I CAME IN THROUGH A WARDROBE
Discourses of Real World / Fantasy World Transitions in Children's Literature

> "And how, pray, did you come to enter my dominions?
> "Please, your Majesty, I came in through a wardrobe."
> *The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe*[1]

This chapter is the first of two which are essentially concerned with fantasy fiction for children. In the next one I shall discuss the role of play and the assumption of adulthood in fantasy fiction, but in this one I am looking at transition narratives. Fantasy as a genre is about secondary worlds, distinguished from the ordinary world in terms of its own geography, or its own time scale, or its own beings, often in combination with each other. Some fantasy fiction plunges us straight into the secondary world from the start, but other fantasy fiction features a transition from the primary world into the secondary world, and those transitions come with their own narratives, some simple enough, but some more complex, containing a fair bit of exposition and serving to establish character; and it is they that are my focus here. Just to get rid of them, here are four opening sentences, each an example of being plunged straight in:

> Thomas was a tank engine who lived at a big station.[2]

> The Mole had been working very hard all morning, spring cleaning his little home.[3]

> In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit.[4]

> Once upon a time there were four little rabbits and their names were – Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail, and Peter.[5]

Yes indeed, *Thomas the Tank Engine*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*.

Moving on, then, to novels where there *are* transitions from primary everyday 'real' worlds to secondary fantasy ones, there is no lack of obvious examples: the two *Alice* books[6], *The Wizard of Oz*[7], *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Coraline*[8], *Elidor*[9], *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*[10], to name but six. Often known as portal fantasies, all involve portals of one sort and another from one world to the other: a rabbit hole, a mirror, a whirlwind blown farmhouse, a wardrobe, a door, a ruined church, a gap between two railway station platforms. The discovery of these portals and the passage through them is never totally decontextualised, and while some examples are simple enough, others are more complex.

Let me start with the most familiar example of all perhaps, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In a brief exposition in the first couple of paragraphs of the book we find Alice dozing away on a warm bank and wondering what to do with herself. Then the White Rabbit appears, talking to himself and taking a watch out of his waistcoat pocket and consulting it, at which point Alice gives chase, passes through the portal – the rabbit hole – and starts falling down the well:

> Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do . . . . . the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid . . . . . suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her . . . . . Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.
>
> In another moment down went Alice after it . . . . .
>
> The rabbit hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then suddenly dipped down, ... she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well. (pp.11/12)

At which point we are in well into Wonderland itself (to pinch a pun from the text) and well through the portal. Three things to note: Alice is bored, tired of having nothing to do. She is thus feeling very sleepy. But when the White Rabbit runs by she finds herself 'burning with curiosity', ripe for any adventure that might be on offer. The sleepiness trope is important, the novel is after all essentially a dream, with a dream logic that is established the moment Alice starts falling down the well, and that continues to inform it right up to the end of the story when she wakes up on the same bank to find her sister brushing dead leaves off her. The exposition has also established one of her defining character traits, curiosity, a curiosity that informs the forever questioning interactions with all the strange, weird and wonderful characters that she is to meet in Wonderland itself.

Through the Looking-Glass is also a dream, specifically acknowledged by Alice after she has woken up, telling the black kitten,

> "You woke me out of oh! such a nice dream!"(p.283)

And she has just as much curiosity as ever, speculative in this case, as she starts to tell the kitten what she imagines Looking-glass House might be like:

> "I'll tell you all my ideas about Looking-glass house. . . . . .
>
> I want so much to know if they've a fire in the winter: you never *can* tell, you know, unless our fire smokes, and then smoke comes up in that room too – but that may be only pretence. . . . . Oh Kitty, now we come to the passage … it's very like our passage as far as you can see, only you know it may be quite different on beyond. Oh, Kitty, how nice it would be if we could only get into Looking-glass House! I'm sure it's got oh! such beautiful things in it! Let's pretend there's a way of getting through into it, somehow, Kitty. Let's pretend the glass has gone all soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why it's turning into a sort of mist now… (pp.147-9)

… and through she goes. Like Wonderland in the first book, Looking-glass World also has its dream logic, and is also full of adventure, and once again Alice's curiosity about all whom she meets is a defining feature of her interactions with them. It is also to be noted that Alice is into imaginative games '..beginning with her favourite phrase "Let's pretend."'(p.147) and indeed on this particular occasion she has exhorted the black kitten "Let's pretend you're the red queen, Kitty!"(p.147), which indeed she will turn out to be at the end of the book when Alice picks up the Red Queen and starts shaking her, discovering as she wakes up that she is shaking the black kitten.

The portal, and the circumstances of its discovery and use in *The Wizard of Oz* are also extremely familiar, but again there are couple of things to note. The initial description of the farmhouse emphasises its constricted size and the paucity of its contents:

> There were four walls, a floor, and a roof, which made one room; and this room contained a rusty-looking cooking stove, a cupboard for the dishes, a table, three or four chairs, and the beds.(p.9)

There is, as well, a cyclone cellar, accessed by a trapdoor in the floor. It is a world in which everything is grey.

> The sun had baked the ploughed land into a grey mass . . . . . Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same grey colour . . . . . the house was as dull and grey as everything else.
>
> When Aunt Em came there to live she was a young pretty wife. The sun and the wind had changed her, too. They had taken the sparkle from her eyes and left them a sober grey; . . . . her cheeks and lips..were grey also. She was thin and gaunt, and never smiled. . . . . (Uncle Henry) worked hard from morning till night and did not know what joy was. He was grey also . . . . . It was Toto that made Dorothy laugh, and saved her from growing as grey as her other surroundings…Toto played all day long, and Dorothy played with him, and loved him dearly. (pp. 9/10)

It is, in short, a joyless house, a joylessness relieved only by Dorothy's dog, Toto. No sooner has this initial scenario has been established than the cyclone arrives. Uncle Henry goes out to look out for the stock, Toto disappears under the bed, and Aunt Em, exhorting Dorothy to follow her, flings open the trap door and climbs down into the cyclone cellar; but Dorothy must first rescue Toto; and before she can follow Aunt Em into the cellar the cyclone hits,

> A strange thing then happened.
>
> The house whirled around two or three times and rose slowly through the air. (p.11)

She is on her way to Oz. Despite the buffeting she fairly rapidly relaxes, and, when it becomes clear that the journey is going to take some time, she ends up falling asleep:

> Dorothy found she was riding quite easily, … she felt is if she were being rocked gently, like a baby in a cradle… At last she crawled over the swaying floor to her bed, and lay down upon it; and Toto followed and lay down beside her.
>
> In spite of the swaying of the house and the wailing of the wind, Dorothy soon closed her eyes and fell fast asleep. (p.13)

She wakes up when the house hits the ground and she emerges into the bright sunlight of Oz.

