IN SEARCH OF ALAGAÆSIA:
EXPLORING THE CONJUNCTION OF READER, AUTHOR AND PLACE
IN CHRISTOPHER PAOLINI’S THE INHERITANCE CYCLE

A Dissertation in
Curriculum and Instruction

by
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ABSTRACT

Fantasy settings are often described as Secondary Worlds—an imaginary landscape in which the narrative and the reader are immersed—and the maps found in the fantasy genre are perhaps its most recognized convention. Current scholarship pertaining to these maps and their efficacy tends to focus on an Implied Reader, effectively ignoring the voice of the individual reader. Yet when a reader interacts with a map, the map does more than aid in creating verisimilitude for that fictional world. The reader is immersed in the setting of the novel, and his or her own sense of place—as a reader, as a fan of fantasy, as someone who may or may not have experienced a real-world location that resembles the map—is projected into that fictional world. What becomes clear is that this sense of place for the fantasy world is powerful; so much so that the reader may express that sense of place through the creation of creating artifacts that reflect the genesis of a Projected World that is a palimpsest of the places of their lives and their readings of the fantasy world.

Using qualitative research methods, this study interviewed the author and fans of a fantasy series to understand the ways in which an individual’s sense of place influences the creation and retelling of a fantasy world, specifically in relation to interactions with the map of that fantasy world. By working with readers who identified themselves as fans of the fantasy series, this project aimed to describe and interpret the ways in which readers interact with a fantasy world and the artifacts created by those interactions. The findings have significant implications for the scholarship relating to the genre of fantasy, suggesting that an individual reader develops a sense of place for the fantasy world that
should no longer be excluded from the scholarship surrounding fantasy maps and settings.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There’s a song that is always with me; it offers up the melancholy longing of Gonzo, a little blue alien who loved a chicken—just one character among dozens by Jim Henson that formed the landscape of my childhood.

This looks familiar, vaguely familiar,
Almost unreal, yet, it's too soon to feel yet.
Close to my soul, and yet so far away.
I'm going to go back there someday. (Ascher, K. and Williams, P., 1979)

Such has been the journey of writing my dissertation. Often, the path has been invisible, the destination unknown; but there has been a sense that I’m on a familiar path, toward a home I can’t quite remember. And as with all quests, I would not have succeeded on my own.

To my committee members past and present, I thank you for always providing me with exactly what I needed when I needed it—regardless of whether or not I knew enough to ask. Dr. Daniel Hade, my chair, provided me with light when shadows were at their darkest and I began to doubt my ability to have any measure of pride in my work. Dr. Anne Whitney was my constant source of faith and reason, encouraging me and helping me remain as calm and confident as an insecure graduate student ever could be. Dr. Jonathan Eburne indulged an unknown quantity who approached him for support without having a coherent plan, recommending readings and kindly guiding my thinking with a subtle hand. Watching Dr. Jamie Myers participate in defenses for other students was all I needed to know that my work would be better for his having read it and offered
his thoughts. Dr. Jacqueline Reid-Walsh was also instrumental in my success, providing feedback that without question made my writing much stronger. If I have found the courage to continue my research, it is because of your having given so generously your time, your genius, and your passion.

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My family has been a source of endless support—emotional, spiritual, financial, even nutritional—and they have helped me through this peculiar time-slip that often left me feeling like the college drop-out I was back in 1995. To have come so far in my education after such an epic failure is a credit to their ability to love me, faults and all.

I had no idea when I contacted his agent that Christopher Paolini would be so generous with his time and experiences as a reader and writer. He became a partner in this research project, providing inspiration for new paths to follow and access to his fan base without which this dissertation would have stalled out. Thank you for providing me with my own quest to complete.
Chapter 1

Introduction

“Home is behind, the world ahead, and there are many paths to tread through shadows to the edge of night, until the stars are all alight.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings

Background and Context

Fantasy stories are often known for their settings as much as their characters; for what is Bilbo without the Shire, or Ged without Earthsea, or even Winnie the Pooh without the Hundred Acre Wood. For authors, the map may serve to establish realistic timelines for travel and adventure. Readers are grounded and guided in these strange new lands through their accompanying maps. Scholars might even consider the map as metaphor, as some have with Tolkien’s Middle-earth and thoughts turned toward the industrialization of England.

What becomes clear is that the fantasy map, which has become one of the most recognized conventions of the genre, along side dragons, elves and foundations of magic, can be read as more than ornamental paratext—paratext being the materials that surround the text, such as the cover, back matter, etc.—designed to enhance the reader’s sense of verisimilitude. There is a deeper connection being made between the reader and the landscape of a fantasy novel, one that leads them to create additional narratives set in that world; to step into their own forested backyard to journey “there and back again” on a
warm summer afternoon; to devote hours upon weeks upon years creating a digital parallel world; to perhaps become creators of their own fantasy worlds. Before the binding on a fantasy novel cracks, before the reader’s eye meets mythical mountain or sinewy stream, the map is a map of a Secondary World. The moment a reader glances at the map, and forever after, they have been immersed in that Secondary World, and their own Actual World has been projected into it; the map has become a map of a Projected World.

**Problem Statement**

The majority of the literature surrounding the maps included in fantasy texts relates to the creation of verisimilitude on the part of an Implied Reader (Iser, 1974), and maps are often evaluated based on whether or not they are successful in that endeavor. Distinctions are made between maps of Primary Worlds and Secondary Worlds; maps that are parallel to the narrative and maps that are a part of the narrative (i.e. the Marauder’s Map in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*); maps that are meant to appear geographical and maps that are metaphorical. What is missing from these discussions are the maps that exist only between the individual reader and the text; the map that the author creates that hides within its lines and latitudes the identity of that author and their sense of place of the Actual World; the maps whose genesis relies upon the immersion of a reader who carries on their journey into that Secondary World their unique identity and sense of place.
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this research project was to understand how the map in a fantasy novel might be interpreted as having purpose beyond creating verisimilitude—beyond helping a reader track a character’s movements from one location to the next in the Secondary World created by the author, making that Secondary World seem “real” to the reader. By studying the author and readers of a fantasy series, this project attempted to observe, describe and interpret the ways in which readers of a fantasy series interacted with that series’ fantasy map outside of the moments when they held the book in their hands. Such interactions were seen as evidence of the reader having developed a personal attachment to the Secondary World that extended the reading transaction beyond the physical reading of the text—as evidence of a Projective World. This understanding would create a space within the literature relating to fantasy maps that acknowledged the reader’s voice and the understanding that a fantasy map represents more than a Secondary World.

In the attempt to elucidate the interactions between readers and fantasy maps, this research study addressed four main questions:

1. What are the participants’ experiences with the genre of fantasy and the paratextual convention of mapping?
2. How do readers describe their interactions with a fantasy map when reading?
3. How, if at all, have readers interacted with the fantasy map beyond reading the book?
4. How might those interactions be interpreted or understood as evidence of the map now representing a Projected World?

The Researcher

Like so many Hobbits before me, I did not know the true meaning of the “precious” jewelry given to me upon my graduation from my Master’s program. The delicate silver compass requires close examination to make out the delicate script on its back: “There are no shortcuts to anywhere worth going.”

If only I had known it was predicting my doctoral program.

Whether it was predictive or prescriptive I may never know. Shortly into my first semester my research interests shifted from an interest in dystopian literature to the maps contained in fantasy novels. The interest grew from a writing project, where drawing a map was seen as a means of escaping writer’s block and getting to know the Primary and Secondary Worlds of my novel more thoroughly. As I sketched out islands and mountains, I wondered at the fact that a year ago, having grown up in Ohio, I had no real sense of what “mountain” meant, but living amongst the time-worn rolling peaks of central Pennsylvania had influenced the Secondary World I was constructing. Never before had I written of mountains.

As I so often do, I discussed these thoughts with family and friends, anxious to maintain connections “back home” as I saw my time in Pennsylvania always as temporary, another moment of rest on a rather convoluted journey with no destination in mind. As though guided by the silver compass charm resting at my throat, one of those
chats led to the discovery that the daughter of friends had created her own fantasy map. I wondered if her limited experience of geography—she was eight at the time she drew the map and hadn’t traveled much outside of central Ohio—had somehow made its way into the map, the same way the Alleghenies had made their way into mine. I conducted an interview which progressed from discussing the map to fighting with foam swords to planning outings in the forest to continue spending time in her fantasy world. As a child, I had often spent time with my male cousins, fighting dragons with plastic baseball bats, or imagining that the 14 inches of snow we often saw in Northeast Ohio was actually an ice age that we, as future explorers, had to survive and dig through to study late 20th century human culture. Immersion in a fantasy world was nothing new to me, and as a researcher, the idea of working with others who enjoyed that sense of emplacement was exciting and encouraging.

The project grew from that initial interview. Having found similarities between my friends’ daughter and my own experience, I decided to interview a fantasy author who was known for having included a map in their book(s). Volumes had been written about Tolkien already, and I was hesitant to follow in the footsteps of those who had spent their lifetime devoted to scholarship around his work when I might be an interloper. At the same time, as a children’s literature scholar, I was always concerned with the voice of the child in scholarship. My initial research was with a child reader, and I appreciated the opportunity to make her voice heard, especially over my own.

Remembering that he was only fifteen when he wrote the first novel in *The Inheritance Cycle*—one of those pieces of pop culture trivia that seems to stick in my mind far better than the names of theorists or important historical dates—I contacted the
agent for Christopher Paolini, on the off chance that he might be willing to participate in an interview with me regarding his drawing of the map of Alagaësia, the Secondary World in which his novels were set. Within 24 hours, I had heard from Christopher himself, agreeing to an e-mail interview and expressing excitement over my research project.

As Christopher and I corresponded, talking about our shared passion for fantasy maps, I off-handedly asked if any of the fans had ever submitted artwork based on the map of Alagaësia. Again came a prompt response that answered my question with several images. The final phase of my project was thus envisioned; I wanted to understand how and why readers were creating artwork related specifically to the map of Alagaësia.

While the project would continue to evolve in how I looked at the data in terms of my theoretical framework, it was my identity as someone who relished being immersed in fantasy worlds that led to my position as a researcher of Secondary Worlds. Taking on the identity of researcher, especially one working with readers, was difficult and often times unbearable; insecurity and “imposter syndrome” have darkened my efforts like a Shadow, in every capitalized sense of the word. Perhaps this is normal; perhaps it will fade. I am only certain that wherever I am headed, I must travel through it; there are no short cuts.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this study emanates from the researcher’s desire to study the ways in which readers interact with fantasy maps. In so doing, the researcher hoped to
create a space for the voice of child readers within the larger body of scholarship related to fantasy literature.

Fantasy has a long history of being associated with children, from its roots in fairy tales and folklore to its continued popularity in contemporary picture books and novels for younger readers. The genre has also inherited the issues associated with perceptions of childhood, including being the only audience that does not write, publish, or purchase literature for itself (with rare exceptions). The child reader is colonized on multiple levels by the adult world. The significance of this project lies in its attempts to consider the Projective World as significant alongside the Secondary World, thus attempting to honor the voice of the colonized child.

Summary of Chapters

I provided the context for this study in Chapter 1, noting the lack of the reader’s voice in the scholarship surrounding fantasy maps. I described the purpose of the study, which is to explore and describe readers’ interactions with a fantasy maps during all aspects of the reading transaction, concluding with the potential this project has for expanding the discussion around fantasy mapping. The methodology for this project was established, as well as my perspective as researcher and fan of fantasy literature.

Chapter 2 attempts to further contextualize the project set forth in the first chapter by presenting a review of the related literature. Topics within the literature review relate to the history of cartography, the relationship of children and maps both historical and current, and the history and meaning of maps as a paratextual convention of the genre of
fantasy. The chapter concludes by presenting the conceptual framework used to analyze the data in this study.

The research methodology and methods employed in this study are described in Chapter 3. I provide a rationale for both the position of the project and my position as a researcher, and I set forth the methods of data collection and analysis to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the research project. This chapter also includes a brief description of each of the participants in the research study.

Chapter 4 represents the findings of the project. Using the themes that emerged throughout the data collection process, I present each participant’s experiences with fantasy maps and their interactions with the map of Alagaësia during all aspects of the reading transaction. These themes are described both in terms of the data collected and their relation back to the conceptual framework set forth in Chapter 2, and they demonstrate the participants’ experiences with their respective Projective Worlds.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I consider the findings of this study in light of the research questions presented in this chapter, within the context of the literature review, to begin the discussion about the importance of a reader’s Projective World in the larger discussion surrounding fantasy maps. The conclusions section of this chapter considers how this research might be extended in the future.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

“May it be a light to you in dark places, when all other lights go out.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, the purpose of this research project is to understand the ways in which a reader’s interaction with the map of a fantasy novel is expressed in settings other than the moments when they are reading the novels, and to consider those expressions as artifacts of the sense of place the reader has developed for the Secondary World—a Projective World—with regard to the fantasy landscape.

