards the new object which is similar to a little child's wonder about a new toy: 'she was intrigued and delighted by the complexity and the detail' (80). This space is Lyra's private haven in which she is empowered to have the privilege of being the only child who is able to communicate with the instrument's signals.

In a significant coincidence, Lyra acquires the alethiometer at the same time she meets her biological mother, Mrs. Coulter, who soon turns out to be rather perfecting the role of an anti-mother. Though she initially represents for Lyra the ultimate female figure with her exceptional beauty and the feminine touch she has left on everything at her house, this image of perfection readily vanishes when she threatens and tortures Lyra at the first sign of the latter's disobedience. Hence, the maternal figure immediately collapses into the wicked Mrs. Coulter who is unable to express compassion or maternal affection towards Lyra. Instead, Mrs. Coulter seems to have more commitment to the Church than to any personal or parental relationship as the Church can satisfy further desires for Mrs. Coulter such as her craving for power and authority. In order to develop independently, it is important that a child should receive continuous support from its environment. As a little child Lyra was abandoned by her mother to discover later that the gyptian woman, Ma Costa, nursed her in the early stage of her life. Longing to hear more about her childhood, Lyra insists on hearing all the details from Ma Costa again and again weaving 'the details into a mental tapestry even clearer and sharper than the stories she made up' (*Northern Lights* 133). The realistic narration of Lyra's childhood story provided by Ma Costa seems to be a way of reclaiming the lost maternal impulse. Having recognised that Ma Costa

was the main care-giver at an early stage of her life, Lyra seems to be creating a maternal figure not only through repeatedly listening to the real story Ma Costa tells her, but also through fantasising more and more details until Lyra becomes 'perfectly convinced that she did remember it' (*Northern Lights* 133). Another way of looking at Lyra's demands of repetition is to view them within the tendency Freud calls the repetition compulsion.[18] This compulsion to repeat is a psychic impulse for mastering separation from the mother as we have seen in relation to the early Potter novels. In Lyra's case, the compulsion is marked by an attempt to master the narrative of Ma Costa's story by adding to it. Lyra, however, remembers very well what should have happened to her next. After a short period of care provided by Ma Costa, Lyra became the responsibility of the scholars of Jordan College, a heavily masculine and intellectual environment providing her no surrogate maternal care.

Having lived supposedly as an orphan, Lyra'a life at Jordan College has been lacking in the warmth of a family life. The only female individual Lyra has to be in contact with during that time is Mrs. Lonsdale who is merely able to satisfy her physical needs such as cleaning and feeding but not of any of her emotional requirements. As a result of having fewer family (and schooling) commitments, Lyra has spent much time wondering about the building from the underground to the rooftops, satisfying her enormous curiosity. This curiosity provides the impetus for the plot since it leads her to hide in the closet in book one, which draws her into her first and subsequent adventures. The staff at the college, however, has a less than favourable view of Lyra's inquisitive nature and

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[18] Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating and working Through.'

instinct for freedom. Consequently, she has been beaten by the steward and smacked by Mrs. Lonsdale and repeatedly received threats and warnings from the scholars. Lyra's father, Lord Asriel, is the only relative Lyra knows, yet only as her uncle. Lord Asriel is far from being a source of emotional provision: his face is 'never a face to patronize or pity' (*Northern Lights* 13). It is thus understandable that Lyra develops into 'a half- wild, half-civilized girl' as described in the beginning of the trilogy (19).

This early lack of maternal bond clearly remains with Lyra in later development. In the third book, on one occasion when Will is contemplating a memory about his mother, Lyra despondently states that there is no memory of such closeness to her mother that can ever nourish her in the way Will's memory does to him: 'you know with my mother, I never realized... I just grew up on my own, really; I don't remember anyone ever holding me or cuddling me, it was just me and Pan as far back as I can go.'[19] Clearly, the later appearance of Mrs. Coulter does little to fill the gap in Lyra's sense of maternal loss. Not only does this woman attempt to deprive Lyra of her alethiometer, the only object that provides Lyra with a sense of security, but she is also unwilling to allow Lyra to progress beyond the boundaries of traditional childhood. Mrs. Coulter insists that during the cocktail party she intends to throw at her house Lyra should be 'perfectly behaved, sweet, charming, innocent, attentive, delightful in every way' (*Northern Lights* 88). In the sphere of such loss of maternal affection, the transitional object represented by the alethiometer becomes an urgent necessity for Lyra whose real mother can merely embody images of negativity, evil, and

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[19] Philip Pullman, *The Amber Spyglass* (London: Scholastic Children's Books, 2001 [2000]), p. 194. Hereafter cited in the text as *Amber Spyglass*.

malevolence. So not only is she unable to fulfil a good-enough motherly role, Mrs. Coulter furthermore threatens to destroy the internalized good object of the mother's image in Lyra's mind. When Lyra later tries to reverse this image of Mrs. Coulter by convincing herself that her mother has really changed, she is simply safeguarding this internal image. No wonder that Will, in *The Amber Spyglass*, abstains from blemishing the image of a good mother that Lyra falsely builds up about Mrs. Coulter, 'I really felt she was loving me and looking after me...She must have thought I was going to die, being asleep all that time' (194). Unaware that she has been drugged to sleep by her own mother, Lyra wants to introject a nice motherly image of Mrs. Coulter. Will, who is aware of this woman's malevolent purpose, nevertheless recognises that, like himself, Lyra needs such memory of a sympathising mother to cherish. He understands that he should not 'betray that memory' (195). In Kleinian theory, such a benign picture of the mother is important for the child as it 'forms the basis for all loving, lasting reparative relationships in the future'.[20]

Pullman's views on growing up are expressed through his portrayal of the daemons whose distinctive feature of flexibility changes in adolescence. In Lyra's world daemons are visible manifestations of human souls which are able to alter their animal shapes before they eventually become fixed in adulthood. The notion of daemons plays a significant role in the materialization of Pullman's ideology about growing up as well as of his views on the difference between children and adults. A child's daemon is able to change and take whatever is required of an

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[20] Patricia Daniel, 'Child Analysis and the Concept of Unconscious Phantasy' in *Clinical Lectures on Klein and Bion*, ed., by Robin Anderson (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 14-33 (p. 19).