> The cyclone had set the house down..in the midst of a country of marvellous beauty.(p.14)

… and descriptions follow of gorgeous flowers, birds with beautiful plumage, rushing streams sparkling in the sun, etc. To make the link back to Alice, one might even suggest that if Alice has imagined that Looking-glass World will have 'such beautiful things in it', then Dorothy's first sight of Oz has realised that dream. What Dorothy also has in common with Alice is that she too falls to sleep before her arrival in Oz, raising the question that the whole thing just might be a dream, and indeed her return to Kansas is nothing if not dreamlike as she puts on the silver shoes, whirls back to Kansas, and comes to as she rolls over on the grass just as if she was emerging from a dream:

> Instantly she was whirling through the air, so swiftly that all she could see or feel was the wind whistling past her ears.
>
> The silver shoes took but three steps, and then she stopped so suddenly that she rolled over upon the grass several times before she knew where she was.
>
> At length, however, she sat up and looked about her. . . she was sitting on the broad Kansas prairie.(p.171)

Otherwise, though, Dorothy's time in Oz does seem to have been real time not dream time; she does not, for instance, wake up the next morning to discover things haven't changed. Instead she discovers that while she has been away Uncle Henry has built a whole new farmhouse. (Quite what her uncle and aunt have to say about her disappearance and reappearance we do not get to find out!)

The Wizard of Oz does, however, add a major factor, a factor that certainly bears upon the transition, and that is the oppressiveness of her family home – it feels loveless; it cannot but escape one's attention that Aunt Em does not ensure Dorothy's safety before she secures her own, in noticeable contrast to Dorothy whose first consideration is Toto, the only character who shows her any affection or who brings her any joy, and it is *his* safety that is her priority. And it is her love for Toto and the time that she takes to rescue him that results in her not climbing down into the cyclone cellar to safety and instead being whisked away to the beautiful land of Oz, another land of adventure, where she will use the same values that bind her to Toto to bring sweetness and light all round.

Dorothy's transition does not involve a portal as such, it is rather a journey, and I shall be considering other journeys later, but first let me turn to *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* which does have a portal of course, the wardrobe itself. There are, again, some familiar features in the transition narrative, but others of which are new. In the first place the children are displaced. It is the Second World War and they have been sent out of London to escape the air raids, and find themselves in a large rambling house 'in the heart of the country' owned by an old professor, and inhabited by him, his housekeeper, and three servants, all of whom leave the children very much to their own devices; and by bed time on the first evening they are already excited by the possibilities of the place. Here's Peter, echoing Alice's enthusiastic speculation about what Looking-glass House might be like:

> I say, let's go and explore tomorrow. You might find anything in a place like this. . . . . There might be eagles. There might be stags. There'll be hawks.(p.10)

The next morning it is raining, but nothing deterred, they set about exploring the house, in the course of which they discover:

> …a room that was quite empty except for one big wardrobe; the sort that has a looking glass in the door. (p.11)

The three oldest children leave, leaving Lucy on her own, curious, like Alice, as to what might be in it.

> ..she thought it would be worthwhile trying the door of the wardrobe . . . . . She immediately stepped into the wardrobe and got in among the coats… It was almost quite dark in there and she kept her arms stretched out in front of her so as not to bump her face into the back of the wardrobe… Then she noticed that there was something crunching under her feet… She was standing in the middle of a wood at night time with snow under her feet and snowflakes falling through the air. (pp.12/13)

… and she is through into the secondary world that is Narnia. Behind her she can still see the empty door to the wardrobe, but ahead of her there is a light which turns out to be a lamp-post, a lamp-post that will always serve as a marker for the way back through the wardrobe whenever the children want to get back. Narnia itself is far from welcoming, ruled over by the White Witch who has made it permanent winter, but luckily Lucy meets the faun, Mr. Tumnus, who invites her back to tea in his cosy cave and 'Lucy thought she had never been in a nicer place.'(p.19) Problems arise however, when she returns, because, for all that she has been in Narnia for a whole afternoon, no time at all has passed in the real world, so of course when she tells the others all about it they don't believe her, and it is in their different responses that their characters begin to emerge; Susan is rational, and Peter sympathetic, though both think that she is being silly, but Edmund is spiteful; and attitudes harden in the days that follow, making Lucy very miserable.

> "Don't be silly, Lucy," said Susan. "We've only just come out of that room a moment ago, and you were there then."
> "She's not being silly at all," said Peter, "she's just making up a story for fun, aren't you Lu?"
> . . . . . .
> For the next few days she was very miserable. . . . The others who thought she was telling a lie, and a silly lie too, made her very unhappy. The two elder ones did this without meaning to do it, but Edmund could be spiteful and on this occasion he was spiteful. He sneered and jeered at Lucy and kept on asking her if she'd found any other new countries in other cupboards all over the house. (pp.27-29)

The next time the portal is open the children are playing hide and seek and Lucy has to hide in a rush, so she goes back into the wardrobe, and Edmund, just catching a glimpse of her as she disappears, follows her in. They both end up in Narnia, but this time the narrative perspective stays with Edmund, who is to meet the White Queen, and she seduces him to her cause by feeding him Turkish delight. He and Lucy, who has been having lunch with Mr. Tumnus, meet up again preparatory to returning through the wardrobe, but when she tells Edmund how nasty the White Witch really is, and is also enthusiastic about telling the others all about it: "What fun it will be!" Edmund isn't so sure.

> Edmund secretly thought that it would not be as good fun for him as for her. He would have to admit that Lucy had been right, before all the others, and he felt sure the others would be on the side of the fauns and the animals; but he was already more than half on the side of the witch.(p.42)

So when they return through the wardrobe and Lucy rushes to tell the other two, Edmund turns on her and denies it all.

> "Peter! Susan! It's all true. Edmund has seen it too. There *is* a country you can get to through the wardrobe. Edmund and I both got in…
> And Edmund gave a very superior look…and then a little snigger and said, "Oh yes, Lucy and I have been playing – pretending that all her story about a country in the wardrobe is true. Just for fun, of course. There's nothing there really."(p.44)

Edmund's cover is finally blown when all four children end up hiding in the wardrobe to get away from visitors, and this time they all get through. Realising the mistake they have made in disbelieving Lucy, they respond according to their natures, Peter apologising, Susan being practical, and Edmund saying nothing, but making the mistake of revealing that he had been there before. Here's Peter,

> "I apologize for not believing you," he said, "I'm sorry. Will you shake hands?" . . . .