In order to understand the potential significance of these expressions, it is beneficial to first understand the broader discussion surrounding maps and cartography. The section of this chapter entitled “A Brief History of Cartography” addresses this need.

One of the original intentions of this research project was to focus on child and adolescent readers, to create a space for their voices, as readers, to be heard. The section “The History of Children and Maps” relates to the history of the associations between children and maps, beginning with its 18th century educational origins, through the evolution of an emphasis on landscape found throughout much of post-Second World War literature, and into its contemporary multi-modal expressions in much of children’s
culture, pausing to consider the position of maps of fantasy landscapes within each context.

Having briefly considered maps within the context of childhood and geography in the previous section, we now take a closer look at fantasy maps in particular—what they are and what they are thought to do. The section of this chapter entitled “Fantasy Maps and Settings” provides a detailed history of fantasy maps and their role in the genre of fantasy.

The importance of landscape has been examined through many lenses, including, among others, geographical, cultural, and socio-political (Carroll, 2011). What these approaches require, however, is the surrender of the individual to the interests of the group. A reader’s interaction with the landscape of a fantasy novel outside of the reading transaction, regardless of how that interaction might be expressed, indicates the presence of a personal connection to the landscape that is wholly individual and contextual. In seeking to understand the participants’ interaction with the landscape as a personal place, rather than examining the space through the eyes of an Implied Reader (Iser, 1974), the individual—in this project, the child or adolescent author or reader—is emphasized.

“Place and Fantasy Landscapes” considers those who have written about these imagined worlds through the concept of place, focusing on the Implied Reader.

The final section of this chapter, “Projective Worlds: A Conceptual Framework,” considers the previous sections and establishes the conceptual framework through which the results of this research project are being examined.
A Brief History of Cartography

As with all fields of knowledge, there has been an evolution in thought with regard to cartography and maps. While this evolution tends to exclude fantasy maps because of their representation of fictional settings, that exclusion becomes problematic when we consider fantasy maps as having the potential to inspire a sense of place within a reader. Still, there are enough connections between literature and cartography—not the least of which are the writings of Joseph Conrad, author of *Heart of Darkness*, and his explication of the three main geographical phases (Harty, 2007)—that a brief history of cartographic thought proves foundational to understanding the development of fantasy maps.

Cartography traces its origins back more than 5,000 years to Babylonian clay tablets with images that bear little resemblance to our contemporary conception of maps (Intergovernmental Committee on Surveying and Mapping, 2016). Mitchell (2008) identifies “the mappamundi—literally napkin (*mappa*) of the world (*mundi*) [as] the earliest form of Western mapping that would be readily recognizable to the contemporary viewer as a map” (p. 37). These Medieval maps were less concerned with geographical accuracy, as their successors would come to be in the Enlightenment, than they were with serving as “a metaphor, and a tool, for the journey through life” (p. 39). Renaissance mapping is credited with using Euclidean geometry to enable the representation of the curved surface of the planet onto the flat plane of a map (p. 42). During the Enlightenment, the discipline became concerned with description over representation, cementing geography’s identity as a science (pp. 53-54). Western Imperialism brought with it an obsession with domination and appropriation, and mapping became inexorably tied up in the representation of colonization. The aftershocks of the Enlightenment and
Imperialist cartographic eras are still felt, but the Twentieth century saw the rise of Postmodern cartographies. Heralded by Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, the transition between colonial and postcolonial mapping was dramatic. The idea of space as static and permanent was upset, followed by human geography and cultural geography—or, as described by J. B. Harley, “social cartography”—which defined maps as “the art and science of mapping ways of seeing” (p. 73). Similar to history, maps were now read as being highly contextualized and biased; they were seen as being reflections of social phenomena, rather than representations of any geographic “reality.” Others described the “critical turn” in cartography, with critical cartographers having “exposed hidden, and sometimes hideous, narratives and agendas embedded in maps, including their metanarratives” (Caquard, 2011, p. 136). Out of these new ways of understanding maps grew several “hybridized practices” of studying maps in relation to cinema, literature, and other narratives; space had been made for studying the “presence of personal and collective narratives” (Caquard, 2011, p. 135). Among those hybridized approaches to cartography is ecocriticism, aptly demonstrated in Dobrin and Kidd’s (2004) *Wild Things: Children’s Culture and Ecocriticism*. Citing Cheryll Glotfelty, Dobrin and Kidd describe ecocriticism as:

...the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its readings of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (p. 3).
Wild Things represents an attempt to bring together studies of children’s culture—of which children’s literature may be considered a part—and ecocriticism, the unity of which creates space in these respective fields for the study of children’s sense of place.

A History of Children and Maps

The earliest associations between children and maps can be traced back to the eighteenth century when children were taught geography through the use of dissected maps, the predecessors of jigsaw puzzles (Norcia, 2009; Shefrin, 1999). As seen in Figure 2-1, children were given maps that had been cut apart, or “dissected,” in the belief that geography was best learned through maps; copying and coloring or recreating maps through needlework were also encouraged (Harty, 2007; Norcia, 2009; Shefrin, 1999). As Norcia (2009) points out:

While not primarily literary, puzzles and dissected maps do offer narratives of power and authority which are incumbent in the business of building both nation and empire, and they give us new insight into literature by imperial authors such as Rudyard Kipling (p. 2).
Given the exposure these children had to maps during their education, and the emphasis the eighteenth century put on geography—the era of Geography Militant as described by Joseph Conrad (Harty, 2007) during which there was a sense of urgency about filling in the blank spaces on the globe—it is not surprising that children began creating maps of their own worlds. The Brontë children, Hartley Coleridge, and Thomas Malkin are all known to have made maps of fictional worlds, Secondary Worlds about which they also created narratives. Malkin’s map of Allestone (see Figure 2-2 below) is exceptional in that he died at the age of six, making him remarkably young to have created such an elaborate map.
Children’s education continued to involve maps, both geographical and literary, throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth (Post, 1979). Many of the maps to which they would have been exposed were religious in nature, such as the map that was drawn of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (Ibid).

Ranson (1999) offers an interesting comparison between the contemporary child reader and their counterparts in the 19th century that relates to how cartography was used in children’s education:

On an educational note, children are now less skilled in cartographic recognition techniques, than in the 1800s when *Treasure Island* was published, due to geography being taught in a different way. Any literate
child in 1883 would have been schooled in cartography, and would have read the map with relative ease. The contemporary child will probably have more difficulty with it. The more modern maps in my selection, e.g. *A Wizard of Earthsea* are certainly simpler, with fewer traditional cartographic devices, such as longitude and latitude and sea depths. … The modern child brings greater artistic appreciation to the text, which compensates for the lack of technical cartographic knowledge (p. 164).

What Ranson suggests, then, is that while the technical skills of the modern child reader may be less sophisticated than his or her 19th century counterpart, the modern child is more likely to view the map as art, as illustration.

As the genre of fantasy developed, and the convention of fantasy maps became familiar, children’s interactions with fantasy maps seems to support Ranson’s thoughts regarding the artistic appreciation of the modern child reader. Of particular interest in Post’s collection of fantasy maps are those he included for C.S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia*. While Lewis’s work has been criticized by Hunt (2010) as being a less successful map because its Secondary World (Narnia) is more idea than place, Lewis nonetheless included a map. Post’s collection of Narnia maps includes Lewis’s original map, a highly artistic map by Pauline Baynes for Macmillan publishers to be used as a poster for marketing in the 1980s, and finally a map “by J. J. Boies of Staten Island [that] shows how a reader has viewed the land” (p. 110) (Figures 2-3, 2-4 and 2-5, respectively).
Figure 2-3: C.S. Lewis's Map of Narnia

Figure 2-4: Map of Narnia by Pauline Baynes
More than the type of duplication encouraged by eighteenth century educators, the reader’s map in this case demonstrates an engagement with the text that allows for a level of detail not present in Lewis’s map. The original map by Lewis has very few landmarks, and is absent the islands that appear on both Boies’s and Baynes’s maps. The creation of original material, the details added from the narratives to the content of the original, indicates that Boies was experiencing Narnia as a work of art, as Ranson (1999) suggested; but more importantly, Boies was experiencing Narnia as a Secondary World in Tolkien’s sense of the term.

The use of maps in education has evolved since its eighteenth century geographical roots to involve more than the duplication of existing maps, although maps continue to be an important part of geography lessons. The ability to read and understand
maps remains part of elementary social studies education, and numerous books exist to help readers develop these skills (Chesanow, 1995; Ritchie, 2009; Sweeney, 1998). Contemporary children’s literature textbooks (Huck, Keifer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2004; Norton, 2011; Tunnell, Jacobs, Young & Bryan, 2016) suggest having readers create their own maps of fantasy stories they have read, providing insight into their understanding of the text. Mapping is also suggested as a writing tool (Chesanow, 1995; Ritchie, 2009; Sobel, 1998; Sweeney, 1998) in place-based education curricula, to help children develop an understanding that the places in their lives hold meaning. Several researchers have examined the use of children’s literature in the social studies classroom (Flaim & Chiodo, 1994; Gandy, 2006; Gillespie, 2010; James, 2008; Landt, 2007; Murphey, 2002; Wasta, 2010); however, “children’s literature” is used in service of social studies, and fantasy texts are rarely included in the lists of recommended texts. Other scholars connect education with place and literature, including Gruenewald (2002), Fischer (2015) and Wason-Ellam (2010). Still other scholars have studied children and their experiences of place, using cartography (Giddings & Yarwood, 2005) and geocaching (Jones, 2012) as methods of data collection. Anderson’s *Children Map the World: Selections from the Barbara Petchenik Children’s World Map Competition* (2005, 2010) offers, as the title suggests, a collection of world maps drawn by children ranging in age from 4-16 which, while not considered fantasy, may be read as representative of the child’s sense of place of—and often within—the world.

Thomas Malkin’s map of Allestone, as well as those created by the Brontë siblings, existed to serve as tools of verisimilitude for Secondary Worlds of their own creation. In these instances, the children are authors, rather than readers; they are using
the maps to help develop their narratives and stabilize the Secondary World for others. Christopher describes a similar purpose for his map of Alagaësia; while writing the first novel in the cycle, *Eragon*, he began to have difficulty in describing the distances traveled by the main characters, and therefore drew the map of Alagaësia to help himself as much as future readers. Arya created a map of an imaginary world, Arcanus, in which she and her neighborhood friends were playing so they could keep track of locations for certain scenes when breaks in their narrative play occurred.

The presence of child-made fantasy maps, both historical and within my own research, indicates not only an understanding of the role of maps as an object of geographical importance, but also a richer experience on the part of the child who has experienced a Secondary World—at times, one of their own creation—as place.

**Fantasy Maps and Settings**

Much as cartography experienced a shift in paradigm, the novel itself underwent a dramatic shift, from the Victorian fin-di-siècle’s concern with time through to the post-Second World War’s focus on space (Carroll 2011). This change did not occur overnight. In her study of 19th century novels, Mucignat (2013) examines the emergence of geography within literature. Citing Franco Moretti’s work, Mucignat explains that “every story belongs to a particular time and place, its rhythm shaped by a particular spatial pattern” (p. 3). The descriptions of setting in these works of fiction go from being “mainly decorative or ecphrastic (as in the classical literary tradition), to playing an active role in the production of the plot” (p. 6). This emergence of setting as an essential,
rather than solely ornamental, aspect of the literary novel would later become a hallmark of the fantasy novel, and J. R. R. Tolkien would become the father of fantasy mapping; however, as Ekman notes, “other well-known works of fiction that are furnished with maps include Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883)” (p. 14). J. B. Post’s *An Atlas of Fantasy* traces the history of maps in works of fiction—which he terms “maps of literary fabrication” to set them apart from maps of “geographical speculation” (p. ix)—beginning with a map of Eden created by Spanish monks, dated circa 776 (p. 2). Many considered maps to be part of the “paratext” of the novel—Gerard Genette’s term for the extra-narrative material included with a novel, such as the cover, illustrations, and end papers (cited in Magnusson, 2012). However, there is a distinction to be made between maps found in fiction and maps found in fantasy novels, one that involves intent rather than appearance; a difference that has been explicated by Tolkien, among others.

While the history of fantasy literature can be traced back through myths, legends, and folktales (Egoff, 1988; Ekman, 2013), it was Tolkien’s efforts that cemented fantasy’s status as a genre independent of other types of fiction (Ekman, 2013). One of the hallmarks of fantasy literature is its ability to transport the reader into the setting of the novel, not as an observer, but an active participant—a co-creator—of that world. Mistakenly referred to in the past as a “willing suspension of disbelief,” Tolkien (1964/2001) explains that when a world is successfully created, there is no disbelief to suspend.

What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful ‘sub-creator’. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside
it, what he relates is ‘true’: it accords with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside (p. 37).