animal's shape reflecting the emotional or mental state of the child. Pantalaimon, Lyra's daemon, may take the shape of a moth in dangerous situations, a wildcat when feeling aggressive and an ermine in peace and tranquillity. On the verge of adulthood, namely in adolescence, daemons are bound to assume permanent fixed shapes reflecting the thereafter unchanging nature of the human being concerned. When Lyra questions the Seaman about the settlement of daemons, he replies that "'that's part of growing up'" (*Northern Lights* 167). This characteristic of daemons, however, does not merely suggest something about the fluidity of children's nature and the rigidity of adults. Rather, it imposes the idea of a stereotypical adjustment of human nature and denies any possibility of future adaptations and consequently of free choice. Growing up is not only associated with the loss of a daemon's power to change, but also with loss of 'grace', a notion that Pullman appears to consider a part of the natural process of maturation.[21]

With growing up, Dust becomes attached to human beings, a development that apparently troubles the Church and its institutionalised Christianity in Pullman's novels. The Church believes that Dust is a physical manifestation of Original Sin, therefore it is implicated in experiments to separate children from their daemons to prevent them from attracting Dust in adolescence. Mrs. Coulter explains to Lyra that daemons are horrible companions in adulthood: 'at the age we call puberty, the age you're coming to very soon, darling, daemons bring all sort of troublesome thoughts and feelings, and that's what lets Dust in' (*Northern Lights* 285). For Pullman, by contrast, Dust being attracted to adults is a metaphor

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[21] On Pullman's view of 'grace' see Pullman, 'Writing Fantasy Realistically'.

for their greater experience and lesser innocence than children. He explicates the significance of Dust in his correspondence with Peter T. Chattaway: 'Dust is my metaphor for all the things [...] that [...] I [believe in]: human wisdom, science and art, all the accumulated and transmissible achievements of the human mind.'[22] Thus while Dust is combined with these high associations of human consciousness, it is a threat to the Church and its objective of absolute dominance. So if the daemons are cut from their human beings, people will be more obedient, manageable and easy to control by the Church. The description of the 'intercised' men in Mrs. Coulter's army allows a clearer picture of the subservient characteristics of the people with no daemons: 'they have no fear and no imagination and no free will.'[23] The Church's attempts to separate children from their daemons through intercision represent an extreme version of contemporary threats impeding what Pullman suggests could be a natural way of growing up or achieving a higher level of consciousness; there are, of course, overtones of the brutal experimentation carried out on prisoners in WWII, and other conflicts. In the more domestic sphere, they stand metaphorically for strict rules and stereotypical patterns of behaviour imposed by such institutions as it is the case in some schools, families, and religious systems in order to limit children's imagination and freedom to experience and learn naturally.

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[22] Philip Pullman in correspondence with Peter T. Chattaway in 'The Extended Email Interview' in *FilmChat* 28 November 2007 <http://filmchatblog.blogspot.com/2007/11/philip-pullman-extended-e-mail.html> [accessed 6 February 2008]

[23] Philip Pullman, *The Subtle Knife* (London: Scholastic Children's Books, 1998 [1997]), p. 209. Hereafter cited in the text as *Subtle Knife*.

For Lyra and Will, growing up into maturity should ideally be the result of their own expanding experience and continuous learning, free from imposed views by adults and their ideology. But Lyra and Will's passion to take their own trajectories towards maturity is impeded not only by the Church's dominance, and threat of intercision if they are captured, but also by their incessant inner struggle initiated by their problematical relationships with their parents. It is only through intermediate space which relates inner and outer reality that a child's good relation to the world can be established. This is made possible by a facilitating environment represented mainly by good-enough mothering (*Playing* 13). Although the term 'mothering' obviously implies a mother in the role, it does not exclude the father's significance for the child's development. It is named as such, Winnicott argues, because the mother is the main care-giver in the early stage of a person's life. The need for a male figure represented by the father, however, is never ignored in his terminology of good-enough mothering (*Playing* 141).

The emotional relationship between a child and a transitional object is essential to maintain protection against the maternal failure to support the child and help to build a good relationship with external reality. Lyra's relationship to the alethiometer represents one of the ways in which she is able to create such an intermediate space of active play which involves '[an] interplay of personal psychic reality and the experience of control of actual objects' (*Playing* 47). Another facet of Lyra's playing is her ability to play with words. For Winnicott, playing does not only apply to little children, but can manifest itself at later stages 'in the choice of words, in the inflection of the voice, and indeed in the sense of humour' (40). Lyra's invented stories about her glorified family she claims to

have, represents on one hand a form of control through employing her linguistic creativity of interactive play and on the other, an inner search for a phantasised image of perfect family. Her creation of an imaginary world of fantasy can be viewed as a means of alleviating her sense of deprivation by introjecting a highly esteemed parental image. The excessive idealization Lyra lends to her phantasised stories can be seen from a Kleinian point of view as an omnipotent attempt to deny the existence of what is felt to be threatening.

The effect of parental deprivation is more apparent in Will's case. He has to pay emotionally and physically for the absence of his father and the poor mental condition of his mother. His search for his father is initiated by his desire to reconstruct the good-enough family he has been missing for a long time. Will's inadvertent situation is thus reinforced by several frustrations in which his attempts to be a normal child have been a failure. Because all his life has been so far revolving about his mother, we assume he has never had the chance to exist as a person in his own right. Though the internalised good mother he once knew is always within him, it is incessantly overshadowed by the extreme pressure he is put under during his adventures and by his current image of his mother as a helpless child, herself in need of being parented. When Mrs. Coulter mentions Will's mother in support for her action of imprisoning Lyra in order to protect her, he 'felt a jolt of shock and rage', a feeling that is readily 'complicated by the thought that his mother, after all, had not protected him; he had had to protect her' (*Amber Spyglass* 149). He is subconsciously aware of the maternal loss he is experiencing. In the cave to which Will and Lyra are taken by the witches after their escape from the children of Cittagazze and while unable to sleep because of

the cold and the pain of his swollen hand, Will's need for his mother's comfort is made explicitly clear. Thus, he recalls a memory of her nursing him at night when he was a little child:

> He was afraid for her, of course, [...] but he wanted her to look after him, too, as she'd done when he was very small; he wanted her to bandage him and tuck him into bed and sing to him and take away all the trouble and surround him with all the warmth and softness and mother-kindness he needed so badly; and it was never going to happen (*Subtle Knife* 330).