> "And now," said Susan, "what do we do next?"
> . . . . . .
> "I say," began Edmund presently, "oughtn't we be bearing a bit more to the left, that is if we are aiming for the lamp-post?" . . . . . Peter whistled.
> "So you really were here . . . . . Well of all the poisonous little beasts!" . . . . . but Edmund was saying to himself, 'I'll pay you all out for this, you pack of stuck-up, self-satisfied prigs.'(pp. 54,55)

Some familiar features here, then. The children are ready to explore and ripe for adventure, and the fantasy world of Narnia offers plenty of opportunity for adventure denied them in the real world. So it has been with Alice, and Dorothy. In addition, Dorothy's Oz is a country of marvellous beauty; and in Narnia, once she meets Mr. Tumnus, 'Lucy thought she had never been in a nicer place'(p.19), which is not to say that it doesn't have its downside, as indeed does Oz. In addition, the transition narrative(s) – plural, there are three of them – have again served to characterise the children, with Edmund's nasty streak coming out particularly strongly, so it is no surprise that he ends up on the side of the White Witch, with the others all on the 'good' side, working to dispose of the witch and to bring summer back to Narnia, which indeed they do, (and to be fair to Edmund, he does change sides in the end). Two other features are also to be noted. Firstly it is established that Lucy is an imaginative child, 'making up stories for fun', and the defensive Edmund offers the same explanation, that he and Lucy have been playing, only pretending the story about a country in the wardrobe is true although he has seen Narnia for himself; and the other two children are still inclined to accept his version since it fits in with their view of Lucy – until, of course, they get into Narnia for themselves. Secondly it is to be noted that the children are displaced. They are away from home, away from their familiar surroundings; a factor that is certainly important in terms of their desire to go exploring, to discover the lay of the land and get a handle on their new surroundings.

My next example, *Coraline*, features a protagonist who is also displaced, in her case she has just moved house, as we are informed in the very first sentence,

> 'Coraline discovered the door a little while after they moved house.'(p.9)

…and, as can be seen, we are also introduced to the portal in that same first sentence. Coraline too wants to explore her new surroundings, curious, like Alice, and like the four children in *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, as to what she might find. In Coraline's case the family have moved into a first floor flat in an old house that comes complete with a big garden and extended grounds. Coraline goes exploring, and in the course of her explorations she finds a well and comes across a black cat. She also gets to meet the neighbours, a couple of retired actresses downstairs and a crazy old man upstairs who is training a mouse circus. The neighbours, alas consistently call her Caroline, not Coraline. Then it rains and she finds herself bored, wondering what to do with herself. Her parents are busy, and have no time for her:

> "What should I do?" asked Coraline.

> "Read a book," said her mother. "Watch a video. Play with your toys." . . . . . .
> Coraline had watched all the videos. She was bored with her toys, and she'd read all her books. . . . . It was time to talk to her father . .
> "… explore the flat," suggested her father. . . . Count all the doors and windows. List everything blue. Mount an expedition to discover the hot-water tank. And leave me alone to work."
> "Can I go into the drawing room?" The drawing room was where the Joneses kept the expensive (and uncomfortable) furniture that Coraline's grandmother had left them when she died. Coraline wasn't allowed in there. Nobody went in there. It was only for best.
> "If you don't make a mess. And you don't touch anything"
>
> (pp. 12-15)

So into the drawing room she goes, and discovers a 'big, carved, brown wooden door'(p.15), in one corner. Her mother tells her it used to be the way through to the next door flat but that it is now blocked, and she unlocks the door and shows her that it opens onto a brick wall. That night, however, Coraline is awoken by a strange noise.

> (She) was almost asleep when something went 't.t.t.t.t.t.' She sat up in bed.
> Something went 'kree . . .
> . . . aaaak.'
> . . . Coraline wondered if she'd dreamed it, whatever it was.(p.17)

Coraline is not sure whether she dreamt the noise itself but, now awake seemingly, she follows a scuttling black shape into the drawing room where it disappears through the now slightly open door – but the brick wall is still there. The next day she meets the crazy old man from upstairs who has brought her a message from the mice: '"Don't go through the door."'(p.22) Nothing deterred, when she gets the opportunity she sneaks back into the drawing room and tries the door for the third time, but she still can't get through. The retired actresses read her future in the tealeaves: "You are in terrible danger." they inform her. They give her a strange stone with a hole in it: "They're good for bad things, sometimes."(p.28) But far from being warned off, Coraline's interest is piqued:

> *In danger?* thought Coraline to herself. It sounded exiting. It didn't sound like a bad thing. Not really.

And of course the door is in a sort of forbidden place, the drawing room; and the brick wall carries a definite message about being a forbidden entry, all of which adds to the possible excitement. She gets the opportunity to try the door for the fourth time when her mother pops down to the shops to get something for lunch and this time..

> ..It opened on to a dark hallway. The bricks had gone, as if they had never been there. (p.33)

And through she goes. A number of familiar tropes are emerging. Firstly, like Alice, Coraline is bored and wanting something to do. Secondly, again like Alice, and like the children from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Coraline wants to explore, to meet the neighbours, to get to know her surroundings, and it is her desire to explore and the curiosity that goes with it, never mind the promise of excitement generated by the warnings of her neighbours, that leads her back to the door each time. Thirdly, and this time the comparison is with Dorothy's home life in *The Wizard of Oz*, her parents are too busy to show any real interest in what she is doing, pausing only to come up with suggestions of meaningless activities and exhorting her to not make a mess. And fourthly the indifference of her parents is compounded by the fact that the neighbours continuously call her Caroline, not Coraline. And, as we are to discover, these linked factors all have a bearing on the psychic journey that she is about to undergo in the mirror world that contains the sinister button eyed duplicates of her parents, who get her name right, and who seem to offer her all the attention that her real parents are denying her. And the stone with the hole in it, and the well she has discovered in her explorations, never mind the black cat, will each have their part to play in the ensuing narrative. It is also to be noted that the portal is used several times, since in the middle of the story she gets back through it into her real world, only to discover that her parents have disappeared, and indeed are actually missing for a couple of days, leaving Coraline to fend for herself, until she discovers that they are trapped in the other world when she sees them in a mirror that had originally come out of a wardrobe – sound familiar!? – and she has to go back in to rescue them. She is to find them trapped in a snow globe. There are, in addition, suggestions that, like Alice, Coraline is a dreamer, an imaginative child,

> Sometimes Coraline would forget who she was while she was daydreaming that she was exploring the Arctic, or the Amazon rainforest, or darkest Africa..(p.75)

And the question may be asked: is the whole thing a dream, a product of her imagination? In the Alice books it is clear enough when Alice falls asleep, and clear enough when she wakes up, but there are no such clear indicators in the narrative here. We may note that towards the end of the book, after she has escaped from the other world for the second time, her mother finds her asleep in the chair in the drawing room.