The creation of the fantasy world is so complete, so compelling, that the reader has no sense that the “outside” world exists. If that sense of being in the Secondary World—what Ryan (2001) refers to as “immersion” and others call transport—is interrupted, then the reader must, if they are willing to do so, suspend disbelief, in an attempt to be transported back into the Secondary World, which may or may not be possible. A reader who is reminded, whether through their own reaction to the narrative or a perceived (or, in some cases of lesser writing, real) shortcoming on the part of the author, that the Actual World not only exists but is where they are situated, and they will forever have a sense that the Secondary World is a work of fiction that cannot possibly exist.

Tolkien (1964/2001) elaborates on what is demanded of an author who has chosen to create a Secondary World, contrasting it with fiction, which is set in the Primary World—an equivalent of our own world—and fantasy, which is set in a Secondary World.

To make a Secondary World inside which the green sun will be credible, commanding Secondary Belief, will probably require labour and thought, and will certainly demand a special skill, a kind of elvish craft. Few attempt such difficult tasks. But when they are attempted and in any degree accomplished then we have a rare achievement of Art: indeed narrative art, story-making in its primary and most potent mode (p. 49).

The map, then, is part of this artwork; it plays a pivotal role in the creation of the Secondary World for both the author and the reader. The map takes advantage of the reader’s familiarity with its purpose of understanding a geographical “reality” and therefore adds validity to the reader’s experience of the setting of the novel. Ekman (2013) adds an additional layer of distinction to Tolkien’s concept of Primary and
Secondary Worlds (p. 10), a distinction that is clarified by Tunnell, Jacobs, Young & Bryan (2016). For Ekman, there exists the Actual World—that is, the world inhabited by the author and the reader outside of the reading transaction; the Primary World—the world that is similar to the Actual World at the beginning of the story; and the Secondary World—the fantasy world. A novel may have multiple Secondary Worlds, but only one Primary World, if any; a novel may exist entirely within a Secondary World or Worlds. Tolkien’s The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings are set entirely in the Secondary World of Middle-earth; The Wizard of Oz and The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe are examples of novels set in a Primary World where characters are then transported into the Secondary Worlds of Oz and Narnia, respectively. Finally, there are novels where the Secondary World bleeds into the Primary World, rather than (or in addition to) the characters being transported to the Secondary World; the Harry Potter novels provide the best example of this type of fantasy motif (Tunnell, Jacobs, Young & Bryan, 2016).

Ekman notes that no work of fantasy is ever set in the Actual World. The map in a fantasy novel, Ekman offers, is a map of a Secondary World; it is meant to aid in “the construction of an internally consistent world” (p. 14). Having experienced maps in other genres, such as history and geography, readers recognize that the map is meant to familiarize the reader with the structure of the world, and therefore helps the reader to believe in, and be transported to, the Secondary World. Michael Brisbois (2005), a Tolkien scholar, has referred to the Secondary World as “Third Space” (Brisbois, 2005); that is, “the artificial creation of imagination and not a direct mimesis of our real or constructed nature” (p. 198); Billman referred to it as a “subcreated realm” (1982). In Rhetorics of Fantasy (2008), Farah Mendelsohn describes four types of interactions
between Primary Worlds and Secondary Worlds, although she does not use Tolkien’s terminology. Those categories are (a) “immersive fantasy” where the narrative is sent entirely in the Secondary World without reference to the Actual World or Primary World (Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*); (b) “intrusion fantasy” that involves the Secondary World intruding on the Primary World (Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series); (c) “liminal fantasy” where there are elements of the fantastic in the Primary World (Louis Sachar’s *Holes*); and (d) “portal-quest,” which involves a portal, or point of entry, into the fantastic world (Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*). Unique among those categories is the “liminal fantasy,” distinct for its lack of Secondary World setting; while there may be magical or fantastical elements within the narrative, the setting is a Primary World setting.

![Figure 2-6: Map of the 100 Aker Wood from *Winnie the Pooh*](image-url)
Not every work of fantasy that contains a map succeeds in constructing the type of Secondary World described by Tolkien and Ekman, the same type of Secondary World of interest in this research project. Peter Hunt (2001) suggests that the world must have a sense of permanence to it; that the world would exist even if a moment of narrative were never to occur within its space. He cites *Winnie the Pooh* as an example; even though a map of the “100 Aker Wood” exists (see Figure 2-6), its locations relate to specific events, rather than being a part of the larger world in a permanent manner. If it were not for Christopher Robin’s presence in the story, the spots where it is “Nice for Piknicks” or “Where the Woozle Wasn’t” would not exist. Baker (2006) suggests that the more complex a world—i.e., Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy, with its alternative worlds—the more difficult it is to map, and thus the less likely a reader is to find maps accompanying them. Other narratives seem to be missing something by not including a map, such as Suzanne Collins’s *Hunger Games* trilogy, leading to a variety of readers interpreting the Secondary World of Panem and creating their own maps, which have the potential to vary greatly (see Figures 2-7 through 2-10 below):
Figure 2-7: A Map of Panem (1)

Figure 2-8: A Map of Panem (2)
Figure 2-9: A Map of Panem (3)

Figure 2-10: A Map of Panem (4)
Some fantasy maps, as we see with the map of the 100 Aker Wood in *Winnie the Pooh* (Figure 2-6), fail to accomplish the goal of verisimilitude that is understood to be the purpose of maps found in epic fantasies such as Tolkien’s work. Baker (2006) cleverly refers to this as the “Jones Scale,” referring to the fictional work by Dianne Wynn-Jones, *The Tough Guide to Fantasy Land*, that performs a witty analysis of the paratextual convention of fantasy mapping. Interestingly, Jones puts the map of Alagaësia at the “mundane” end of the scale, an opinion echoed by Orrin (see Chapter 4). The setting of *Winnie the Pooh* is not built in such a way that it exists independent of the Actual World; there is no Secondary World, but instead a series of vignettes that serve as the background for the happenings surrounding Christopher Robin and his friends. This is not to say that the Actual World is not represented within the map of the 100 Aker Wood—the collection of Christopher Milne’s writings entitled *Beyond the World of Pooh* describes in detail Milne’s childhood home and its influence on his father’s writing—but the setting itself lacks the robustness and detail found in fantasy novels set in a Secondary World; there is no sense of stability, of permanence; the world-building is simply insufficient. To go back to Tolkien’s point, the reader does not find the green sun to be credible. The settings of these works lack the detail and permanence that readers of fantasy sense in the more elaborately designed worlds of authors such as Tolkien. Therefore, the existence of a map in a fantasy work does not automatically indicate the existence of a Secondary World as originally defined by Tolkien.

Other scholars have stepped outside of these traditionally framed considerations of verisimilitude in examining children’s literature in the fantasy genre. In 2005, Dams published an article wherein she examined the construction of a Secondary World in *The*
Wolves of Willoughby Chase series by Joan Aiken, noting that while a map was not provided, Aiken succeeded in creating verisimilitude for her readers through language and song. Honeyman (2001) considers the associations between childhood and geographical exploration, suggesting that maps represent a cultural impetus to document in place of remembering. Hunt (2001) compares British fantasy to American fantasy, offering a somewhat unfavorable view of the latter due to a lack of depth of history within the genre of fantasy on the part of the younger, a shortcoming he argues can be seen in its fantasy maps.

**Place and Fantasy Landscapes**

There is a common theme that can be traced across disciplines when examining the importance of setting within fantasy literature. Scholars of fantasy literature and children’s literature (which are by no means distinct and often overlap) agree that fantasy can be defined, in part, as a narrative set in an alternative world (Baker, 2011; Egoff, 1988; Ekman, 2013; Hintz & Tribunella, 2013; Huck, Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2004; Hunt, 2001; Tunnell, Jacobs, Young & Bryan, 2016) —in Tolkien’s words, a Secondary World. Fantasy novels which hold the creation of the Secondary World to highest standards are often referred to as “epic fantasy” or “high fantasy,” and are placed in their own subgenre, distinct from allegory, light fantasy, animal fantasy, science fiction, and others. Tolkien’s The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings fall under this subgenre, as does Paolini’s Inheritance Cycle.
Scholars have long written about fantasy, and have used a variety of terms to describe the sense of place a reader has when immersed in the setting of a work of high fantasy. Children’s literature textbooks tend to refer to the “setting” of fantasy, the technical literary components which are needed to provide a backdrop to the piece (Hintz & Tribunella, 2013; Huck, 2004; Norton, 2011; Tunnell, Jacobs, Young & Bryan, 2016). While the term “setting” is sufficient if examining the larger genre of fantasy—or any other narrative, for even a non-fiction text has a “somewhere” in which it happens—the term falls flat when studying fantasy literature where the setting is as much a character in the narrative as any other protagonist or villain.

Written in 1938-1939—around the time The Lord of the Rings was being developed—and published in 1964, Tolkien’s On Fairy-Stories is perhaps the most frequently quoted piece of scholarship relating to the uniqueness and importance of fantasy settings. In this landmark essay Tolkien sets forth the idea of the fantasy setting being a Secondary World, and also clarifies that the author is in partnership with the reader (in his example, specifically a child reader of fantasy); the author is a “sub-creator” who must provide a Secondary World that is so artfully created that the reader believes it, while inside it (p. 37). This concept is elaborated upon in Tolkien’s short story Leaf by Niggle, the story of a painter whose passion is thwarted by life and its many distractions. Upon his death, he overhears that his unfinished masterpiece was repurposed for mending his neighbor’s roof, leaving only a small corner featuring an impossibly beautiful, detailed, single leaf. Entering heaven, he finds his imagined painting come to life, containing detail he himself had never imagined; the masterpiece was co-created, and thus more complete and more beautiful than he could have accomplished on his own.
Tolkien’s writings, both scholarly and fictional, offered the belief that author and reader are co-creators. Mendelsohn (2008) echoes this belief: “… the fantastic is an area of literature that is heavily dependent on the dialectic between author and reader for the construction of a sense of wonder, that it is a fiction of consensual construction and belief” (xiii), as do Meek (2003) and Nilsson (2009). The Secondary World does not exist without the presence of the reader, nor is it constructed without the reader’s participation. Boies’s map of Narnia (Figure 2-5) is illustrative of such co-creation.

To speak of the place of a fantasy novel is to speak of both the creator and its inhabitants and visitors. The role of the author must not be overlooked when consideration such co-creation, even if the reader is given equal authority over the text. In *Turtles All the Way Down*, Jane Yolen (1996) describes the importance of the author’s work:

> But in fantasy, outer landscape reflects inner landscape. The hills and mountains must be true, whether they are based on actual places like Minneapolis or Scotland or England or China—or are made up analogue fashion, from places in the author’s mind. … If the writer creates what Eleanor Cameron calls ‘the compelling power of place,’ building up the fantasy world or the real world in which the fantastic takes place with a wealth of corroborating details, the reader will *have* to believe in the place. If the place is real enough, then the fantasy creatures and characters—dragon or elf lord or one-eyed god or the devil himself—will stride across that landscape leaving footprints that sink down into the mud. And if those creatures are also compelling, having taken root in the old lore and been brought forward in literary time by the carefully observing author, those footprints in the mud can be taken out, dried, and mounted on the wall” (pp. 165-167).

Important in Yolen’s piece is the emphasis on both the author’s effort at verisimilitude, and the ability for the reader to then take up that effort—the footprints in the mud—to add to them, reimagine them, and create something entirely new—the art mounted on the
wall. Yolen is also clear that something within the author— their sense of place—is captured in the worlds they create. Balfe (2004) reflects on the representation of the “mysterious East” in fantasy literature, emphasizing that these constructions are not “pure” invention, but rather reflect the creator’s sense of place and their sociocultural context, and Eyre (1985) examined Rastafarian culture and connected their geography as fantasy in that it is drawn directly from the Bible and “cannot be verified by satellite and geodetic observation,” (p. 144), and should instead be understood within the context of their faith. Peter Hunt’s (1987) comparison of English fantasy to American fantasy alludes to the richness of history and mythology available to the English authors—a richness that is not completely understood by their American counterparts, resulting in a distinct difference in the expression of a sense of place. While written four years prior to Hunt’s piece, Murray (1983) argues that Canadian fantasy—specifically the work of Catherine Anthony Clark—has as much to offer in the way of richness of culture influencing the setting of fantasy as any text from Britain. Slater (2015), using a “translocal” theory, recognizes the influence sociocultural context has on the setting of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s The Secret Garden:

Using a translocal lens, then, acknowledges Burnett’s productions of place as local without threading those productions through the cloth of nationalist paradigms. Importantly, a translocal framework requires us to reorient our concept of scale, not as a system of bounded, discrete, and hierarchical units, but as a mutually constitutive network where local place forms through both everyday, low-range practices and global exchanges (p. 5).

Slater, in emphasizing the importance of the local, acknowledges that influence of the sociocultural context as one component of a network of influences on the production of place of the setting of The Secret Garden. While not focused on a fantasy novel, Slater’s
piece is important in that it recognizes (a) the importance of an author’s sense of place, but also recognizes that (b) others have a role in the production of the setting. Ultimately, the role of the author is not without importance when considering the setting or Secondary World; it is but one layer among many, one leaf on the tree, painted from the author’s own experience of place and waiting for others to add their own touch.