To achieve a successful progress towards independence, Winnicott suggests that a mother should *gradually* withdraw from a state of complete and unconditional adaptation to her child's needs. Due to the fact that Will's mother has abruptly and unexpectedly retreated from such a state due to her mental and emotional deterioration, the gradual withdrawal which is necessary to create the potential space for their healthy separation has never occurred. Will seems here to be trapped in the happy memories of close attachment to his mother. One of the child's means of dealing with the failure of the mother to satisfy the emergent needs is through remembering and reliving moments of intimate attachment. In fact, with the burden of all the responsibilities he has been assigned, Will has been progressing towards what in Winnicott's language is called a premature false adulthood: 'a child [...] may suddenly need to become responsible, perhaps because of the death of a parent or because of the break-up of a family. Such a child must be prematurely old and must lose spontaneity and play and carefree creative impulse' (*Playing* 146). But this kind of accelerated maturity always retains the possibility of regression and relapse to a state of dependence.

The narrator's choice of the subtle knife as a transitional object for Will may symbolise the adolescent's internal anger towards society: the children found

tormenting and abusing his mother, killers who are pursuing his father, and even anger towards the father himself, who has left Will trapped in such a desperate situation with his mother. The state to which Will has to withdraw in order to properly use the subtle knife resembles the state to which the little child retreats through playing, but he is more reluctant than Lyra to renounce the failed family romance. As Winnicott states: 'to get the idea of playing it is helpful to think of the *preoccupation* that characterizes the playing of a young child. The content does not matter. What matters is the near-withdrawal state, akin to the *concentration* of older children and adults' (*Playing* 51). When Giacomo Paradisi starts to teach Will how to use the knife, he asks him to 'concentrate', to 'focus' his mind, but Will is not yet ready for such a thought-experiment; his mind remains distracted by the memory of his 'poor frightened unhappy dear beloved' mother and by the horrible pain caused by the cutting of his fingers (*Subtle Knife* 191). With the help of a comforting gesture from Pantalaimon, Lyra's daemon, and with Lyra encouraging him to enter a trance like the one she goes into when using her alethiometer, Will is invited to occupy a 'potential space': somewhere in which he can learn how to master the capacity of playing with his transitional object. Despite the initial success in temporarily controlling the subtle knife, Will recurrently struggles in making his own decisions. He often loses concentration amid thoughts wavering between regressive thoughts about his mother, and his ambition to help Lord Asriel in his rebellion and by so doing developing his sense of independent, masculine individuality. He tells Lyra: "'I'm divided, I'm pulled apart'" (*Amber Spyglass* 203). Significantly, the bear Iorek Byrnison once tells Will: "'when you talk of the knife, you talk of your mother and father'" (203). So

the potential space required for Will to progress into a state of subjectivity separate from the area of the mother is viewed as subjected to Will's ebbs and flows in his experience with the subtle knife. Only through time, will the subtle knife allow Will a space to negotiate his priorities whether he is destined to kill, to revenge his enemies or to protect and retain his own goodness.

Even when Will becomes more experienced in using the knife for opening windows between worlds, the image of his mother often intrudes into his mind. It was the picture of her face that brings about the break of the knife: "'the knife is broken [...] I thought of my mother and that made the knife twist'" (*Amber Spyglass* 173) Will's pressing need to have his knife repaired is also fed by his desire to be able to access the world in which his mother lives. He tells Lyra that he is afraid of the possibility of being unable to see his mother anymore if he is stuck in another world:

> From nowhere a memory came to him: he was very young, and it was before her troubles began, and he was ill. All night long, it seemed, his mother had sat on his bed in the dark singing nursery rhymes, telling him stories, and as long as her dear voice was there, he knew he was safe. He *couldn't* abandon her now. He couldn't! He'd look after her all his life if she needed it. (*Amber Spyglass* 194)

Though a sense of devotion to his ill mother is clearly present, this passage signals Will as merging into the mother's realm and finding difficulty in becoming independent. What Will needs is to understand that his mother is existent, but so is he, and only in forsaking her can he be secured a healthy progression towards adulthood. In adolescence Winnicott concedes that growing up requires more independence from parental support. Maturation or adopting an adult status is not a natural process that can be achieved through time and inward development alone: 'growth is not a matter of inherited tendency; it is also a matter of a highly

complex interweaving with the facilitating environment' (*Playing* 144). Soon after the knife is repaired by the bear Iorek, Will attempts to close his eyes temporarily to his mother: 'instead of trying not to think of his mother he said to himself: *Yes, I know she's there, but I'm just going to look away while I do this*...And that time it worked' (*Amber Spyglass* 256-57). Owing to the genuine surrogate support of Lyra and Iorek, Will's subjugation to the maternal dominance recedes allowing him more space for a mature and masculine subjectivity to emerge successfully.

Will's reluctance to embrace a secure position in relation to others is also linked with his severed relationship with his father. This relationship has been marked with longing and deprivation since Will's childhood. Will has always had his version of family romance which involves his father returning home and undertaking the responsibility of his mother so that he can lead a normal life: '"I could just go to school and have friends and I'd have a mother and a father too"' (*Subtle Knife* 274). Through reading his father's letters sent to his mother during the father's expeditions in the North, Will is offered the first opportunity to know his father as a person rather than a distant memory. The letters readily allow Will to retreat once again to the fantasy of the happy family, but more importantly by learning about his father's discovery of a window in the air, Will realises that he is sharing the same extraordinary discoveries with his father: 'he felt deeply happy that he had something so important to share with his father; that John Parry and his son Will had each, separately, discovered this extraordinary thing' (*Subtle Knife* 119). Will's short-lived meeting with his father at the end of *The Subtle Knife* is far from satisfactory in emotional terms. The father and son have a fierce oedipal fight before Will receives treatment for his wounded hand and