> Her mother shook her gently awake.
> "Coraline?' she said. "Darling, what a funny place to fall asleep …
> We looked all over the house for you.(p.147)

But there is no clear point in the narrative which one can identify as the point at which she fell asleep, neither before her first visit nor before her second visit to the other flat. It is true that she falls asleep and dreams on a number of occasions within the story, a couple of times in her real world and once in the other world; and early on, as already noted, she herself wonders if she is dreaming, when she sees the black shape that she follows downstairs. One might speculate that the total disappearance of her parents for a couple of days in the middle of the book is also a dream, confirmed perhaps when she rings the police in the middle of the night to tell them that they have disappeared and are trapped in the other world, and the friendly voice on the other end of the phone, assuming she's had a nightmare, tells her to get her mother to give her a hug and make her a mug of hot chocolate.

> "There's nothing like hot chocolate and a hug for making the nightmares go away.(p.61)

But such a reading of that particular episode would have to postulate a dream within a dream structure, with Coraline dreaming that she rings the policeman, and again there is no clearly identifying point in the narrative at which one can suggest that 'here Coraline fell asleep'. Of course, given that at a deeper level the whole thing is a nightmare anyway, one may suggest that thus there is deliberately no clear cut distinction between dream and reality.

When it comes to the exercise of her imagination as such, there is, at one point, a more explicit suggestion that she has to use it to make things happen, and that is when she is escaping from the other house for the second time, bringing the snow globe with her. She has gone through the portal door in the other world, but cannot close it because her other mother is pulling it with all her might from the other side.

> *Shut!* she thought. Then she said, out loud, "Come on, *please*." And she felt the door begin to move.(p.142)

But she still struggles until she hears the voice of her real mother saying,

> .."Well done, Coraline," and that was enough.
> The door started to slip closed, as easily as anything.(p.143)

Even then it is a major struggle to get up the corridor.

> It was an uphill run, and it seemed to her that it went on for a longer distance that anything could possibly go.(p.144)

And she has to use all her will to get through, though she finally makes it,

> Panting for breath, she staggered through the door and slammed it behind her.. (p.145)

She is through and, though there is no further mention of the snow globe, we must presume that she has brought her parents with her given that the next thing that she is aware of is her mother waking her up in the chair in the drawing room.

We find another example of a child using their imagination to make things happen in the next book that I want to consider, *Elidor*. In it we find four children: in descending ages they are Nicholas, David, Helen, and Roland, who is the protagonist. They too are displaced, having, like Coraline, just moved house and, like Coraline, feeling very much in the way and looking for something interesting to do, they decide to go exploring in central Manchester. There they find a street map on a roller in a big glass frame which can be driven by turning wheels on the side. Roland proceeds to spin the wheels arbitrarily and suggests that they go to wherever it ends up pointing at. Nicholas is somewhat scathing, '"I might have known you'd think of something

daft"'(p.10), but nonetheless when the map stops at a street called Thursday Street off they go, discovering when they get there that it is in the middle of a slum clearance site with half demolished houses with only the front walls left standing and with the windows looking through to the sky. There's a church still standing in the centre of the site, well set to be demolished itself. Its door is locked. Strangely they hear music being played and see a fiddler on the corner of a street seemingly playing to no-one. Roland's suggestion that, against the better judgement of the others, they go where the map sends them, has established him as the more adventurous one, and he is specifically identified, by his older brother, as the more imaginative one too.

> "I keep feeling we're being watched," said Roland . . . .
> "Oh, come off it, Roland," said Nicholas. "You're always imagining things." (p.13)

There's a plastic ball lying around, which Roland kicks, and which then takes on a life of its own, soaring high and with such force that it crashes through the central lancet of the west window of the church, and as it soars Roland hears the music more piercingly,

> "When I kicked the ball, the – the fiddle seemed to stick on a note. Didn't you hear it? It went right through my head. (p.17)

In turn, first Helen, then David, then Nicholas go to retrieve it, leaving Roland on his own; and at each disappearance Roland has heard the fiddle in the distance playing furiously. Finally he has to follow himself. The main door to the church is locked, but he finds a side door sagging open and gets into the church itself. There is no sign of the others, nor of the ball, but the fiddler appears at the top of some stairs, gets Roland to lead him down, then again starts to play furiously, urging Roland to go through the hitherto locked main door of the church. Roland plunges through,

> The outline of the church rippled in the air, and vanished. He was standing among boulders on a sea shore, and the music died into the crash of breakers, and the long fall of surf.(p.22)

… and he is through into Elidor, fairly immediately finding a ruined castle in the keep of which he finds the football lying at the foot of a lancet window with smashed glass. The portal itself is most easily identifiable as the door to the church, but getting through it has been a complicated process, with the ball's transit showing them the way – and indeed from the ball's perspective the lancet window has been the portal – and with the fiddler obviously playing a major role in getting them through. Like Narnia, Elidor is also dark; and in the course of the story the children acquire four treasures, a sword, a spear, a chalice, and a golden stone, which have to be held in safety in their own, real, world 'unless there is heard the song of Findhorn'(p.49), who will turn out to be a unicorn, at which point it will be time for the treasures to be returned and for light to return to Elidor. Roland learns all this when he meets the fiddler who is now in Elidor itself and whose name we discover is Malebron. Malebron tells Roland that his siblings are trapped in a nearby mound, as are the treasures, and that only he, Roland, can gain entry into the mound by imagining a doorway into it, which he does at Malebron's urging, picturing the front door to their new house to do so.