As described in the previous section, Ekman (2013) builds on Tolkien’s terminology by addressing those works of fantasy that involve a crossing of borders between worlds, which necessitates the addition of an Actual World to distinguish the reader’s physical location while reading a book, versus the Primary World, which may be very much like the reader’s Actual World but is still part of the fantasy narrative. To provide another example, in Lewis’s *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* the Pevensie children live in a Primary World that is very much like Lewis’s own war-ravaged Britain, from which they travel through an enchanted wardrobe into the Secondary World of Narnia. While Ekman’s clarifications are of great importance in such fantasy narratives that involve travel between worlds, they do not aid in the study of those works set entirely in the Secondary World, such as *The Inheritance Cycle*.

Carroll (2011) refers to these Secondary World settings as “Landscapes” in her research into different topographical features, or “topoi,” in children’s fantasy literature. Employing a “landscape historian” approach to Susan Cooper’s *The Dark is Rising* series, Carroll examines several topoi—the basic elements that make up a landscape, including gardens, roads, and green spaces—for their evolution through fantasy literature for children. Carroll’s definition of landscape is remarkably similar to the definitions of place offered by Tuan and others:
Landscape is, then, a construct; a portion of land or territory that is shaped and given order either physically (through cultivation or building) or imaginatively (through art or literature). The interaction between geography and human culture transforms land into landscape (p. 2).

It is the “imaginatively” that is of importance here. Carroll’s work combines theories of place and the work of landscape historians to understand the change that occurs to a space through the cultural interactions of that space with human cultures. The space—the land—need not be “real” to be influenced by human culture; these “literary landscapes,” such as Middle-earth, Narnia and Alagaësia, are changed imaginatively when a reader is immersed in them, is lost within those Secondary Worlds; the reader is transported into the literary landscape and both are changed by the experience. Carroll’s work, in using the phrase “human culture,” examines a larger expanse of time, tracing the appearance and evolution of topoi throughout fantasy literature, across works that come before and follow after Susan Cooper’s novels. What is missing, however, is the individual reader’s development of a sense of place of the literary landscape. The influence examined by Carroll necessarily pushes the individual to the background while emphasizing a culture.

The terms setting, Primary World and Secondary World, and literary landscape each refer to the “where” of the narrative, the element that makes a successful high or epic fantasy novel come to life for its readers in such a manner that their own reality is lost to them for a time. Yet each of these terms, in their contexts as set forth above, falls short of including the individual reader’s perspective. Missing is the means to name the way one would describe the unique Middle-earth or Narnia or Alagaësia that exists only when a reader is immersed in the setting, is transported into that world, has projected
themselves into that literary landscape; the very thing that makes each of those a place for that reader.

**Projective Worlds: A Conceptual Framework**

Place may most simply be defined as a space made meaningful. In the field of humanistic geography, Yi-Fu Tuan would refer to place as pause. “From the security and stability of place,” Tuan (1977) writes, “we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place” (p. 6). Place is created when an identity has paused to linger within a space, forming an attachment between that identity and that space. The concept of place creates the opportunity to consider a reader’s interaction with a Secondary World—and specifically, with the map of that Secondary World—as a co-creation similar to what Tolkien described in *On Fairy Stories* and, metaphorically, in *Leaf by Niggle*. Not unlike what Tuan describes as occurring between an individual and a space when that individual has a moment of pause—the moment of genesis of place—the reader’s interaction with the Primary and Secondary Worlds of a fantasy novel, their immersion in that setting, may also be a moment of pause, wherein the reader develops a sense of place.

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1 Tuan makes the following distinction between human geography and his area of expertise, humanistic geography: human geography believes that “asymmetrical relationships and exploitation can be removed, or reversed,” whereas humanistic geography acknowledges that all human interactions are subject to this asymmetry, and instead believes that “we humans can face the most unpleasant facts, and even do something about them, without despair” (Tuan, 2004). The challenge is not to remove conflict, but to approach conflict with the belief that it may be resolved.
for that world—the Projective World. Rigsbee (1983), in studying Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and George MacDonald’s *The Princess and the Goblin*, alludes to the pause of an identity within a Secondary World in terms of the spiritual development of the reader: “[the readers’] selfhood is enriched, for the memories of their experiences in the fantasy places undergird their belief in the value of the imagination and in the importance of the intangible, spiritual dimensions of human existence” (p. 10). Both fields—children’s literature by way of literacy studies and humanistic geography—contain within them the belief that what occurs when a reader is transported into a Secondary World has a profound, lasting impact on that reader’s identity.

There are multiple places at work when a reader is immersed in a fantasy world. There is the place that exists as the reader is reading the text – the reader’s physical surroundings, as perceived by the reader himself, as the act of reading occurs. This, in Ekman’s terms, would be the Actual World. Depending on the type of fantasy, there may or may not be a Primary World – a world that may very similar to the reader’s Actual World but fictional nonetheless. Finally, there is the Secondary World – the “magical” world created by the author – such as Tolkien’s Middle-earth or Lewis’s Narnia or, in the case of this project, Christopher’s Alagaësia.

Scholarship pertaining to fantasy literature typically ends with the Secondary World. While some scholars will consider the metaphorical or allegorical themes expressed in an author’s Secondary World (Le Guin, 1999; Oziewicz, 2008; Pullman, 2001) the discussion still ultimately centers around the Secondary World and its meaning.

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2 The term *projective* used in this section is not derived from the cartographical term “projection,” which relates to the representation of any celestial sphere onto a plane surface. Rather, it relates to the writings of James Gee, as discussed further in this section.
Missing is the voice of the reader—specifically, the reader’s sense of place of this Secondary World that is created when the reader first interacts with the Secondary World and continues to grow and evolve thereafter, never fully formed, always becoming, much as the reader’s identity is never complete. At best, scholarship may consider the identity of an Implied Reader as defined by Iser; such scholars (Baker, 2006; Brisbois, 2005; Hunt, 1987; Rigsbee, 1983) describe the reader’s interaction with Secondary Worlds—and to a lesser extent, Primary Worlds³—but focus on a generalized “fantasy reader” who is assumed to interact with the text in a prescribed manner.

The theories of place offered by Tuan and humanistic geography describe how an individual might develop a sense of place, but they alone do not address how this occurs when a reader is interacting with a text. Humanistic geography tends to focus on interactions of individuals and spaces in the Actual World. As a reader must be transported into a Secondary World, so to must theories of place be brought into the Secondary World. Reader-response theory bridges the divide.

Influential in both literary theory and literacy, Rosenblatt’s *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (1978) described the transaction between a reader and a text, defining aesthetic reading as the reader being immersed in the text, creating a “poem” – a new text born of the transaction between the reader and text. “This [aesthetic reading] permits the whole range of responses generated by the text to enter into the center of awareness, and out of these materials he selects and weaves what he sees as the literary work of art” (pp. 28-29). In these moments of aesthetic reading, a reader has become immersed in the text.

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³ As this project focused on an “immersive” fantasy novel (Mendlesohn, 2008), wherein the narrative takes place entirely in a Secondary World, the framework set forth below will address only Secondary Worlds, although it may be applied to other types of fantasy novels.
Different from literary theories prior to the 1960s and 1970s, the work of Rosenblatt and other reader-response theorists emphasized that meaning lay not within the text itself, but within the transaction between the reader and the text. While this allows for a varying number of interpretations of any one text, Rosenblatt was not arguing that there was no meaning within the text itself. Rather, the meaning an individual reader would draw from a text was influenced by their identity—all that they had learned and experienced—and the way the text was interpreted in light of that unique identity. Two readers with different experiences might draw very similar meanings from a text, while another pair of readers with statistically similar identities might disagree entirely on the meaning behind a text.

If we are to believe, as I do, that story is the way in which we communicate with each other, and that every individual’s story is unique, then a literary theory that also emphasizes the importance of an individual’s identity and the meaning they create when interacting with a text is critical. In this project, then, reader-response theory is a natural fit for understanding what occurs when a reader interacts with a Secondary World. Where other scholars have written only of an Implied Reader, this project hopes to demonstrate how an individual reader’s sense of place—their Projective World—might be included in the conversations surrounding these Secondary Worlds.

Having bridged the divide between place and the Secondary World using reader-response theory, a closer examination of the interaction between a reader and that Secondary World is possible. As previously described, there exists the Actual World in which the reader is situated; and, using *The Inheritance Cycle* as the example, there is the
Secondary World of Alagaësia in which the reader becomes, to some degree, immersed during the reading transaction.

Scholars have chosen different ways to write about the interaction between reader and text—what Rosenblatt referred to as “poesis” (1978). In writing about video games as texts, James Gee (2007) describes the three identities involved in the transaction that takes place when an individual is playing a role-playing game, such as World of Warcraft: there is the identity of the player; the identity of the avatar – the template character a player modifies when playing the game; and finally, there is the identity of the player-as-character, what Gee refers to as the projective identity (p. 51). There is a transaction that occurs during game play, not unlike the transaction Rosenblatt describes during aesthetic reading, that results in a new identity – the projective identity – that is the unique combination of the game player/reader and the video game character/text.

In much the same way, the setting of the text, as it is read aesthetically, is unique to that reader in that particular, contextualized transaction. The reader projects not only their identity into the game; I would argue that their sense of place—of the Actual World, or of the Secondary World if they have encountered it in another form, such as a novel or film in the case of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*—is also projected into the game. The setting of the text, the Secondary World, becomes a Projective World. Crossing our metaphorical bridge back to theories of place, the philosopher Edward Casey explains that the reader knows the setting of the text because the reader *is* in the text; the reader is in the position to perceive the setting during the transaction of reading. “A place is more an *event* than a *thing* to be assimilated to known categories. As an event, it is unique,
idiolocal” (1996, p. 26). The event Casey describes can be thought of as the transaction in Rosenblatt’s theory of reader-response; the place of the transaction is unique to that reader, in that moment, in that context. That reader is projecting their identity and their own unique sense of place into that text, and experiencing the Secondary World in a way that cannot be duplicated, resulting in a Projective World.

Ryan’s *Narrative as Virtual Reality* likewise examines the potential for textual worlds—an additional term for settings/Secondary Worlds/literary landscapes—to become “real” for the reader. While her research focuses heavily on hypertext as a form of immersive text, her work begins with non-Virtual Reality (non-VR) texts. Ryan uses the term “immersion” to describe the reader’s interaction with a text, or Rosenblatt’s “poesis.” “In the phenomenology of reading, immersion is the experience through which a fictional world acquires the presence of an autonomous, language-independent reality populated with live human beings” (2001; p. 14). Ryan’s immersion is Gee’s projection, is Rosenblatt’s poesis; all involve the reader’s sense of being transported into the narrative in a unique, contextualized way. Unt (2010) describes the immersion as a blurring of boundaries between the “real world” and the “fictional world” during her observations of children’s play. Where Ryan’s work departs from Gee’s is in her emphasis on language, and the nuances in the way—and extent to which—a reader is transported by a text. Ryan explains that while uttering the word “Texas” may likely provide a reader with some measure of imaginative transport, that transport falls short of immersion; it is “a consequence of the speech act in a narrative context” (p. 95). This

4 In *Exploring the Work of Edward S. Casey: Giving Voice to Place, Memory, and Imagination* (2013), Casey defines idiolocal as a location that is somehow peculiar, unique, different.
“minimal form of transportation” is distinguished from the type of immersion that requires “the resonance in the reader’s mind of the aesthetic features of the text: plot, narrative, presentation, images, and style” (p. 96). Here Ryan acknowledges the importance images—of maps, for example—play in the verisimilitude of the Secondary World; they aid in the reader’s ability to be completely immersed in the text, in being able to project their identities into the narrative and experience it as Projective World.

Others have alluded to this interaction between reader and setting, although they identify an Implied Reader in order to focus on the interaction, rather than the individual reader. In analyzing Gunilla Lindquist’s modification of Vygotskian theories of play, Nilsson (2009) identifies the concept of a “playworld,” which is a jointly shared fictional world created by and shared by adults and children. Rieke (1983) uses the phrase “sense of place” in relation to children interacting with maps; however, the term is used to describe the child’s knowledge of geography, rather than any individual connection to place, whether interacting with the Actual World or a Secondary World.

Thus far we have considered the reader’s interaction with the Secondary World at a higher level, considering the reading transaction to include the text in its entirety. When dealing with place, however, and Secondary Worlds, the existence of a map as a convention of the fantasy genre and its presence in much of the scholarship relating to Secondary Worlds warrants closer examination.