instructions to pursue the mission of fighting on the side of Lord Asriel. Their brief encounter, however, abruptly ends with an arrow killing John Parry an instant after recognising each other for a flicker of a moment. In his ensuing journey, Will is guided and protected by the two angels, Balthamos and Baruch, and trained by Iorek. Their continuous support and nurture compensate in part for Will's paternal loss securing him a facilitating environment for making his own decisions. Will does not disregard his father's instructions, but a more urgent need necessitates a diversion in the task: 'but first I must rescue Lyra Silvertongue' (*Amber Spyglass* 116). Will even appears more self-determined and responsible during his encounter with his father's ghost in the journey into the underworld. In an assertive tone, Will avows to his father's ghost: "'you said I was a warrior. You told me that was my nature, and I shouldn't argue with it. Father, you were wrong. I fought because I had to. I can't choose my nature, but I can choose what I do. And I *will* choose, because now I'm free'" (*Amber Spyglass* 440). One can sense a denial of an adult's or authorities' abilities to influence a child's own trajectory of growing up, a notion that the Church's interference in childhood development clearly disavow. One might also argue that Will's surrogate parenting, by a homosexual couple (the angels), and a bear, substantially revise and modernise the more traditional patriarchal trajectory, whereby the son imitates and psychologically becomes the father.

The availability of a good environment within which a child can communicate in a potential space of play is emphasised throughout Pullman's trilogy. Winnicott stresses the significance of play as a third area which intermingles with creativity and the cultural life of individuals. This third area is

contrasted with inner psychic reality and the actual environment in which a person lives and which is perceived objectively. In other words, this area is parallel to the potential space between a child and external objects such as the mother or part of the mother at a stage when the child begins to recognise the mother as different from him/herself and feel the need to break from her into his/her own individual autonomy. The existence of a potential space is determined by the availability of trust and reliability offered by the mother or the environment (*Playing* 108). The role which different environments can play in shaping the potential space is manifested in Pullman's trilogy through the sharp contrast between the ways in which different worlds or environments can influence the moulding of the individual's personality. In Cittagazze, the city of magpies, children are growing up in an ecologically degenerating environment. It is a world where Spectres, a kind of human-soul eaters, feed off the horror of grown-ups, leaving the children to wander carelessly and mischievously. People in this world are parasites, as Joachim Lorenz tells the witches Serafina and Ruta Skadi: 'we create nothing, we have built nothing for hundreds of years, all we can do is steal from other worlds' (*Subtle Knife* 141). Giacomo Paradisi describes this as a 'corrupt and careless world' (196). It is because of his predecessors' legacy that Spectres first came to this world and now are freely causing more damage to it. In consequence, the children in Cittagazze are leading a life devoid of any human compassion. First, they are seen trying to kill a cat using sticks and stones before it is saved by Lyra and Will. Then, their aggression is directed towards Lyra and Will; they accuse the pair of theft and murder after Will has possessed the knife and caused Tullio, Angelica's brother, to be attacked by the Spectres. Screaming with rage, the

children gather in a mass attempt to attack Lyra and Will while hiding in a white villa on the boundaries of Cittagazze. Firing their pistol and threatening in fury, these children make Lyra crouch paralysed in fear against the wall. When the two adolescents are finally saved by the witches, Lyra, in disbelief, tells Serafina: 'we were - those kids - they were *kids*, and they were going to kill us' (*Subtle Knife* 245). In the environment of Cittagazze, there is a failure in confidence between the children and the actual place they live in. They lack what Winnicott calls 'the play-capacity' which is diminished by the limitations of the potential space; there is 'a relative failure on the part of those who constitute the child's world of persons to introduce cultural elements at the appropriate phase of the person's personality development' (*Playing* 109). Thus, the poor quality of the familial and cultural atmosphere in the city of Cittagazze deprives its children of a good environment in which they can successfully thrive.

More evidently, in *The Amber Spyglass*, Pullman provides a sharply contrasting environment in the mulefa world. The mulefa creatures live in an idyllic state in harmony with nature. Dr. Malone notices how these lovable wheeled creatures work together with the natural environment to produce an organised and independent society: 'everything was linked together, and all of it, seemingly managed by the mulefa' (133). Their use of the seed-pod produced by special kinds of trees in their world as wheels is a metaphor for the reciprocal relationship with the environment: 'creatures could only use wheels on a world which provided them with natural highways' (133). The mulefa youngsters are given a space to play and feed their curiosity as they grow up which corresponds to Winnicott's notion of nourishing environment which is necessary for children

to mature healthily. Mary once watches them attempting naturally to imitate the mulefa adults by trying to fit their feet into the seed-pods as the adult creatures do. Once they become able to do so they will have the wisdom and consciousness their elders are getting from the oil inside the seed-pod. In other words the children in the mulefa world are given the opportunity to grow and learn within this peaceful and self-reliant society by experiencing the world themselves.

The world of the dead provides a metaphorical illustration of how an environment can affect the process of growing up. Will and Lyra's journey into the world of the dead is precipitated by the death of Roger, Lyra's friend. After her shock over her father's murder of her friend Roger, Lyra's attention becomes primarily focused on apologising to Roger's soul. To be able to achieve such an ethically-necessitated goal, Lyra is compelled to painfully sacrifice her daemon Pantalaimon in venturing into the land of the dead, a journey resonant with allusions to descent in classical and theological mythology.[24] But the agonising experiences both Lyra and Will have to endure in the underworld yields the most substantial psychic and emotional development. Lyra's quest for atonement ultimately goes beyond her sense of remorse, leading her to liberate all the souls of the dead held captive in the underworld. Will's initial impulse is to see his father, but like Lyra, he recognises more general heroic task: to open a way out of the underworld. At this point of the narrative where a shift from the individual to the general comes into play, Graham Holderness argues that 'we witness a transition from the classical journey to the underworld, to the Christian Harrowing

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[24] Examples include Odysseus and Orpheus's descents to the underworld in Greek mythology, and 'Harrowing of Hell' in which Christ frees the souls of the dead trapped in the underworld. See Graham Holderness, '"The Undiscovered Country": Philip Pullman and the 'Land of the Dead', *Literature & Theology* 21:3 (2007), 276-92.

of Hell'[25] But this transition can also be interpreted psychoanalytically. As adolescents, the protagonists of Pullman's trilogy are at a stage during which they have to progress from the personal to the public. Generally speaking, adolescents must learn to recognise and to engage with a wider net of relationships than they had as children. Therefore, in their new mission as redeemers of the souls of the dead, Lyra and Will become consciously aware of the others' needs versus their own personal and individual impulses and motivations.