> "Make the door appear: think it: force it with your mind." . . . . Roland thought of the door at the new house. . . . . "Yes," said Roland. "It's there. The door. It's real."
> "Then look! Now!"
> Roland opened his eyes, and he saw the frame of the porch stamped in the turf . . . (pp.39-41)

Once the children, carrying the treasures, are safely out of the mound, Malebron, again driving them with his fiddle playing, hassles them back through the portal from the castle keep in Elidor into the church in their world, which then comes crashing down behind them. Roland watches anxiously, relaxing only once he is assured that the portal is closed. '"It's alright. We'll be able to hide them now."'(p.54). The treasures themselves have been transformed into a length of railing, two laths nailed together, a broken cup, and a keystone to the church. They hide them, initially, in their old house. However they prove to be very difficult to hide, since it turns out that they generate a vast amount of static electricity, such that it is possible to identify their equivalent location in Elidor. And if the men of Elidor can find that location they will attempt to open up a new portal at that point and break through to retrieve them. Roland and his imagination will play a major role here – if he starts to picture the men breaking through then break through they will. He first discovers this when he goes to get the treasures from their old house – he sees the outline of two men on the attic wall, and the more he looks at them the more real they become. He manages to tear himself away just in time. Once the treasures are in their new home things are no better, since their electrical properties affect everything that is electrical in the house. The television won't work, nor the radio, and they set their dad's shaver going, never mind the food mixer and the washing machine. Even the car starts on its own. In despair the children put them in a dustbin and bury it in the garden. This seems to solve things for the time being, but then they start having problems with their front door, the door that Roland has pictured in his mind to get into the mound in Elidor. It buzzes and rattles away at all hours of the day and night; and when Roland creeps downstairs one night, he can clearly see Elidor through the letter box. He realises that by using the front door to imagine his way into the mound in Elidor he has made the door itself into a portal, and to close it he must imagine it being closed.

> It's my fault. I made it. I made it … I must unmake it . . . . .
> He closed his eyes and pictured the arch in his mind . . . he concentrated on the joints of the brickwork. Grey mortar. Loose. Dry. Crumbling . . . . . He forced his mind like a drill between the bricks . . . . Come on! Break! Come on! More! A brick fell, and another, and a crack ran up to the roof. . . If he could undermine the roof, the weight of the stone tiles would pull the whole thing down. . . . Roland gathered his energy and made one blind lunge. Everything of him poured out, and after that there was nothing; and into this nothing the porch began to fall. (pp.113/114)

Time passes and their dad plants a rose garden over the buried treasures and Nicholas, goes into denial about the whole adventure, suggesting that it was some form of mass hallucination. Then the rose garden itself starts to generate static and Roland once again sees the outlines of the men.

Things come to a head when the unicorn breaks through – the children are walking back from a Christmas party on a cinder path that 'ran through a no-man's-land between two built up areas'(p.128) The other three try to assume that it must have been a horse that has escaped from a stables, but Roland has seen its horn. Again Nicholas is scathing, so to prove his point Roland takes him, and the other two, to look at the rose garden on one of the occasions that it is generating static, and the shadows reappear. But this time they have got into the children's minds and they can't turn away, and the figures, becoming moment by moment more real, come rushing at them until they finally emerge, 'two men of Elidor, into the garden.'(p.137) The children now realise they must get rid of the treasures once and for all, and so take them back into Manchester riding on the busses until again they end up at Thursday Street, where the unicorn re-appears, being hunted down by the men, who kill it, but as it's dying it sings, fulfilling the prophecy, and the children can see life springing up in Elidor through the windows of the half demolished houses and, in the very last lines of the book, they fling the treasures through.

> .. for an instant the glories of stone, sword, spear, and cauldron hung in their true shapes, almost a trick of the splintering glass, the golden light.
> The song faded.
> The children were alone with the broken windows of a slum.
> (p.170)

As can be seen, the hunt for a portal by the men in Elidor and the defence of it once it has been discovered is a major structuring element of the book, and the associated transition narratives have a number interesting features. Two of the break through sites, the slum clearance site and the cinder path, are in deserted places, each an in-between no-man's-land, a place that doesn't really belong anywhere, places that Malebron has described as places that 'have been shaken loose in their worlds'(p.47). We must assume that the unicorn has broken through onto the cinder path of its own accord, but it has needed Malebron's fiddle playing to drive the children through the church/castle portal and back again. And of course the children themselves are in their own no-man's-land, caught between their old house and their new one, shaken loose from the familiar and confronted with the new and strange. (One might note, in passing, that Dorothy's flight to Oz also occurs when the land around the farmhouse is quaking with the destruction brought by the hurricane and as a result is shaken loose in *its* world.) But even more important is Roland's own imagination, a problem for the older children, particularly Nicholas who is desperately trying to find some sort of rational explanation for everything. It is Roland who dreams up the initial idea that first gets them to Thursday Street – 'I might have known you'd think of something daft' – and it is his imagination that comes into play when he has to create the doorway that will get him into the mound in Elidor. And he has to use his imagination to destroy that same imagined doorway when it is under attack. It is he that sees the unicorn for what it is when it breaks through on the cinder path; and when it comes to what is in effect the third breakthrough, it is his imaginative powers that will inadvertently summon the two men of Elidor through the outline shadows over the rose garden. The imaginative child is emerging as a common feature in these transition narratives. As already noted, there's Coraline, who has to use the power of her imagination to escape from her other mother in the other house. There's Lucy in *the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, who also has problems with her disbelieving older

siblings. And there can be no doubt that Alice, particularly the Alice of *Through the Looking-Glass* busy imagining what Looking-Glass house might be like, is also an imaginative child.

In the examples I have looked at, the transition narratives have grown in complexity. Those in the *Alice* books being simple enough, but those in *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and *Coraline* carrying larger amounts of exposition about situation and character. The transition narrative in my final example takes up more than the first third of the book and contains even more exposition, since it has to establish the two worlds and the protagonist's very different role in each of them before he has even passed through the portal(s) from one to the other. I refer of course, to *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. We actually learn that there is a secondary world in the first chapter when the denizens of that world, specifically Dumbledore, Professor McGonagall, and Hagrid, arrive in the normal world of the Dursleys, Harry's appalling Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia, in order to deposit him, Harry, as a one year old baby, on their doorstep; with a letter explaining things tucked into his blankets. We learn that Harry is special, that he has survived an attack from Voldemort, the ultimate evil wizard of the series, an attack in which his parents were killed; and he himself carries evidence of that attack in the form of a scar on his forehead. When, as he grows up, he asks about his parents and about the scar, the Dursleys lie to him, telling him that his parents were killed in a car crash and not to ask questions, and it rapidly becomes clear that whatever it is that is special about Harry is something that the obsessively conventional Dursleys find deeply disturbing.

In chapter two we find Harry approaching his eleventh birthday – 'He'd lived with the Dursleys almost ten years, ten miserable years'(p.27) – forced to sleep in the cupboard under the stairs, bullied by his atrociously spoilt monster of a cousin, Dudley, and treated by his uncle and aunt as if he didn't exist, or worse.