The map that appears at the beginning of a fantasy novel is indelibly changed once readers have projected themselves into the text, in the same manner that Rosenblatt’s text is forever changed by the reading transaction. This new map—or perhaps mappamundi, to repurpose the Medieval term previously mentioned, given the
unique, personal context of each representation—is not the same map as that which appears at the beginning of the fantasy novel, regardless of any physical resemblance it may have to the map in the novel—for that reader. And therein lies the importance of providing space for the individual reader’s voice to describe their sense of place of the Secondary World—to describe that Projective World. What the research participants in this project have in common is that the map now represents for each of them a unique Projective World, one that has meaning beyond the moments when they are reading (or re-reading as is the case with most of them) the Inheritance Cycle. To view these interactions with the map of Alagaësia as a representation of the Secondary World of The Inheritance Cycle is now inaccurate as it suggests the meaning is held within the text of the map, rather than the poesis between reader and map; it overlooks, to use Rosenblatt’s term, the aesthetic reading of the map; the reader’s voice is silenced.

Choosing to focus on the interactions between readers and the map of Alagaësia specifically is to emphasize the paratext over the text while recognizing the interplay between the two. In order to do so, we turn again to what maps are thought to do for readers—including both maps of the Actual World and the Secondary World. In so doing we are not discounting the beauty and skill of the language used to describe setting, for there would be nothing to map without it. Instead, we are acknowledging the uniqueness of the convention of mapping within the genre of fantasy and what draws readers to it, for each of the participants in this research project in some way expressed a passion for fantasy maps, and it is what led them to participate as fully as they did.

As we explored earlier, the concept of mapping is by no means new; maps as we think of them today—as means of “wayfinding” or navigating within our own Actual
World—have been identified from as early as 1160 BCE, an approximation of when an Egyptian map on papyrus is thought to have been created, considered the earliest road map (Akerman & Karrow, 2007). Nor is the concept of mapping concise; contemporary reference sources list no fewer than ten categories of definitions for the term “map,” citing, among others, the fields of geography, genetics, mathematics, and physiology in its development. It is no surprise, then, that the theoretical frameworks that have been applied to the concept of mapping are as disparate as the sources of its use. It is worthwhile to explore these applications independent of the history of cartography previously discussed.

At its foundation, the term “map” derives its meaning from geography, with the OED’s definition below encompassing how most would define a map:

A drawing or other representation of the earth's surface or a part of it made on a flat surface, showing the distribution of physical or geographical features (and often also including socio-economic, political, agricultural, meteorological, etc., information), with each point in the representation corresponding to an actual geographical position according to a fixed scale or projection; a similar representation of the positions of stars in the sky, the surface of a planet, or the like.

The intention of a map is, then, to represent—a place, an idea—and to provide a means of preserving and communicating that representation in a recognizable form.

Traditionally, mapping, or cartography, has been the dominion of science, seen as an attempt to document, with increasing accuracy, the unknown world. Lewis Carroll humorously illustrates this phase of geography in the last novel published before his death, *Sylvie and Bruno*, wherein he explains that a completely accurate representation of the real-world could never exist because it would be the exact size of the real world, and thus obscure the real world completely (Mucignat, 2013). During the Enlightenment,
cartography was considered objective and empirical; it was a scientific endeavor to represent the “truth” of the spaces on the globe.

As the world became the “known world,” the “blank spaces” that had inspired many unknown land adventure stories disappeared from maps, and the underlying intentions of cartography shifted from representation to colonization, with an emphasis on establishing borders and ownership. Post-structuralism brought about further changes, where the “author” of a map was no longer viewed as a god-like creator of a scientific representation, but rather as part of a conversation that now involves the active participation of a reader (Mitchell, 2008, p. 14). This phase in thought and theory is especially important when considering fantasy maps, wherein the author is a god-like creator, responsible for the genesis of the world in which the novel is set. This is not to say that the Author creates in a vacuum—obviously, the author is influenced by a myriad of factors. Citing Foucault’s metaphor of geology, Mucignat (2013) provides a useful interpretation of post-structuralist thought:

…Michel Foucault identifies the main characteristic of the modern episteme of the nineteenth century in the discovery of an ‘obscure verticality’ under the surface of things, an invisible substratum on which the emerged visible rests, which contains the ultimate meaning and, so to speak, the kernel of reality. In this context, the representation of nature, life, and human societies acquires a new sense of depth: there is something in them that is not immediately visible to the eye, something that sinks below the surface, escaping the formal description of the traditional horizontal taxonomy (pp. 18-19).

In Foucault’s (and Mucignat’s) terms, then, the map of the Enlightenment era is a map of the surface, while a post-structuralist view of the map plumbs the depths of the substrata, where the reader’s sense of place of the fantasy world is buried. Post-structuralist thought allows for the importance of the reader’s experience of the map
along side of, or in addition to, the author’s creation of it; it allows for a consideration of what occurs among the reader, the map, and the author during the reading transaction. Carroll’s work in *Landscape in Children’s Literature* (2011) offers a similar understanding through her employment of the techniques of landscape historians, viewing landscape as a palimpsest. “…Landscapes began to be viewed as historical texts, as deep palimpsests on which the traces of the past are still visible even when the present age is being inscribed” (p. 4). Carroll’s concept of landscape as palimpsest is useful in explaining the map of a Projective World. Each time the reader interacts with the map, they are adding new meaning—new senses of place—to that Projective World. As an identity changes, so too does that identity’s transaction with the text; neither are ever “complete;” they are always becoming. The map becomes layered with each of those meanings; each is inscribed over the last, traces of each remaining part of the whole.

Theories of place provide a means of understanding why readers would continue to interact with the setting of a fantasy novel—and specifically, with the map found at the beginning of the novel—beyond the context of reading the novel; in fact, Rosenblatt would argue that such interactions are still part of the reading transaction. Place is space that has been made meaningful by the experience of an individual’s identity. Important because it represents the interaction between an individual and their landscape, place represents more than geographic location, more than an individual’s position in space and time. Place is inexorably tied up in the creation of identity; our identity influences how/when we will see space as place, while at the same time the places we encounter impact how we see ourselves. We are always placed, and we are always both being and becoming (developing our identities). Our identities are no more permanent than our
physical location; as we move throughout space, creating new places, we move toward our future selves. Place need not be linked to any geographical reality. The list of places to which we are most strongly attached might include our childhood bedroom or a favorite teacher’s classroom, but they might just as likely include the setting from a favorite picture book or novel. Eudora Welty (2002) beautifully asserted the importance of place within a novel, the strength of the setting that would render a story unrecognizable if the characters and plot were moved elsewhere (p. 47). For many readers, Bag End and the Shire are as crucial as Bilbo Baggins himself; without this idyllic home place, *The Hobbit* would not work as it does; there must be a Shire to which Bilbo may journey back again, and no other place would do. “Location is the ground conductor of all the currents of emotion and belief and moral conviction that charge out from the story in its course” (Welty, 2002, pp. 53-54). For Casey, “[t]here is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it” (1996, p. 18). The reading of a story—in Rosenblatt’s terms, the transaction between reader and text—has the act of transporting the reader into the place of the novel. The reader’s experience as they journey from page to page with the characters creates a unique sense of place, the result of the reader’s identity being projected into the setting of the novel.

The interaction between an identity and space in those moments of pause that Tuan described renders place integral in the understanding of the setting of a fantasy novel as Projective World. The map, read one way as a representation of the poesis described in Rosenblatt’s transaction, is more than the Enlightenment’s superficial representation of the geographical surface of the novel’s setting, or any real-world
correlation to the map. The map represents those substrata described by Foucault, the palimpsest of Carroll’s research; the meanings made by the readers and the convergence of those meanings with those of the author and myself as a researcher are the focus of this project. Theories of place allow me to speak out against the pressures to bring quantitative methods to bear on what I view as an intensely personal, and ultimately more meaningful, aspect of the relationship between readers and texts.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter situated the paratextual convention of fantasy mapping within several contexts. A brief history of cartography was provided to determine how this project defines “map” and to then understand how maps and children have been associated in the past. Having established this context, the concept of mapping as a convention of the genre of fantasy was examined, including the foundations established by Tolkien and the spectrum of work by other scholars. Special attention was devoted to the different terms scholars have used to talk about the settings of fantasy literature, clearly defining those used in this project. The chapter concluded with the perceived gap in these areas—specifically, the lack of the individual reader’s voice and sense of place within the scholarship—and the conceptual framework of a Projective World, which creates a space for those voices to be heard.
Chapter 3

Methodology

“It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord of the Rings

Introduction

The purpose of this research project was to understand how the map in a fantasy novel might be interpreted as having purpose beyond creating verisimilitude—beyond helping a reader track a character’s movements from one location to the next in the Secondary World created by the author, making that Secondary World seem “real” to the reader. By studying the author and readers of a fantasy series, this project attempted to observe, describe and interpret the ways in which readers of a fantasy series interacted with that series’ fantasy map during multiple contexts of the reading transaction. Such interactions were seen as evidence of the reader having developed a personal attachment to the Secondary World that transcended the reading transaction—as evidence of a Projective World. This understanding would create a space within the literature relating to fantasy maps that acknowledges the reader’s voice.

This research study addressed four main questions: (1) What are the participants’ experiences with the genre of fantasy and the paratextual convention of mapping? (2) How do readers describe their interactions with a fantasy map when reading? (3) How, if
at all, have readers interacted with the fantasy map beyond reading the book? (4) How might those interactions be interpreted or understood as evidence of Projective Place?

This chapter begins with an overview of the research methodology, design, and rationale for choosing a qualitative research project. The chapter then establishes the methods used for the recruitment and selection of research participants and describes the information necessary to respond to the research questions set forth above. Data collection and analysis are then described, and the chapter concludes with consideration of the ethics, trustworthiness and limitations of the project.

**Rationale for Qualitative Research Design**

**Qualitative Inquiry**

The aim of this research project was, from the start, to understand why readers developed a strong connection to the Secondary Worlds so often found in fantasy. A great deal of literature had been written about the way that maps served the narrative, creating verisimilitude, but the reader in these hypothetical reading transactions remained an Implied Reader (Iser, 1974). Missing was the experience of any actual readers—it was taken for granted that, for example, the fans of Tolkien’s work, who is often acknowledged to have created the expectation for the paratextual convention of mapping within the genre of fantasy, interacted with and had the same appreciation of the map of Middle-earth. Other work (Ekman, 2013) approached the concept of fantasy mapping in a
quantitative manner, focusing on the style and frequency of maps within a sample of fantasy novels for adults.

The lack of voice on the part of the reader necessitated a qualitative approach to conducting this research project. The reader—especially the child reader—is, in essence, a colonized identity (Rose, 1984). Literature for children, with few exceptions (including the first novel of *The Inheritance Cycle, Eragon*, which was written when Christopher was fifteen), is not written by children; children’s literature is written by adults, published by adults, marketed by adults, and often purchased by adults. Access to literature might be controlled by adults as well, through familial censorship, such as parents forbidding the reading of certain types of texts, or through other layers of control, such as libraries restricting access based on age, or the censorship and banning of books at an institutional level. Of course, all these attempts may be subverted, and often are, which makes the importance of creating space for the reader’s voice that much more essential.

The goal was, quite simply, to understand. As Marshall & Rossman (2011) state, “many qualitative studies are descriptive and exploratory: They build rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature” (p. 68). This project was designed to be descriptive; missing are the elements associated with other forms of qualitative research like critical, feminist, or post-modern analysis; it is “silent about critique, action, advocacy, empowerment, or emancipation” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As a qualitative study, the purpose was to investigate a phenomenon, explain the patterns related to the phenomenon in question, and to describe the phenomenon for the audience (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).
At first, the goal was to understand how an author’s own sense of place was infused into map of a Secondary World. After my initial interviews with Christopher were completed, my interests in fantasy mapping and place evolved to include the reader as a participant. My new (additional) goal was to understand why readers developed an attachment to a Secondary World through their interactions with the paratextual convention of a fantasy map. As I collected data, a more nuanced goal emerged; to understand not only why readers developed such an attachment, but to consider that there was more than one way to examine and understand that attachment; that such an attachment was being expressed in unexpected and creative ways.

The interpretivist paradigm as described by Clifford Geertz has, as its central purpose, the goal of understanding (Glesne, 2011), and it served to address the evolution of my study during data collection. Interpretivists share the goal of “understanding human ideas, actions, and interactions in specific contexts or in terms of the wider culture” (p. 8). Specifically, this research project was designed to “[access] the perspectives of several members of the same social group about some phenomena [to] begin to say something about cultural patterns of thought and action for that group” (p. 8). Such an interpretivist approach typically employs qualitative methods, and allows for the observance of patterns, rather than an average or “norm,” within the data that creates a natural space for the inclusion of the participant’s voice.

The adaptation of the research project to include readers of The Inheritance Cycle created a unique challenge. I wanted to understand a very personal phenomenon—the development of a sense of place as described by Tuan (1977) and others—but I wanted that attachment between reader and Secondary World to be authentic and preexisting,
independent of my interest as a researcher. To contact this type of reader, however, would mean contacting the fan base of the series, which meant it would be impractical to conduct the type of in-depth, in-person interviews that are frequently found in qualitative research. I considered selecting a small group of children and then reading *The Inheritance Cycle* with them, but again, I had concerns related to the readers’ connection to the Secondary World of Alagaësia being authentic, rather than contrived. Seidman (2006) describes several reasons for avoiding interviews with people already known to you, including issues of inequity and vulnerability—concerns that were mediated by choosing to recruit participants from the fan base for *The Inheritance Cycle*.