Concomitant with this transition, however, is more dramatic one articulated through Lyra's conversion from fantasy to reality. In this world Lyra is impelled to renounce constructing 'made-up' fantasy stories for the apparently mature business of telling 'true stories'. When Lyra attempts to offer an invented story to the chief harpy guarding the door to the land of the dead, the girl is met by angry shrieks and attacked by the winged creature leaving her with a bleeding cut on her scalp. For the harpies, Lyra's fabricated stories are no more than lies, so that '*Lyra* and *liar* were one and the same thing' (*Amber Spyglass* 308). Harpies are hideous creatures with birds' bodies and women's heads whose only mission is to torment the ghosts of the dead with their 'screams, cries, shrieks [...] with gusts of rotten stink, battering wings, and those raucous screams, jeering, mocking, cackling, deriding' (313). This incident dramatically alters Lyra's absolute belief in the power of her lies, which have worked supremely well for her so far. In her despair, she tells Will: "'Will - I can't do it any more – I can't do it! I can't tell lies! I thought it was so easy – but it didn't work – it's all I can do, and it doesn't work!'" (*Amber Spyglass* 309) Thus, Lyra's realm of fantasy is no

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[25] Holderness, 'The Undiscovered Country', p. 284.

longer a source of self-confidence. When asked by the children's ghosts to tell them about the real world, Lyra hesitates to undertake what has been her favourite task of narrating fictional stories. Advised by Will to tell only the truth to avoid the harpy's rage, Lyra starts to narrate sentimental stories of her own play and mischief at Jordan College and at the clay beds of Oxford, evoking the smells around the places and the sounds of every single action in an effort not to ignore any material detail. It is not only the children's ghosts who do enjoy Lyra's 'playing on all their senses', but every single harpy becomes 'solemn and spellbound' listening passionately to Lyra's true life stories. The striking change in the harpies' response drives the Chevalier Tialys to enquire for a reason, and in response, the harpies explain that unlike the '"lies and fantasies"' Lyra has been speaking of, these stories are 'nourishing' because they are true (*Amber Spyglass* 332). In exchange for Lyra's true stories, the harpies offer to show Lyra and Will the way to a part of the land of the dead where Will can cut through into the upper world. In their journey through the underworld, Lyra and Will lead the way of thousands of ghosts to their freedom. They are the first ones to experience the horror of walking along a ridge beside a deep abyss and the fear of falling into it. Though frightened themselves, their words are replete with encouragement to the ghosts of the dead people to follow their steps. This dramatisation of the value of realistic narrative over fantasy is one way of Pullman's verifying his views about the momentous change in the progression from childhood into adulthood. For the reader, though, it is in a way a paradoxical appreciation of reality, since we are being passionately moved (if we are) by fantasy, even if the stories are true for Lyra.

In their struggle in the world of the dead, Will and Lyra have to develop mentally and emotionally in order to cope with the excessive pressure and hurdles presented by its hostile environment. Their psychological development is capable of inducing another dramatic change in the harpies. These creatures who feed on the wickedness of the dead people begin to realise that there are things other than evil in the world. Having recognised this through listening to Lyra, the harpy No-Name does not only lead the dead to the upper world; she also saves Lyra's life when the latter slips and falls into the abyss. No-Name who has attacked and wounded Lyra when they first met is praised and blessed for her kindness and generosity. The harpy's transformation is ratified by her new name 'Gracious Wings' given to her by Lyra (*Amber Spyglass* 405). Initially depicted as demonised creatures, the harpies have been transformed by Lyra's truth-telling into passionate mothers. Hence, the two adolescents with the help of the Gallivespians Chevalier Tialys and Lady Salmakia effectively have been able to influence the environment of the underworld. By her recognition of the value of true stories in the waste land of the underworld, Lyra is spurred to step away from her self-centred fantasy towards a realistic stance which can be comprehended as an adolescent version of embracing the reality principle. It is within the dynamics of the reality principle Lyra can establish relationships with objects and individuals that are external to the territory of the self.

This progression toward reality is symbolised by a change in Lyra's relationship to her alethiometer. In fact, after her emergence from the land of the dead, Lyra's readings of the alethiometer become more and more strained, and the trance she allows her mind to retreat to in the process becomes 'awkward and

tentative' (*Amber Spyglass* 446). But the value of true stories is highlighted even further in Will and Lyra's next adventure into the mulefa world. In their meeting with Mary Malone in the world of these organised creatures, Will and Lyra are introduced to the true story of Dr. Malone's past. In the peaceful environment and at the point where the two adolescents become aware of each other, Mary Malone's account of her own rebellion and love story awakens deep sensual desires in Lyra and Will, 'Lyra felt something strange happen to her body [...] the sensations [...] were exciting and frightening [...] she felt as if she had been handed the key to a great house [...] inside her, and she turned the key, deep in the darkness of the building she felt other doors opening too, and lights coming on' (*Amber Spyglass* 467-68). This sensation may be understood as a metaphor for readiness to explore a new exciting zone of romance and sexuality. In the mulefa world, Mary plays the role of the guardian of the new Eden allowing Lyra and Will to explore the world for themselves looking for their own lost daemons despite the fact that she is, like a matriarch, genuinely concerned about their safety and well-being. With the reluctance of a good mother, Dr. Malone allows Lyra and Will a space of experimentation which initiates a gradual withdrawal from her complete adaptation to their needs. Their increased individualism and adult-like independence is accelerated by means of prominent good-enough mothering. Though Lyra and Will's travels into different worlds allow them a particular type of play which is conceded as a facilitating factor for growth and creativity, Dr. Malone and the mulefa environment have the greatest effect on the adolescents' evolution. Malone's role as a helper is highlighted through her significant

assistance to the mulefa creatures and her understanding of their world and the nature of consciousness through her study of the Dust particles.