> The Dursleys often spoke about Harry like this, as though he wasn't there – or rather, as though he was something very nasty that couldn't understand them, like a slug. (p.22)

But change is on the way. It starts when a letter addressed to him, *'Mr H Potter, The Cupboard under the Stairs, 4 Privet Drive'*(p.30) arrives, at which point one may say that the transition narrative proper starts. Uncle Vernon snatches the letter from him before he can read it, and it clearly disturbs him.

> "Who'd be writing to you?" sneered Uncle Vernon, shaking the letter open with one hand and glancing at it. His face went from red to green faster than a set of traffic lights. And it didn't stop there. Within seconds it was the greyish white of old porridge.(p.31)

They do at least move him out of the cupboard into Dudley's second bedroom, full of Dudley's old broken toys, but more and more letters arrive, this time addressed to him in *The Smallest Bedroom*. In an effort to escape from the letters the family go on the run, first of all to a grotty hotel – the letters follow – then, on the day before Harry's actual eleventh birthday, to a hut on a rock out at sea. On the stroke of midnight, as Harry actually turns eleven, there's a huge knock on the door and it's Hagrid, the Hogwarts' giant gamekeeper, who sets about the quivering

Dursleys in no uncertain terms, totally outraged that they have never told Harry anything, and explaining to Harry what he's talking about.

> "About *our* world, I mean. *Your* world. *My* world. *Yer parents' world*."(p.41)

This magical world clearly exists in parallel to the real one, but there's a Ministry of Magic whose job it is to prevent the latter finding out about the former.

> "Well, their main job is to keep it from the Muggles* that there's still witches an' wizards up an' down the country.(p.51)
>
> *Muggles being the name given to ordinary non magical people in the real world.

Hagrid goes on to tell Harry what was in the letter tucked into his blanket when he was deposited on the Dursleys' door step when he was a baby, i.e. that he's a wizard, son of a wizard and a witch, that Voldemort killed them, but that when he tried to kill Harry he couldn't, that Harry's scar is the tangible evidence of that attack, and that Harry is thus famous as the only person ever to survive such an attack. As for the letters that have been arriving over the recent week or two, they were informing him that he has a place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and that term starts in a month's time. It is Hagrid's job to get him kitted out, to which end they must go to London, which they do by largely conventional means, catching the train to Paddington and the underground into town where they find a tiny pub called the Leaky Cauldron which other passers-by don't seem to notice, and which is the first of series of portals that Harry will have to pass through. He's enthusiastically greeted by everyone in the pub, including a very nervous little man, Professor Quirrell who is to prove to have an important role at the climax of the story. Through the pub into a little walled courtyard, Hagrid opens up a second portal that takes them into Diagon Alley where Harry has first of all to go to Gringotts, the bank of this magical world, to get the money left to him by his parents, with which he is then able to purchase the various items that he needs, a cauldron, robes, various books, and a personal animal for carrying his post, etc. – owls are currently all the rage so Harry gets an owl – and most importantly, a wand. Mr Ollivander, who runs the wand shop and who has an encyclopaedic memory tells him that no two wands are the same, and that the wand chooses the wizard rather than the other way round, and the one that Harry gets is the brother to the one that gave him the scar, Voldemort's wand in other words, a fact that will have implications throughout the entire series. While in Diagon Alley Harry has run across a pale faced boy with a superior drawling manner whom we will discover is Malfoy, who will be Harry's bête noir, also throughout the whole series.

Leaving the way they came, Hagrid gives Harry his train ticket, the point of departure being platform nine and three quarters at King's Cross. The departure date is a month away but when it arrives he persuades his uncle to drive him to the train with his 'huge, heavy trunk'(p.68) loaded into the back, but once dropped off he is on his own, and totally mystified about how he is to find platform nine and three quarters. Luckily he overhears a family, the Weasley's, behind him talking about Muggles and platform nine and three quarters. Under their tutelage he makes a run for the barrier between platforms nine and ten:

> – leaning forward on his trolley he broke into a heavy run – the barrier was coming nearer and nearer – he wouldn't be able to stop – the trolley was out of control – he was a foot away – he closed his eyes ready for the crash –
>
> It didn't come … he kept on running … he opened his eyes.
>
> A scarlet steam engine was waiting next to a platform packed with people. A sign overhead said *Hogwarts Express, 11 o'clock*. (pp.70,71)

He's through. On the journey to Hogwarts he is befriended by Ron Weasley, a new boy like him, but with the advantage of having had older brothers who have told him all about the school, and who is able to fill Harry in with more detail, telling him all about Quidditch, the main sport of the school, a sort of hockey on broomsticks, and about the organisation of the school into four houses, etc. We also meet Hermione Granger, a bossy know-it-all girl whom neither of the two boys take to initially, and they are also visited by Draco Malfoy, the supercilious boy whom Harry had come across in Diagon Alley, and his two bully boy sidekicks, Crabbe and Goyle. All want to meet the famous Harry Potter. Those of you who know the story (is there anyone who doesn't!) will know that Ron, Harry, and Hermione will become lifelong friends, and Malfoy a lifelong enemy. Disembarked from the train they find Hagrid, who leads them the last bit of the way down a narrow path and to the first sight of the school.

> The narrow path had opened suddenly on to the edge of a great black lake. Perched atop a high mountain on the other side, its windows sparkling in the starry sky, was a vast castle with many turrets and towers. (p.83)

They cross the lake in boats into a dark tunnel, then clamber up a passageway to find themselves on a green sward in front of a huge oak door

> Hagrid raised a giant fist and knocked three times on the castle door.
>
> The door swung open at once… (pp.84,85)

… and there is Professor McGonagall waiting to welcome them in. Harry has found his true home at last. As already noted, the transition narrative is pretty substantial, it is effectively the exposition of the whole novel, and it has served to offer us a detailed description of the magical world – and I have only outlined the highlights – within which Harry, all unknowingly, has a major role to play; all of which is set within a narrative that, genre wise, is an adventure story, and we are thus so caught up in the 'what happens next' structure that we don't notice the information that is being fed to us in the process. Structure wise there are a couple of portals, the first being the portal into Diagon Alley, with its antechamber in the form of the Leaky Cauldron, a sort of no-mans-land – another one – between the magical world of witches and wizards and the world of ordinary human beings. And the second being the barrier between platforms nine and ten at Kings Cross. Other features of the transition narrative are by now more familiar. Harry is nothing if not displaced, having been brought up since a baby in an extremely unloving family who deliberately lie to him about his origins and the fact that he is a wizard, never mind

the fact that he is already famous. Harry's emotional and psychological displacement which might be more accurately described as total alienation is certainly more extreme than that of Dorothy and Coraline, but it echoes theirs. Like Coraline he enters a world where he can find himself, establish his true identity; and like the children in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and like Dorothy, and like the children in *Elidor*, he has entered a world, a promised land indeed, where he can and will make a difference.