The compromise in light of these concerns was to turn to internet ethnographic methods (sometimes referred to as virtual ethnography) to conduct interviews electronically, via e-mail, rather than in person, as one of my methods of data collection. Marshall & Rossman (2011) validate the use of internet ethnography as a qualitative research method as it responds to the “observation that social life in contemporary society communicates, interacts, and lives more online” (p. 25). In instances where a community is established and exists primarily, if not entirely, in a virtual setting, traditional qualitative methods may not be possible or appropriate. While there is much criticism over internet ethnographic methods, Marshall & Rossman (2011) offer that they “allow for more reflective, participant-driven textual responses” (p. 25). The limitations of this type of qualitative research are discussed below.
The Role of the Qualitative Researcher

As stated above, an important part of my research as a scholar of children’s literature is giving voice to those readers who might otherwise be overlooked or silenced during its discussion. In some way, this project is a convergence of those voices. Many of the research participants are adolescent or young adult readers, or were at the time they first encountered Paolini’s series, the first book having been published in 2004. Paolini himself was 13 when he began planning and drawing the map of Alagaësia. Including Arya, an adolescent reader, in the trip to Montana was a conscious attempt to shift the focus of the dissertation away from my own experiences with Alagaësia and Projective Worlds. My goal was for the dissertation to be structured in such a way that expresses my interpretations while emphasizing the importance of the research participants’ voices, which echoes the importance of Rosenblatt’s theory of reader response—focusing on the reader’s interaction with the text, rather than valuing the text as authority.

Rationale for Grounded Theory as Methodology

Grounded Theory

The methodology used for this project was Grounded Theory, drawing specifically on the concept of “constant case comparison” which examines data “in terms of such things as events, participants, settings, or word use” (Glesne, 2011, p. 187). I had concerns that, being relatively new to human participant research, my own experiences and thoughts with regard to interactions involving fantasy maps and theories of place
would have too strong an influence on what I found during data collection (although as a Qualitative researcher I accept, if not celebrate, the freedom to be a participant in my own research and understand that my influence could never be entirely eliminated). At the same time, the theoretical framework of Projective Worlds guided me toward a narrower set of questions, focusing my research on a specific transaction within a specific context, rather than broad categories originally considered for the project. For example, while I knew I would be contacting “fans” as potential participants, it was not their status as “fans” that was of interest; rather, they were readers of a particular text (Eragon) within a particular genre (Fantasy) who expressed an interest in a particular part of the text (the map of Alagaësia). Therefore, a methodology more suited to interviewing a large population about their fandom—perhaps ethnographic or case study methodologies—would not be as useful in this research context. The explanation of Grounded Theory as a methodology that I relied upon in making my decision is as follows:

Grounded theory work involves specific procedures for data collection and analysis that include continual data sampling, coding, categorizing, and comparing in order to generate theory about social phenomena. In very simplified terms, the grounded theorist collects data (through interviews and observations) on a topic, analyzes that data for conceptual categories, links the categories into a tentative theory, and then collects more data to see how the theory fits. This process repeats and continues with the researcher further developing conceptual categories and modifying the theory with each new set of data (Glesne, 2011, p. 21).

By using Grounded Theory in general, and more specifically the concept of Constant Case Comparison, as my methodology, I could pause between each phase of data collection—and even during data collection with a single participant—to observe the themes emerging and adjust my subsequent questions accordingly, all the while going
back to the theoretical framework of Projective Worlds to determine whether or not its relevance remained.

The Role of the Researcher

My position as researcher in this project was intended to be that of “researcher as learner” (Glesne, 2011). I had a set of research questions in mind, based on a pilot project that had led to the development of my theoretical framework of Projective Worlds, and I hoped to interact with my participants to learn from them; I was, as Glesne described, “a curious student who comes to learn from and with research participants” (p. 60). In order to keep the interviews focused on the participants’ experiences as readers, despite their being contacted through their identity as fans of *The Inheritance Cycle*, I planned my initial contact from the position of researcher, rather than fellow fan. This intent was disrupted, however, when unsolicited, Christopher reposted my initial Twitter message on his Facebook page with the language “Do you love the Inheritance Cycle and fantasy maps? Then you can help with fan Laura D’Aveta’s project:” (see Figure 3-2 below). This event led to anxiety on my part with regard to my positioning as a researcher, rather than fan. It is unclear to me whether or not the participants were aware of this subtle distinction, or whether or not it had any influence on the amount of participants who chose to be interviewed; I chose not to draw attention to the term during my interactions with the participants. It is possible, even, that in so doing, Christopher helped me establish a rapport with his fans that would not have existed without his identification of me as a fan. I did, however, elect to remove an autoethnographic component from the
scope of the research to honor my goal of keeping the focus on the readers, choosing to emphasize my identity as a researcher, rather than a reader or fan.

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

Recruitment

As a participant in the pilot study that inspired the theoretical framework of Projective Place, Arya was not initially considered as a participant in this research project beyond the scope of that original study. I had planned to use data relating to her having drawn the map of her fantasy world, Arcanus, to illustrate this project’s theoretical framework, but had not planned on conducting any additional interviews with her. Instead, I had intended to focus on a published author. The decision to involve Arya would, like many other components of the project, evolve out of my ongoing analysis of data as it was collected.

Christopher was likewise selected because of his connection to fantasy mapping. I was aware, as a scholar of young adult literature, that Christopher was an adolescent at the time the first novel in The Inheritance Cycle (Eragon) was written. With the theoretical framework of Projective Worlds having been established in the research project involving Arya, my interest in the concept of a fantasy map representing a child’s/adolescent’s sense of place being projected into a Secondary World continued, and Christopher presented an additional opportunity to interview a (former) child/adolescent who had drawn a fantasy map, the other more famous examples being
those maps drawn by the Brontës and Thomas Malkin, with whom interviews had never been conducted.

During the course of my interviews of Christopher, he mentioned the subject of fan art, and I learned of the existence of “retellings” of the map of Alagaësia made by fans. This represented another source of data, and the scope of the research project was expanded to include fans.

With Christopher’s cooperation, digital communications were sent out to his fan base via Twitter and Facebook, requesting that interested parties visit a website, fantasymapproject.wix.com/theproject, in order to learn a bit about the project and indicate their interest in participating (see Figures 3-1 and 3-2 below). If they submitted their name and e-mail address, they were included in the research project.

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![Twitter announcement of project retweeted by Christopher Paolini.](image)

**Figure 3-1:** Twitter announcement of project retweeted by Christopher Paolini.
As I had continued to include my pilot study in my thinking with regard to Projective Worlds, so to did I continue conversations with family and friends who inquired about the status of my doctoral program. Arya’s parents were part of that group, and during one such conversation, Arya’s mother informed me that Arya had read *The Inheritance Cycle* the previous week and was a huge fan of Christopher’s work. As I described my own intentions to travel to Montana to explore the Actual World landscape that Christopher cited as inspiration, Arya’s mother suggested that I should take Arya with me. My last participant was thus recruited.
Participants

As a result of the digital communications sent out by Christopher, 68 participants submitted their contact information to the project’s website (fantasymapproject.wix.com) and were sent the initial interview packet. Of those initial participants, 26 returned their completed interview packets. Those participants ranged in age from 15 to 34, and were located in 10 different countries (see in Figure 3-3 below; participant countries are shaded grey).

![Map of Participant Locations](https://www.amcharts.com/visited_countries/)

Figure 3-3: Map of Participant Locations.

The interview data from this initial participant pool was reviewed, applying the grounded theory methodology previously described above. Several participants responded affirmatively to the question in Section Three of Interview Part One (see Appendix B) that pertained to whether or not they had created any “artwork inspired by or related to the Inheritance Cycle” (Interview Part One), and this affirmative response

5 I did not conduct any follow-up communications with the 42 participants who did not return the initial interview packet.
was seen as evidence of interactions with the map of Alagaësia that extended the reading transaction. As this type of evidence began to emerge, these nine participants were selected for a second interview. Each participant was sent a unique Interview Part Two packet that specifically addressed and extended the interview in relation to his or her responses to Interview Part One. Of those nine, seven returned their second interview packet.

A brief description of each of the final participants and their experience with the genre of fantasy is presented below. The order of the participants is not intended to suggest any thoughts of importance or significance. As discussed in the literature review, this project, in part, seeks to honor Tolkien’s thoughts regarding co-creation, as expressed in Leaf by Niggle. The participants have been listed alphabetically by their first name (in the case of Christopher) or their chosen pseudonyms.

**Arya**

Arya, who is now fourteen and lives in Columbus, Ohio, was twelve at the time she first described her experience as a fan of the fantasy genre. She enjoys fantasy in a variety of formats—namely, books, films, and especially music; she enjoys the genre of music called “Epic,” which is reminiscent of many fantasy film scores, some of which she played during our drives through the mountains in Montana (Arya, Interview Transcript 031114). Arya named the Warrior Cats series as one of her more recent favorite fantasy book series, as well as her enjoyment of the Narnia books. She is also an avid Marvel Universe fan, citing Thor and The Avengers as her favorite fantasy movies.
Arya is home schooled, and spends a large portion of her spare time reading. She first read *The Inheritance Cycle* in the summer of 2015, and completed all four novels in approximately two weeks.

**Brom**

A 22 year old college senior in West St. Paul, Minnesota, Brom self-identifies as a voracious reader who reads daily and finishes one book per week at a minimum. Brom’s description of fantasy as a genre indicates an understanding of the nuances of fantasy’s subgenres and the difficulty in establishing genre boundaries that appears in scholarly debates around the topic.

One of the fundamental aspects of fantasy as a genre is that it is the genre of the impossible or highly improbable yet fascinating; it is simultaneously the genre of the “not” and of the “if only.” It inspires in the heart and mind of the reader an overwhelming sense of wonder. These are not distinctive of the fantasy genre, however. Defining what uniquely makes a novel belong to the category of fantasy is tough because of how varied the genre has become and how complex such categorizations are. Once I would have said a fantasy novel contains dragons, wizards, sword fights, elves, and a fat little hobbit or two. I breathed the air of Middle-earth and concluded that it and it alone was he fantasy genre. If those elements did not exist in a story, it wasn’t a fantasy novel. Period. Then I read Terry Brooks’ *Voyage of the Jerle Shannara* trilogy followed by Brandon Sanderson’s *Mistborn* trilogy and had all of my categories shattered. Now, I say that a fantasy novel is a novel in which fictitious creatures or beings, fictitious settings and terrestrial mechanics, and/or fictitious powers exist. Vampires, elves, impossibly high mountains, a steady downpour of falling ash, words that can manipulate the world, and the power to communicate with other beings by thought all find their resting place beneath the umbrella of fantasy. Something else that sets fantasy apart from other genres is that, while a person may not be able to describe what fantasy is or how to identify it, he knows it when he reads it (Brom, Interview Part One).
Brom’s enjoyment of fantasy extends beyond reading. He describes an enjoyment of films and video games that are based on several of his favorite fantasy books, and he indicates a connection between watching these films and the ability to be immersed in their Secondary Worlds.

I love the *Lord of the Rings* movies and video games because they provide the reader with a visual and auditory depiction of the world he once inhabited in his imagination alone and enable him to explore parts of Middle-earth that were only mentioned in passing in the books or in supplementary literature. I also enjoy them because they bring me a tiny bit closer to inhabiting Tolkien’s rich landscapes and experiencing the things the characters experience. I love the *Harry Potter* films for the same reasons (Brom, *Interview Part One*).

Brom describes expressing his pleasure in reading fantasy literature that echoes Christopher and Arya’s experiences in that the narrative of the text was often reenacted through imaginative play.

A book was my favorite pastime growing up. I would read and read and read until I could read no more; then I would go outside and reenact what I read in the woods with sticks for swords or staffs or wands (Brom, *Interview Part One*).

**Christopher**

The author of *The Inheritance Cycle*, Christopher Paolini was fifteen at the time he completed the first novel, *Eragon*, and the map of Alagaësia. He recallsdisliking reading when he was young:

And while I did learn the method of reading, I didn’t understand the purpose, and I certainly didn’t enjoy the process. I still remember saying to my mom, when I was five or so, ‘*I hate* reading. I’m never going to use it my entire life.’ And I believed it too (Christopher, *Interview Part One*).
Christopher’s love of reading changed once he was permitted to select his own books at the local public library and chose a detective novel aimed at children, whose title and author he can no longer recall.