The adolescents' realisation of passion and love for each other is represented as a fall into self-consciousness. In Pullman's reproduction of the scene of temptation in his version of the Eden, Lyra is seen in the mulefa world offering Will some of the 'little red fruits [...] Her fingers were still at his lips, and he felt them tremble, and he put his own hand up to hold hers there, and then neither of them could look; they were confused; they were brimming with happiness' (*The Amber Spyglass* 491-92). The scene, however, brings about blessing rather than sin to the world. On the one hand, it allows the restoration of the original nature of Dust in the mulefa's world which up to the moment of Will and Lyra's fall has been in decline as a result of the migration of the Dust particles. On the other hand, this fall allows the children to progress into a state of awareness and consciousness and initiate the creation of the 'Republic of Heaven'. It is because of this incident that they transcend the grace of childhood and become aware of their sexuality. Engulfed with the golden particles which mark their fall into experience, Mary Malone thinks that their image 'would seem the true image of what human beings always could be, once they had come into their inheritance [...] and these children-no-longer-children, saturated with love were the cause of it all' (*Amber Spyglass* 497). Dust is produced when human beings become more conscious of their human capacities of feeling and thinking as the angel Xaphania explains: '"conscious beings make Dust – they renew it all the time, by thinking and feeling and reflecting, by gaining wisdom and passing on it"' (520). What Lyra and Will have discovered of sensual pleasure is only a

part of the human experience of growing up and of learning from the small incidents of everyday life.

This view which celebrates the senses is Pullman's introduction to his concept of the Republic of Heaven wherein every human being should make the best of here and now. Pullman's notion of this Republic is put forward as a substitute for the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven which represents for him the monotheistic persecuting authority of the Church (or any authority claiming to be Absolute). Upon their recognition of the impossibility of living together in one world because their daemons' lifespan will be limited in other worlds, Will and Lyra have to build their versions of the Republic of Heaven in their respective worlds individually: 'we have to build the republic of heaven where we are, because for us there is no elsewhere' (*Amber Spyglass* 382). Pullman is advancing the idea of achieving an individual's inner paradise and living fully on earth as opposed to any illusory afterlife as promised in religious contexts. His idea extends to emphasise the value of living the present time with contentment and satisfaction which he paradoxically seems to contradict by concluding the trilogy with the tragic separation of two adolescents who have to renounce their new discovered love.

Through his depiction of this painful separation, Pullman proposes that freedom of choice must be consciously restricted by a sense of responsibility. Lyra and Will voluntarily sacrifice the possibility of accessing each other's world so that the dead may have one passage left for them to exit the underworld. This conscious choice is a vivid manifestation of their mature utilisation of free will. Their responsible choice of sacrificing their love discloses that they are on their

way to becoming mature adults. When Will asks the angel Xaphania for her advice about what to do, he quickly thinks that he should decide for himself: "'*I shall decide what I do. If you say my work is fighting, or healing, or exploring* [...] *and if I end up doing that I'll be resentful because it'll feel as if I didn't have a choice* [...] *whatever I do, I will choose it, no one else.*'" To this speech the angel replies: "'then you have already taken the first steps towards wisdom' (*Amber Spyglass* 525). The two adolescents' irreversible progress towards adulthood is evoked by the scene in which their daemons assume their permanent shapes.

Growing up is accompanied by the loss of grace which eventually puts an end to Lyra's graceful use of her transitional object, the alethiometer: 'there was no sign of the clear concentration she used to sink into so quickly' (*Amber Spyglass* 517). Likewise, Will has to end his relationship to his own transitional object, the subtle knife, when he undertake the responsibility of preserving the Dust which unwittingly seeps out every time the knife was used. In order to break the knife, Will has to think of unbreakable love; this time it is not the image of his mother that breaks the knife but Lyra's. If a sense of responsibility socially marks the episode of coming of age, psychoanalytically it is evinced through the substitution of the original love object: the mother. Will awakens into recognition of his own reality where the image of his mother that broke the knife blade once becomes a dislodged entity outside his own sphere. The mother is recognised as an external reality rather than an incorporated image into his own.

The role of the surrogate paternal figures both Lyra and Will encounter in the course of their adventures cannot be disregarded in their emotional and

personal development. Their relationships with the bear Iorek, the witch Serafina Pekkala, Farder Coram, the aeronaut Lee Scorsby and particularly Mary Malone compensate in part for the loss of adequate relationships with their biological parents.[26] In the vein of love and support provided by the imaginary father as discussed in chapter two with reference to *Not the End of the World*, the continuous support and encouragement provided by these paternal and maternal surrogates are extremely significant in facilitating the necessary space for Lyra's maturation and bridging her experience of fantasy and reality. It is through the dominant influence of these surrogate relationships that Pullman eclipses the dramatic transformation of Lyra's parents. Though drawn as distant and demonic parents throughout their emotionally ambiguous roles, Marisa Coulter and Lord Asriel's sacrifice at the end of *The Amber Spyglass* certainly places them at the extreme opposite of their earlier roles as parents. Paradoxically, their voluntary fatal sacrifice remains veiled from Lyra: "'I never asked about my father and mother – and I can't ask the alethiometer, either, now... I wonder if I'll ever know?'" (525) Thus, Lyra is never consciously reconciled with her real mother. For the reader, though, Lord Asriel and Mrs. Coulter's sacrifice partly redeems their earlier incompetence as parents.

When a child achieves independence from the mother, the loss of the value of the transitional object is anticipated: 'its fate is to be gradually decathected [...] it is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning, and this is because the transitional phenomena have become diffused [...]' (*Playing*

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[26] On the surrogate paternal relationships in Pullman's trilogy see Amelia A. Rutledge, 'Reconfiguring Nurture in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 33.2 (2008), pp. 119-34. Project MUSE. University of Sheffield Library. <http://muse.jhu.edu/> [accessed 11 June 2009]

5). Literally, both the alethiometer and the subtle knife have lost their original values as precipitators for separation from the external realities, when Lyra and Will arrive at a stage of significant maturation. Although Will's termination of his relationship to the knife is definite and complete, Lyra's relationship to the alethiometer is not completely terminated. The alethiometer has lost its value as an object Lyra can communicate with by means of unconscious grace. But she may be able to partially recover its use one day by means of conscious grace attained by hard work which is 'deeper and fuller than grace that comes freely' as the angel Xaphania makes clear to Lyra (*Amber Spyglass* 520).