The Birth Narrative

At a symbolic level a number of transitions are often coded as birth narratives. Indeed it is an almost commonplace interpretation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to equate the pool of tears with the amniotic fluid within which Alice is nurtured before her entry into Wonderland itself, and the analogies can be expanded, for if the pool of tears is the amniotic fluid, then the 'long low hall'(p.15) within which the pool of tears is to be found must presumably be the womb. Extrapolating backwards some have noted that before she even gets to the hall she is expelled from the bottom of the well and then proceeds down a long passage which opens up into the hall itself, the egg being ejected from the ovaries and passing down the fallopian tubes into the uterus itself perhaps. (Once you get going you can make them up as you go along, and a quick search of the web will show that lots of people do!) Others have suggested that the little door that she finds in the hall is the entrance to the birth canal through which Alice can see 'the loveliest garden you ever saw'(p.16). Alice ruminates on the impossibility of even getting her head through at this stage, another birth reference, though later in the book she will come back to the hall, reduce herself to the right size and get through. The problem, of course is that by that time she has seen a good bit of Wonderland already, so the chronology would seem to be a little out of kilter. Others have noted that the insertion of the key into the lock of the little door is clearly symbolic of coitus, but since that also happens halfway through the book, the chronology would again seem to be a little out of kilter! Psychoanalytic readings of the Alice books are almost always used to shed light on the psyche of the author himself, but authors are not my focus here. However once one has thought of them it is difficult not to find such readings lurking in the text.

The Wizard of Oz offers us another womb, the whirling farmhouse itself, within which Dorothy 'felt as if she were being rocked gently, like a baby in a cradle'(p.13), and finally being birthed into 'the midst of a country of marvellous beauty'(p.14) And we find yet another womb in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the wardrobe itself, and Lucy has to push her way out: 'pushing the soft folds of the coasts aside to make room for her'(p.13) All three examples, interestingly, offer us light at the end of the tunnel narratives. There is no light at the end of the tunnel for Coraline, but the drawing room, kept for special occasions – 'kept for best' as the text has it, could stand in for the womb, even if it's a rather uncomfortable one, and after she passes through the doorway she too proceeds down a corridor, albeit uneasily, but nonetheless a birth canal, which finally opens up into the lookalike kitchen occupied by her 'other', sinister mother. It is not difficult to posit another womb in *Elidor*, the church itself, but Roland is not anxious to leave, and his birth requires a good deal of pushing, having to be driven out into Elidor by the furious playing of the fiddler,

> "Now! Open the door!"
> "I can't! It's locked!"

> "Open it! There is little time."
> "But – !
> "Now!"
> Roland stumbled to the door, grasped the iron handle, and pulled with all his weight. The door opened, and he ran out on to the cobbles of the street, driven by the noise.(p.22)

– cobbles which turn into boulders on the sea shore while the church behind him vanishes. As for Harry Potter, the Leaky Cauldron certainly offers itself up as a candidate for a womb, from which he emerges into Diagon Alley, though only to withdraw[11] back through the pub into the real world of his uncle and aunt. The next time he is on his own, and he has to penetrate the barrier between platforms nine and ten at King's Cross, breaking the hymen perhaps, with Hogwarts Express standing in for a nurturing womb, reaching the amniotic fluid of the lake at the end of the journey, entering the birth passage of the final tunnel and upward leading passageway, until they get to the doors of the school itself which swing open to let Harry and the other first years in. Hagrid, be it noted, has acted as midwife on both occasions, shepherding him through the Leaky Cauldron in the first instance, and through the doors into the castle in the second. It may perhaps also be suggested that in Harry Potter's case Hogwarts itself is yet another nurturing womb from which he is only to emerge as a fully matured wizard some seven volumes later – but that, as they say, is another story.

Transition narratives elsewhere in children's fiction

When I was writing my piece on *The Coral Island*[12] I came across this quote from Kutzer[13], 'the swift movement of the story from coastal England to exotic Pacific island is similar to the swift movement from the real world to the fantastic in children's fantasy', and one cannot but concur. In the first chapter of the book first person narrator, Ralph, tells us a little about his background, about working in the costal trade, and about the tales his shipmates told about their adventures in foreign lands:

> But, of all the places which they told me, none captivated and charmed my imagination so much as the Coral Islands of the South Seas.(p.14)

So in pursuit of such adventures he joins the crew of the *Arrow*, which is when he meets Jack and Peterkin, the two boys who are to share the adventure with him. Thereupon the journey proceeds very rapidly, 'I shall say very little about the first part of our voyage'(p.18) and before we know it they have rounded Cape Horn and within a sentence or two are amongst the aforementioned coral islands.

> I shall never forget the delight with which I gazed – when we chanced to pass one – at the pure, white, dazzling shores and verdant palm trees, which looked bright and beautiful in the sunshine. And often did we three long to be landed on one, imagining that we should certainly find perfect happiness there!(p.20)

They end up on one such island when their ship is caught in a storm and wrecked on the reef that encircles it. All bar one of the boats have been lost in the storm, which the crew now pile into. It is overturned.

> The last thing I saw was the boat whirling in the surf, and all the sailors tossed into the foaming waves.(pp.23/24)

The three boys, however, have seen that there is quiet water inside the reef and at Jack's urging they have entrusted their lives to an oar,

> "...if we manage to cling to the oar till it is driven over the breakers, we may perhaps gain the shore."(p.21)

..which is indeed what happens. The description of the storm and the wreck has been dealt with very economically, and there is no account at all of the oar being carried over the reef. Ralph has been knocked unconscious before they ever get there, and he wakes up to find himself already on dry land.

> On recovering from my swoon, I found myself lying on a bank of soft grass, under the shelter of an overhanging rock.(p.23)

They have almost magically surmounted the reef and been washed ashore. So yes indeed, the links with the transition narratives in the fantasy novels are all too clear. And yet again we have a desirable destination, a destination that initially exists only in Ralph's imagination, but that is just as much desired once he has seen a coral island for real. And once they get onto their own island after the shipwreck they do indeed find happiness there, as they bond and work together to survive and flourish. Other adventures intervene of course, but they are reunited at the end, and though they are glad to be going home, they are also sad at 'leaving far behind us the beautiful bright green coral islands of the Pacific Ocean.' It has indeed been an idyll.