And for whatever reason, when I took the book home and started to read it, it was as if a switch got flipped inside of my head. All of a sudden, instead of just seeing the words on the page, I could see and feel the things they represented. It was, and remains, the closest thing to magic I’ve ever experienced. And for me it embodies the greatest appeal of writing; the ability of an author to transport readers to different places, different times, and most importantly, different minds (Christopher, Interview Part One).

Christopher developed into a voracious reader, which he credits, in part, to being home schooled, living in rural Montana, and having little else to do (Christopher, Interview Part One). This very rural setting also seems to have influenced the genres of literature that appealed to Christopher.

Fantasy and survival books, such as Hatchet by Gary Paulsen, appealed to me the most, although I also loved sci-fi. Those first two genres fired my imagination in ways others didn’t because, despite the impossibilities of many fantasies, they were closer to my day-to-day experience than a story set in, for example, contemporary New York City. When I went outside, I was surrounded by trees and plants and animals and often extremely harsh weather, and I saw nature not as it’s so often portrayed—pure and innocent and free of humanity’s supposed sins—but as it really is, red in tooth and claw: eagles scooping fish out of the river, cats playing with and eating mice, foxes hunting ground squirrels, and an endless parade of dead deer, killed by numerous different causes. Most of the books I came across didn’t deal with those things, and the few that did, often didn’t understand how the world as I experienced it actually worked. But fantasy did.

The connection Christopher describes between his experience reading fantasy and his sense of place of rural Montana foreshadows the connections found between the Actual World and the Secondary World of Alagaësia.
Firnen

At sixteen, Firnen represents the youngest participant in this project (with the exception of Arya). A tenth grader in Canberra, Australia, he has read the Harry Potter series at least 40 times, and has also read-and re-read *The Inheritance Cycle*, *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* (Firnen, Interview Part One).

To me, a fantasy book must transport you to another time or place where your imagination can run free, and where impossible things are possible: magic, dragons, dwarves and giants, elves and goblins, and an unlikely protagonist locked in an epic battle with an evil deity. Obviously, there’s a lot I can’t cover in this brief description, but I’d also like to mention the world – to create a good fantasy book, the author should put a lot of effort into world building. Not a “boring” or “uninteresting” world like our own, but one that readers *want* to believe in. Oh, and that’s not to say our world is boring … I just think that fantasy worlds can be created to be more interesting, more magical, and more dangerous (Firnen, Interview Part One).

Firnen, who also enjoys fantasy television shows and films, returns to the power of Secondary Worlds when describing what he enjoys about fantasy literature. Here he provides perhaps the clearest expression of the concept of a Projective World offered by any of the participants.

For me, the best part about reading fantasy is to be transported to another world. A good author who has spent a lot of time and effort building their world can make a reader not only believe in the world that they are trying to create, but imagine themselves in that world too, with the characters and exploring the places (Firnen, Interview Part One).

While Firnen used to read daily, he indicates that his reading has “slowed down” as he has become busier with school work and other commitments, that include, in large part, his interaction with the map of Alagaësia that go beyond reading the books.
Glaedr

Glaedr, at 27, is one of the oldest participants in this study. A Hannibal, Missouri resident with a Bachelor’s degree in Communication Arts, Glaedr identifies as reading “constantly,” both fiction and other texts, in the pursuit of personal academic interests “such as pan-mythology, Celtic studies, and current urban legends, modern folklore etc. [sic]” (Glaedr, Interview Part One). He has read extensively in the genre of fantasy, and also enjoys fantasy films and video games. Glaedr’s definition of the fantasy genre and his enjoyment of the same are tied closely the genre’s convention of setting the narrative in a Secondary World:

Fantasy is usually begun with a general ‘what-if’ premise. But usually, unlike Sci-fi, it relies on non-mechanical qualities. Also, it primarily has to do with engaging the imagination to plumb the depths of deep questions about Truth. Fantasy telling is all about the act of sub-creation, where the author weaves their art to entertain, move, inspire (etc. all the ways which Art can affect us). Fantasy is high Story at its best. … The best kind of fantasy transports me immersively into the story at hand. I also love whenever fantasy betters reality by revealing wonder in the every day. I also love the notion of pan-truth, or the idea that similar notions pop up again and again across a wide spectrum of time, authors, and even genres (Tolkien’s On Fairy Stories, etc.) (Glaedr, Interview Part One).

While Glaedr’s responses regarding the genre of fantasy were brief, his answers to subsequent questions relating to the map of Alagaësia and the creation of his own fantasy map demonstrate a complex understanding of the genre.

Murtagh

Murtagh, a 21 year old senior in college in Lyon, France, who, like Oromis, does not read as much as she did when younger, but still enjoys reading, describing the act of
curating her book collection as something that also brings pleasure. “I don’t read as much but I still enjoy reading and buying more and more books. I like beginning a series and make it a collection that I put on a shelf with almost pride” (Murtagh, Interview Part One). Murtagh’s collection includes fantasy series, namely “Lord of the Rings, Narnia, La Malerune (Pierre Grimbert), The Banned and the Banished, [and] Knights of Emerald” (Murtagh, Interview Part One).

Murtagh’s understanding of fantasy as a genre and her enjoyment of both relate to the presence of Secondary Worlds.

I would say that a fantasy book is a book mixing a realistic world with ingredients that don’t and can’t exist in our real world. These ingredients are part of the world even if they may not be understandable for people living there. Then, fantasy books often take place in medieval worlds where there are sword fighting, kings and common people, horse travelling and so …

I can travel in marvelous worlds where everything seems possible, where I can meet fantastic beasts and do magic! (Murtagh, Interview Part One).

This sense of immersion occurs in Murtagh’s experience with other forms of fantasy texts as well:

I like movies too, because in movies we can also see different and original types of clothing, or architecture, which we have to imagine ourselves while reading, and I think pictures make thing [sic] even more real and it is like our dreams came true. I don’t play video games but I think the same about their graphiscs [sic] which help us to enter another universe. When I was younger I used to play at Dungeons & Dragons with my family, it was even better to be one of the character [sic] of the story because what is happening is in some kind happening to me (Murtagh, Interview Part One).

Murtagh’s suggestion that pictures – or perhaps paratextual items such as a map – make things even more real echoes theories that maps aid in verisimilitude; but by
extending that to explain it being “like our dreams came true” indicates the unique, personal nature of the interaction between reader and image.

**Nasuada**

Nasuada is a nineteen year old college sophomore from Columbus, Ohio whose extensive reading within the genre of fantasy includes books by Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Cornelia Funke, Rick Riordan, and Sarah Prineas, and she has read *The Inheritance Cycle* at least three times. She is drawn to fantasy literature because she likes “escaping into another world, where you can be anyone and do anything,” and believes that the “most important element of fantasy … is that it takes place in a world that we cannot travel to, or create in the future” (Nasuada, *Interview Part One*). Nasuada describes her reading habits:

I read far more often than I should, given my course load. I used to read almost constantly, to the point where my grade school teachers even stopped complaining about it because they knew I could read and pay attention at the same time. Nowadays, I read less, but still several hours a week, virtually all outside of my assigned reading (Nasuada, *Interview Part One*).

Nasuada also enjoys playing fantasy video games, including *Dragon Age: Origins* and *Dragon Age 2*, and her enjoyment is strongly related to her sense of immersion when playing the games, of being able to see how her actions in the game have an impact on later events (Nasuada, *Interview Part One*).
Oromis provided an extensive list of fantasy books/series she had read, including books by Tolkien, Ursula K. LeGuin, Terry Pratchett, Robert Jordan, Susan Cooper, Lloyd Alexander, and several others. She also enjoys fantasy films, citing the recent Lord of the Rings films as “one of the best made fantasy flicks (series)” (Oromis, Interview Part One). At 23, Oromis no longer reads as avidly as she did when she was a student, and is much more selective with what she reads, often returning to books she has already read.

I used to read a lot (1-2 books a week) in elementary and junior high school, but that’s died down a lot. I read outside of assigned reading all the time, and during the summer my family went to the library about once or twice a week. Since high school and especially college, I’ve read less and less. I’ve gotten a lot more picky about what I read, and I’m spending a lot more time with friends and socializing than reading. I currently read about a book a month, often books that I’ve already read once or twice before” (Oromis, Interview Part One).

Oromis describes a fantasy book as “any book where the world functions on elements that do not exist in our world and cannot be explained by technobabble” and features “a romanticized view of previous eras with a large focus on honor, quests, and larger-than-life characters” (Oromis, Interview Part One).

I enjoy reading about moral struggles. Fantasy tends to have very deliberate battles between good and evil, which other genres do not. I like immersing myself in a fantastical and faraway location, which is what I like about series over standalones. Redwall is one of my favorite series, not just for story and character but largely for the world Jacques created. It’s also why that’s the only series I’ve written serious fanfiction for; there’s so much of the world to be explored (Oromis, Interview Part One).

Her enjoyment of fantasy literature expresses an interest in theme as well as the uniqueness often found in fantasy literary landscapes.
Orrin

Orrin, 27, who currently lives in Melbourne, Australia, has read extensively in the genre of fantasy, listing several books/series as favorites, including *The Farseer Trilogy*, *Lord of the Rings*, *The Obernewtyn Chronicles*, *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, *the Tenabran Trilogy*, *Abhorsen*, and *Harry Potter*. Orrin defines fantasy as “a story that contains impossible elements such as magic, nonhuman non-alien sentient races, and things that cannot be achieved with technology” (Orrin, *Interview Part One*). Orrin credits his enjoyment of fantasy literature to “the escapism of reading about a place that doesn’t exist, and interest in learning how that world works and how the characters live within it” (Orrin, *Interview Part One*). He also enjoys fantasy video/computer games and films. Orrin reads “often, and widely” (Orrin, *Interview Part One*).

Information Needed

The information needed for this research project evolved as data was collected, as was expected to happen using a Grounded Theory approach.

In order to understand the relationship between my research participants—author, readers, and fans—and the Secondary Worlds of fantasy literature, I first needed to understand what drew them to the genre of fantasy literature. The initial interview packet was designed to obtain two of the four areas of information typically collected in qualitative research—demographic and contextual—while the second (and any subsequent) interviews focused on perceptual information (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).
After understanding the context in which my participants were situated—members of a community that engaged with and had an appreciation for fantasy as a genre and that genre’s convention of mapping—through the first interview, I next needed to focus on the perceptual information needed in response to my research questions. Bloomberg & Volpe (2008) define perceptual information as “participants’ descriptions and explanations of their experiences as this relates to the phenomenon under study.” The second (and subsequent) interviews were designed to engage the participants in additional descriptions of their interactions with the map which would allow me to understand how the map in fantasy might represent a different way of thinking about the reader’s engagement with the Secondary World.

**Research Design**

**Timeline**

The proposal for this research study was approved by my doctoral dissertation committee in March 2015 and then by my university’s Institutional Review Board on June 15, 2015. Prior to that, a pilot study involving one participant, Arya, had taken place in March 2014, with separate IRB approval having been obtained on February 15, 2014. The recruitment of participants for this project took place during the months of August and September 2015; interviews began as participants were recruited and continued through October of 2015. Participants were given the opportunity to review my writing pertaining to them—a phase known as member-checking—in March and April of 2016.
Data Collection Methods

The first source of data collection in this project was a qualitative interview with the Christopher Paolini, the author of *The Inheritance Cycle* and creator of the map of Alagaësia, and represents the original scope of the research project. A modified version of Irving Seidman’s “Three-Interview Series” structure was used, allowing the researcher to obtain a “focused life history, details of the experience [being studied], and reflection on the meaning [of the experience] (2006, pp. 16-18). The first two phases were combined in one interview packet, and the third (and portions of the second) were addressed in the second phase of the interview process. The first interview contained a set of pre-planned questions (Appendix A) and the second interview contained questions that emerged from the responses Christopher provided during the first interview.

The second source of data collection was qualitative interviews conducted with readers of *The Inheritance Cycle*. The interviews were conducted using Internet ethnography methods—via e-mail—in a manner similar to the interview of Christopher. In order to reach as wide an audience as possible, I relied upon e-mail interviews as the means of collecting data from readers of the series. As Glesne (2011) pointed out, “…Internet-based interviews have some advantages … they allow the researcher to access people from many different geographic areas and in politically sensitive or dangerous locations. … [E-mail interviewing] can also enable conversations with some groups that might not be as willing or able to participate in face-to-face interviews such as … second-language speakers, or those who are particularly shy” (p. 115). Marshall & Rossman (2011) suggest that Internet ethnographic methods have the added benefit of
immediate follow-up for clarification, facilitation of validity checks, and expanded access to distant participants. With Christopher’s cooperation, digital communications were sent out to his fan base, requesting that interested parties visit a website, fantasymapproject.wix.com/theproject, in order to learn a bit about the project and indicate their interest in participating. If they submitted their name and e-mail address, an initial interview packet was sent to them, containing a first set of questions (Appendix B) and a waiver of written consent form (Appendix C) (as per IRB requirements). Once that interview document was returned, the responses were reviewed and, when appropriate, a second personalized interview packet was sent out. When relevant, participants were asked to provide images of materials described in their responses. In this manner, a qualitative interview was conducted. The questions in the first interview were the same for each participant, and related to four main areas: their perception of what “fantasy” means as a genre, their experience as readers of fantasy, their experience as readers of a specific fantasy series and the map found within, and whether or not they extended that experience with the map beyond the context of reading the books. As with Christopher, the questions contained in the second interview grew from their responses to the first.