Implicit in Xaphania's view is Pullman's ambivalent attitude towards growing up and his fantasy–realism dichotomy. In Lyra's world the irreversible loss of daemon's fluidity marks its subject's crossing over into 'fixed' adulthood. This crossing over into a state of maturity is equally identified by the loss of grace which for Lyra is concomitant with her loss of creative capability of spinning fantasy stories. In both cases, Pullman has created a substantial boundary between adulthood and childhood spaces of being. Yet the possibility of Lyra regaining grace and using the alethiometer as an adult provides the possibility of a continuity between the early time of childhood and approaching adulthood. His segregation of adult and child categories as articulated in the trilogy is undermined by his incorporation of 'large' subjects in children's fiction because as he claimed in his acceptance speech of the Carnegie Medal in 1996, 'they can only be dealt with adequately in a children's book'.[27] Yet, he also evinces his

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[27] Philip Pullman, 'Carnegie Medal Acceptance Speech', *Random House*
<http://www.randomhouse.com/features/pullman/author/carnegie.html > [accessed 28 June 2009]

'large' issues in a 'fantasy' children's book despite insisting on realism and on the fact he has not specified any particular age-group as his intended readership.

How then may this contradiction of binaries be reconciled in *His Dark Materials*? In fact the trilogy itself bridges these binaries on multiple levels by its exploration of adolescent dynamics and themes. On the narrative level, at times, there is neither such segregation between childhood and adulthood, nor between fantasy and reality. For example, Lyra is sometimes depicted as childlike, curious and graceful, but also as witty, a decision-maker, a protector and fighter. In other words, she combines the traditional features of both childhood and adulthood in her adolescent character. And on the other side, the adult Lee Scoresby, on the verge of death, temporarily recaptures the sense of playing as a child: 'it had to do with his childhood, and the Alamo [...] His childhood was coming back to him, with a vengeance' (313). Likewise, a striking example of merging fantasy with reality is evoked at the opening of book three by bringing a real picture of Roger, Lyra's friend, in the land of the dead to Lyra's dreams during her drugged sleep. These images of the underworld depicted in italic print intervene in the main plot at irregular intervals. On another level, the trilogy depicts an adolescent potential space in which the two protagonists, and Lyra in particular, acquiring greater complexity. As Pullman describes,

> Just as Lyra is growing up, accumulating new experiences and seeing the world in a wider and more complex way, so the reader is doing that as well. The structure of the trilogy is mirroring the consciousness of a growing, learning, developing consciousness'[28].

Lyra's progression towards adulthood is bound in Pullman's dialectics with adopting more realistic vision. One typographical indication of the transition from

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[28] Weich, 'Philip Pullman Reaches the Garden'.

fantasy to reality (from pre-Symbolic to the Symbolic) is that the simple visual images that mark the beginning of the chapters in *Northern Lights* and *The Subtle Knife* are replaced with quotations from classical literature and philosophy in *The Amber Spyglass,* thus underlining the densely intertextual nature of the third, ostensibly more 'adult' volume of the trilogy.

On the level of the reader's experience, as we have discovered in earlier chapter *His Dark Materials* creates a psychological space for the adult reader to recover an 'adolescent' sense of potentiality. The adolescent text becomes our transitional object in which the fantasy brings us to the reality of our psychological experience of adolescence. This notion is evidently articulated in Julie Powell's comment on reading the trilogy: 'What pulls me in and leaves me gasping is not the fantasy, but the reality of the dizzying submersions of adolescence.'[29] The fantasy genre of young adult fiction immerses the reader in the potentiality of metamorphosis, of becoming rather than being. As Bram and Gabbard write, 'potential space is viewed as a state of "coming into being" a sense of "aliveness" that is an experience significant in itself, thereby transcending its role as developmental impetus.'[30] *His Dark Materials,* therefore, may be interpreted as facilitating the transitional atmosphere for the adult reader to be transformed temporarily into a space where fantasies and realities are diffused and dispersed in the intermediate territory between the internal reality and the external world of the reader. Thus, the fantasy genre defined by ingenuity

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[29] Julie Powell, 'Bizzare Soul Mates: The Magic of 'His Dark Materials', You must Read This. *National Public Radio,* <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5535590> [accessed 23 June 2009]

[30] Bram & Gabbard, 'Potential Space', p. 687.

and infinite configurations becomes a psychologically adolescent genre and its readers become adolescents regardless of their biological age.

Conclusion

Rethinking Adolescent Literature

Negotiations of identity and questions of ongoing structuring of selfhood are intrinsic to much adolescent literature. The diverse ways in which these processes are represented and thematised in various genres of contemporary young adult fiction are inscribed in our temporal psychic assumptions which incessantly replay the emergence of our subjectivities. My aim in the previous chapters has been to demonstrate that contemporary young adult fiction presents an excellent opportunity to explore the implications of Kristeva's notion of non-biological adolescence. While such fiction reflects on aspects of adolescents' lives and adolescent subject positions, it concurrently offers configurations of an open psychic structure that characterises our psychic identity and are reflected in an open aesthetic structure of the literary text. In effect, adolescence is conceived less as a biological stage than as a quality that conveys dynamics of adolescence both psychologically and aesthetically. These dynamics involve openness, fluidity, cultural and psychic metamorphosis. Accordingly, I have attempted to explicate the subtle ways in which the young adult novels in focus may offer the reader the possibility to engage with their adolescent *espace* via the various representations of the adolescent economy of the text. Here, adolescence is represented as a psychodynamic phenomenon that manifests itself more prominently in young adult fiction to which negotiations of identities are principally germane.