Finally a transition narrative that may sound a tad more familiar! I refer to Enid Blyton's *First Term at Mallory Towers*[14]. The transition narrative starts in the first couple of lines of the book, as our protagonist, Darrell, prepares for the first time to leave for boarding school – Mallory Towers itself. She is nothing if not keen to go.

> Darrell Rivers looked at herself in the glass. It was almost time to start for the train. . . . . Darrell felt excited. . . . . She looked forward to many years of fun and friendship, work and play.(p.7)

She has her obligatory trunk: 'Her trunk was packed full'(p.7) and, her mother with her, off she sets for the station in a taxi where they will find a special train to take them straight to the school. The platform is specified, platform 7, and when they get onto it 'A long train was drawn up there, labelled Malory Towers.' Her mother explains the house system to her, four houses – four towers – and telling her that she will be in North Tower. And once on the train she will meet other first years, characters who will play an important role in the ensuing narrative. Disembarking, they pile into coaches, anxiously looking for their first glimpse of the school.

> They rounded a corner. Alicia nudged her arm. "There you are, look! Over there on that hill." . . . . Darrell looked. She saw a big square-looking building of soft grey stone standing high up on a hill. . . . . It looked like an old time castle. . . . . it wasn't very long before all the coaches roared up to the flight of steps that that led to the great front door. (pp.15/16)

After all of which one is almost tempted to say that the only thing that is missing is Darrell's owl! Of course trunks and train journeys and first glimpses are all part of the school story genre, but the similarities with Harry Potter's journey to Hogwarts are striking. What implications one is to draw from those similarities is up to individual readers, but for myself I am very much tempted to read the account in the later book as being a tribute, an *homage* indeed, to the earlier one, the earlier text offering a cast iron structure upon which to build the detailed invention required to establish the magical world of the later text. But I am straying here into 'author's intention' country, never mind coming close to making value judgements, into both of which places I am loath to go. I only report on similarities of text; but they are striking.

In this chapter I have looked at some of the discourses of transition narratives in children's books, to be found predominantly in fantasy novels, but to be found elsewhere too. (I have generally referred to them as features, but discourses I would suggest they are.)

There is the discourse of curiosity, the desire to explore and discover:-

Alice;
The children in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*;
Coraline;
Ralph in *The Coral Island*.

There is the discourse of the desire for fun and adventure, which I see as very much tied up with the desire to explore and discover:-

Alice;
The children in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*;
Coraline;
Ralph in *The Coral Island*;
Darrell in the *Mallory Towers* books.

There is the discourse of the desirable destination:-

Looking-Glass world;
Oz;
Narnia;
The magical world of Hogwarts;
The idyllic Pacific island;
Mallory Towers.

There is the discourse of displacement:-

The children in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*;

Coraline;
The children in *Elidor*;
Dorothy;
Harry Potter;

In the first three examples here the children are displaced by events that are beyond their control – they have moved house or they have been sent to the country to escape the bombing, and thus find themselves in situations where they feel in the way and temporarily unwanted. In Harry Potter's case his alienation is much more serious, his uncle and aunt having made it plain to him that he is unwanted from the very first day that he turns up on the doorstep as a baby. And Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* – another aunt and uncle as it happens – falls somewhere in between, having to fend for herself in a situation where, even if she is not actually unwanted, she certainly seems starved for love. The two real world novels, *The Coral Island* and *First Term at Malory Towers*, could I suppose also be seen as being displacement narratives, but neither of the protagonists in either of the books are leaving something undesirable, they are rather more simply heading for something desirable.

Along with displacement – feeling in the way – there is boredom, four candidates this time:-

Wonderland Alice;
The children in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*;
Coraline;
The children in *Elidor*.

There is the discourse of the imaginative child, the dreamer, whose imaginations or dreams have a role in driving the transitions in the first place:-

Alice;
Lucy in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*;
Coraline;
Roland in *Elidor*;
Ralph;
Darrell.

In the case of the first two it is ostensibly a coincidence, though in reality no coincidence at all, that they are the ones who find the way through, but in the cases both of Coraline and Roland, they have to consciously use their imaginations to make things happen. And in the real world novels we are specifically told that Ralph has already visited the islands in his imagination, and there can be little doubt that Darrell's imagination is also working overtime as she imagines what fun Mallory Towers is going to be. By contrast Harry P., alas, does not strike me as being gifted with much of an imagination, but I may be doing the poor lad an injustice!

Finally there is the discourse of the no-man's-land between the two worlds, places that don't really belong in either world, that have, in Malebron' phrase, been shaken loose in their worlds. *Elidor* provides the most consistent examples of these, the ruined church and the cinder path, but, as noted, Dorothy's farmhouse is also shaken loose in *its* world; and the Leaky Cauldron feels like an in-between place too. The wardrobe in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is in the corner of an otherwise empty room, and the doorway leading to the other flat in *Coraline* is in an unwanted room full of uncomfortable furniture: neither room having any real function in the real

world. The only exception in the examples I have discussed is the *Alice* books. Certainly not the mirror in *Looking Glass*; the rabbit hole perhaps, but I think even that's pushing it.

In conclusion let me just say that I am making no claims that these are the defining discourses of transition narratives. I have, after all, only looked at eight books, and there is no specific discourse that is found in all of them. Perhaps it is more useful to think of them as a loosely connected family of discourses. But as for whether there are some cousins that I have missed, I should be very surprised if there weren't. So if you're interested, why not go hunting for yourselves!

[1] Lewis 1950 p.35

[2] Awdry 1946

[3] Grahame 1908

[4] Tolkien 1937

[5] Potter 1902

[6] Carroll 1865 & 1871

[7] Baum 1900

[8] Gaiman 2002

[9] Garner 1965

[10] Rowling 1997

[11] My serendipitous use of the word withdraw opens up another thought – perhaps the visit to Diagon Alley doesn't result in full conception, that is only achieved when Harry, here representative of his own seed, breaks through the hymen at Kings Cross. Or is that taking it too far?

[12] Ballantyne 1858 For my reading of the book as a bromance see elsewhere on my website www.sarland.com.

[13] Kutzer 2000, quoted in the Wikipedia article on *The Coral Island*.

[14] Blyton 1946