In my research, I have drawn on narrative and psychoanalysis theories to examine this adolescent tendency in both the text and the reader through close

readings of a number of widely-read young adult texts. My attention has been focused on a number of theories that are concerned with the interplay between psyche and language and how these are interrelated to constructions of subjectivity. Theories, developed mainly by Kristeva, Freud, Lacan and Winnicott, are employed to study such linguistic/psychological interchange that adolescent fiction may allow to its (adult) reading subjects. The adolescent economy invested in young adult fiction draws on adolescence as a phase of new individuation and separation from the family. In fact, biological adolescence is conceived as a return to a prior infantile status in which the psyche is open to attachment-individuation impulses before breaking up the boundless symbiosis of the mother/child dyad. Kristeva emphasises that symbolic creations help open the psyche to such infantile impulses which render subjectivity to a state of incompleteness. Adolescent literature as a site in which unconscious and conscious symbolised fantasies come into play repeatedly enacts the construction of subjectivity. In chapter one, I have explored how the adolescent narrator's negotiations of the emerging adult subjectivity in Meg Rosoff's novel are illuminated through the logic of abjection. I have shown that as much as abjection is both a precondition and a threat to the subject, it is also a psychic space whereby the reader can engage in adolescent imaginary through vicariously experiencing the temporal imaginary dissolve of psychic boundaries. In chapter two, I have explored the heroine's experience of abjection from a feminist angle and argued that this experience can be mitigated by the idealisations of the imaginary father. While in chapters one and two I have approached the adolescent economy through subjective fluctuation within the nauseous experience of

abjection, in chapter three, I have argued that subjective assumptions of adolescent identity tend to be freed temporally and spatially through the 'fantastic' which disrupts its stability and linearity. Reading magical realist narratives represented in young adult fiction offers readers a possibility of occupying an adolescent experience of tension between childhood and adulthood, past and present, selfhood and otherness. In the last two chapters, I have focused on adolescence as a second scene for constructing subjectivity. In chapter four, I have argued that reading series of young adult narratives re-enacts the same psychological dramas experienced by children as they grow up. This re-enactment, however, operates only temporarily as these psychological dramas evolve in unexpected ways through reading later instalments of the series when more elaborate narrative and subtle ambiguities become disruptive of these dramas. In the last chapter, I have drawn on the notion of the potential space which is thematically dramatised in Pullman's novels offering the reader more potentiality to engage with a narrative journey to a growing self-consciousness. The transitional phenomenon occurs through the fantasies invested in transitional objects.

Contemporary adolescent narratives tend to represent less fixed models of subjectivity than mainstream adult-addressed fiction. In actual effect, the fact that subjectivity is not an inherent value, but a permanent configuration of different contested discourses, it is never homogeneous and consistent. In other words, constructing subjectivity is never a complete work, but a lifetime project that is imaginatively represented in adolescent literature. Kristeva's notion of the 'subject-in-process' captures the essence of this perspective. Although

representations of subjectivity in adolescent literature often coincide with portraits of personal maturation and coming into terms with the adult world, these representations can provide particular ways in which the current cultural status of contemporary world is mirrored.

Characterised by accelerating changes in scientific, technological, geographical and social structures as well as a sense of unpredictable transformations and potential disasters (climate change, terrorism, epidemics etc.), the world is felt to be less secure and sustainable than it used to be in previous historical eras.[1] The sudden outbreak of war in Rosoff's novel plays on a sense of insecurity present in a world that is rife with politically-driven conflicts. While Geraldine McCaughrean's theme draws on the environmental threat caused by global warming, Philip Pullman literally dramatises the effect of a careless exhaustion of natural resources. David Almond's characters express apprehension towards the collapse of traditional structures and towards the possibility of building Frankenstein-like scientific creations. Johan Fornäs argues that late modern culture, especially youth culture and its manifestations (drugs, sex, music etc.), is deeply rooted in modes of regression to narcissistic experiences. This narcissistic identity is produced by a change of modern socialisation and by an increase in modern reflexivity. But while this identity or 'frustrated search for self-identity' as Fornäs describes narcissism, has negative effects such as regression, in its positive aspects, it leads to a 'juvenilization of culture' rather than 'infantalization.'[2] More significantly, this narcissistic identity is characterised

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[1] This zeitgeist is well reflected in contemporary film productions such as Roland Emmerich's *The Day After Tomorrow*, 20th Century Fox, 2004.
[2] Fornäs, Cultural Theory, p. 266-67.

by ego-flexibility and great openness to others which makes it, in some aspects, resistant to essentialist assumptions of subjectivity. Youth identity may be transient in the sense that biological youth is only temporary, but psychological youth is enduring and subject to the demands for continuous identity development.

In this thesis I have viewed adolescent literature as capable of conveying a sense of 'juvenilization' in ways through which it opens the age boundaries of the implied reader it attempts to construct. The literary examples discussed here appropriate a range of narrative forms in which young adults protagonists are presented in a stage of *becoming* rather than *being*, of continuous negotiations of presupposed assumptions both on individual and general levels which make it possible for an adult reader to assume an adolescent subject position. For example, the harrowing experience of psychic abjection, as presented in the discussions of *How I Live Now* and *Not the End of the World*, conflates an impulse of personal experiences with a more generalised distrust towards political and ideological systems. Examining these texts in the light of Kristeva's psycho-linguistic theories and reader response analysis has shown how such narratives can construct adolescent reading positions in which static identities are actively questioned. Employing a Freudian approach to Almond's magical realistic novels has also revealed that while the representations of the fantastic allow prospects of questioning the ways of perceiving reality, they also subvert temporal boundaries between childhood, adolescence and adulthood. In exploring the *Harry Potter* series and *His Dark Materials*, I have engaged more closely in the connection

between adolescent negotiations of identity and earlier stages of psychic development.

Adolescent identity is inscribed in contemporary young adult fiction as it may generally characterise the contemporary cultural moment in Western societies. The texts discussed in this thesis may be characterised as 'adolescent' in the richest sense of the term; I contend that their particularities of discursive representations predispose reading subjects (whether adolescent, child or adult, in biological age) to engage with the adolescent imaginary. While reading as such describes a theory for reading that is applicable to other experiences of literary engagement, it certainly highlights the literary prospects of young adult fiction resurfaced in this study by close readings of such texts. Resisting many specialist critics' reticence to approaching children's literature with 'adult' theory, I have sought out many bridging connections between psychoanalytic theory and the texts I have held in view. Likewise, I have also tried to avoid applying psychoanalytic categories schematically to this fiction, which similarly implies that young adult fiction lacks the complexity to 'talk back' to theory. It has been my aim throughout the thesis to read the fiction alongside psychoanalytic theory, in order to elucidate some of the subtleties and complexities of contemporary young adult literature.

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