The third data source is the journal entries, sketches, and photographs resulting from my “footfall” journey with Arya. An American geographer, Carl Sauer spoke of the importance of immersing oneself in the geography one was studying; he wrote, “Locomotion should be slow, the slower the better; and should be often interrupted by leisurely halts to sit on vantage points and stop at question marks” (1965, n.p.). Tuan’s ideas of place as pause echo Sauer’s leisurely halts. Sauer referred to this type of study as a “footfall” approach to geography—literally letting your feet fall on the ground you
hope to rediscover and understand on a personal level. At the suggestion of her parents upon hearing of this research project, Arya, currently an eighth grader, travelled to Montana with me to visit some of the places Christopher had previously identified as “places of influence” in the development of the setting of the series and, specifically, in the drawing of the map. Both Arya and I kept travel diaries in which we reflected upon the setting of the novel and interacting with those “places of influence.” In addition, Arya was given a digital camera with which to capture images of places she feels connect with the setting of the fantasy novels.

**Data Analysis**

My main method of data analysis was Thematic Analysis. This method, often paired with the Grounded Theory methodology, takes advantage of the researcher’s ability to analyze data while it is being collected for emerging themes. “In thematic analysis, the researcher focuses analytical techniques on searching through the data for themes and patterns” (Glesne, 2011, p. 187). Between the earlier pilot study described above and the interviews conducted with Christopher, Arya, and the other participants, I informally reviewed the data collected, and at each step refined my theoretical framework and adjusted my interview foci. In other words, as I collected my data, I noticed the emergence of a particular theme that then influenced how I re-read all the data during the subsequent analysis when drafting the dissertation.

The phenomenon described in this research project is that of the interactions with a fantasy map that occurred when a reader was no longer reading the book (yet still
considered part of the reading transaction, as defined by Rosenblatt), which might be understood as an expression of the reader’s sense of place of a Secondary World as depicted in a map and further described throughout the novel. The essence, the necessary attribute, is this sense of place, as expressed by the participants. These expressions took various forms, transcending textual responses to interview prompts, which are explored in Chapter 4: Findings.

Further Considerations

Research Ethics

Throughout the different stages of this research project, I remained cognizant of the moral and ethical obligations a researcher has to minimize the risk of any potential harm their participants could encounter as a result of participating in my research project. The risks were deemed minimal, both by my university’s Internal Review Board and by the methods in which the study were being carried out (primarily interviews conducted via e-mail), and the primary concerns were the potential for experiencing negative emotions as a result of the personal nature of the questions being asked and the loss of confidentiality. When appropriate, the names of participants have been changed to protect their identities, and other identifying information is kept to a minimum. To address the potential emotional risks, participants were notified of the same during the recruitment process, when they were required to complete a Waiver of Written Consent form per IRB protocol (Appendix C). Further, participants were reminded at the beginning of each
interview that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In order to protect participants’ confidentiality, all hard copies of data were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. While it has been argued (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) that data gathered through Internet ethnographic methods can never be truly secured due to the potential for hacking, all possible precautions were taken to mitigate this risk. All digital data was stored on my password-protected university computer.

**Trustworthiness of the Study**

Trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry is described as having three main components: credibility, dependability, and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). While the terms have different meanings depending on the type of research conducted, the goal is ultimately to ensure the quality of research being conducted. Each component is addressed in kind below.

**Credibility.** As a scholar of children’s literature, a lifelong reader of the fantasy genre, and an individual who engaged in imaginative play set in fantasy worlds that was later expressed through creative writing, I am inherently biased towards the belief that there is value in the Secondary Worlds found in fantasy narratives. Throughout this research project I kept journals wherein I reflected upon my own experiences as a researcher and a participant in my own project, to attempt to understand the convergence of my identities as scholar, researcher and participant. Rather than attempting to subdue that interplay, I allowed my reflections to serve as a means of understanding my position within the qualitative research study, and to acknowledge that while they guided my
thinking with regard to theory, they did not interfere with my goal of allowing the participants’ voices to be dominant in the focus of the study. Qualitative research is valued, in part, for its attempts to promote “deep understanding” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008), and it is my understanding of the phenomenon of a reader interacting with a map outside the reading transaction that I wished to deepen, not that of my own experience. For that reason, I chose not to include my own data from the footfall journey in this study, focusing on my position as a scholar rather than a reader, while providing enough transparency that the audience would recognize my voice among the others.

Once data collection was complete and I began to write up my findings, I included a “member check” phase (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) to provide participants with an opportunity to review and correct any misrepresentations that had occurred during my description of their participation.

**Dependability.** Dependability is sometimes referred to as reliability, and addresses whether or not the processes used in data collection and analysis can be tracked and, if desired, repeated. The methods used throughout this study are documented above, and represent a summary of the entries made in my research notes during the course of conducting the research project.

**Transferability.** The goal of this research project was not to assert that all readers would interact with a fantasy map in the same way, nor was it to assert that all fantasy maps elicit an expression that resulted in artifacts such as those described in this project. As a qualitative research project, the intent was to describe, through “thick description” (Denzin, 2000), the phenomenon I observed and provide the audience with enough information to consider their own observations through the theoretical framework of
Projective Worlds. An important part of this goal was to thoroughly examine the literature surrounding how fantasy maps had been discussed in the past, so that the audience of this project might understand the larger scholarly context in which this project was situated.

Limitations of the Study

In choosing to conduct a qualitative study, I recognized that there are inherent limitations pertaining to the subjective nature of the collection and representation of data, as well as the choice to approach the study using a particular methodology.

Of particular importance are the limitations imposed on the collection of data using Internet ethnographic methods. Marshall & Rossman (2011) list challenges, including a dependency on participant openness/honest, the inability of the researcher to observe the types of non-verbal cues normally involved in an in-person interview, and the expense of materials and equipment. The third is of particular relevance in this research study. The recruitment techniques and data collection methods described herein limit the participant pool in terms of (a) access to technology, and (b) accessibility of technology. At this time, measures have not been taken to recruit participants outside of the virtual context.

As with all research projects, the decision to study a topic is inherently biased; what the researcher finds to be of interest is personal and contextual, and will by no means represent a consensus among his or her peers. While this type of bias cannot be counteracted, I have attempted to mitigate its impact through transparency—by sharing
my own experiences as a fan of the fantasy genre and maps in Chapter 1, and as a researcher by documenting my methods for future audiences to examine.

Finally, there is the potential bias involved in selecting participants from one particular context. While two of my participants (Christopher and Arya) might be considered as falling outside this group, either by their position or the ways in which they participated in the project, the remaining participants were recruited from the fan base for *The Inheritance Cycle*. As a result of my recruitment methods, there are not any participants in my study that do not interact with fantasy maps. As the interviews revealed, however, identifying as a fan of fantasy maps does not presume a lack of critical analysis of the map of Alagaësia.

**Chapter Summary**

Qualitative research is the quest for deeper understanding, emphasizing exploration, discovery and description (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Inherently subjective, there is a demand for transparency on the part of the qualitative researcher to ensure the most ethically sound project possible. In setting forth the rationale for the design and methodology used in this research project, the intention of this chapter was to meet these demands.
Chapter 4

Findings

“There is nothing like looking, if you want to find something. You certainly usually find something, if you look, but it is not always quite the something you were after.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit

Introduction

As previously described in Chapter 3, all but two of the participants in this project were contacted through social media, with the author, Christopher Paolini, serving as an intermediary. At the time the announcement of the project was made via Paolini’s Twitter feed (see Figure 3-1), there were approximately 50,000 Twitter “followers.” In addition, Paolini posted the same announcement on his Facebook page (see Figure 3-2), which had an audience of approximately 45,000 “friends.”

Seventy participants responded to the project announcements made by Paolini by following the link provided to the website created for the project. Interview Part One packets (see Appendix B) were sent to those participants. Of that initial group of 70, 28 participants responded by completing and returning the Interview Part One packets. As part of methodological approach described in Chapter 3, the participants’ responses were reviewed and then a subset of participants were selected to participate in a second round of interviews. Interview Part Two packets were created and emailed to nine participants, customized to engage with their responses to Interview Part One. Of those nine, seven
participants responded to their individualized Interview Part Two packets, and they represent the majority of the participants discussed in detail in this study.

Two participants were not selected through the process described above. The first is the author, Christopher Paolini, who responded to interview questions (see Appendix A) that were similar to those in the Interview Part One packet sent to the other participants, as well as questions that explored the sense of place an author expresses when creating a fantasy map. Christopher’s answers provide insight not only into his own sense of place, but provided context through which other participants’ map-making might be understood. The interview with Christopher was conducted prior to the interviews with participants from his fan base, and his responses to interview questions led to my decision to conduct interviews with readers of the series.

Arya represents a unique opportunity to explore the concept of a Projective World through the “footfall” approach previously described by in Chapter 3. A participant in an earlier research project related to an earlier version of the Projective World framework (at the time the term “Projective Place” was used), Arya had, at the age of eight, created her own fantasy map. She was also a recent fan of The Inheritance Cycle, having completed her first reading of the series three months prior. Arya was not given the Interview Part One packet. Instead, Arya was asked to create journal entries and take photographs during our footfall journey to Montana to visit the area in which Christopher grew up (and still resides) during his creation of the map of Alagaësia, to reflect on her perception of any connections between the Secondary World, the Actual World, and her own sense of place of the series’ landscape—its Projective World.
Each participant, regardless of the way in which their interview was initiated, was asked questions relating to their experiences with fantasy maps. The goal of these questions were to determine each participant’s experience and knowledge regarding what is commonly considered a convention of the genre: the inclusion of maps. In addition, the initial interview was intended to be a means of obtaining evidence of the existence of a Projective World—of the readers having developed a sense of place with regard to Alagaësia—in the language they used to describe their interactions with the map. While what constitutes evidence of a Projective World evolved during the course of data collection—as is permitted to occur using a constant case comparison approach (Glesne, 2011)—the responses to these initial interviews provided a foundation for understanding how readers view the genre of fantasy and one of its most recognizable paratextual conventions: the fantasy map. As each participant is discussed below, his or her understanding of fantasy mapping has been included for context.

As my understanding of the ways in which readers were interacting with the map of Alagaësia grew, what I had originally considered to be constitutive of evidence of a Projective World likewise evolved. During the design phase of the Internet ethnography portion of the project, the intention was to analyze the language used by participants, as well as any comparisons they made between their own Actual World and the Secondary World of Alagaësia, to determine if they were connecting with the Secondary World in a personal way that indicated not just a sense of verisimilitude, but projection—that their own Actual World and the Secondary World were both present in their perceptions of Alagaësia.
While the participants who responded to the first interview packet invariably described the ability of a fantasy map to aid in creating a sense of immersion in the Secondary World of Alagaësia, very few – less than twenty percent – described any interaction with the map other than referring to it while reading the novels. Using grounded theory, which allows for the analysis of data after initial collection and prior to completion of data collection, the emergence of these types of interactions indicated a need to expand on the questions asked in *Interview Part One*. Each participant’s responses were examined, and those who described an interaction with the map other than referencing it while reading—now believed to be indicative of a Projective World—was sent a customized *Interview Part Two* packet that provided questions and/or prompts to elicit more information regarding the phenomenon. The results of the second interviews and any subsequent communications represent the remaining data explored in this project.

While each of these interactions were unique, as any creation would be when viewed through a qualitative lens, there were several participants who described similar experiences and, when relevant, provided similar artifacts. More than half the participants, including Arya and Christopher, had at one time created an original fantasy map. As a result, the data in this section has been presented, in part, based on the themes that emerged as participants shared their experiences and artifacts, in sections entitled “Creation of Original Maps,” “Playing in Alagaësia,” “Recreating the Map of Alagaësia,” and “Close Reading of the Map of Alagaësia.” As with the participant profiles in Chapter

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6 The term “artifact” in this context comes from Pahl & Rowsell’s work (2010) in literacy that conceptualizes artifacts as objects that have meaning that is made by a contextualized identity (p. 2).
3, the order in which the emergent themes are presented is not intended to indicate any judgment or preference on the part of the researcher. Neither does every individual belong solely to one thematic category; often, participants described an activity that crossed boundaries. Each interaction with the map was unique and interesting in its own right, and could have been viewed as such or as part of the larger collection of data. The exceptions to these themes are the data gathered from my work with Christopher and Arya.

As often happens when one is immersed in a particular area of scholarship, one tends to see that subject everywhere. The same can be said of my research into fantasy maps. I have come to picture my process of data collection as a journey across a map, a narrative shared throughout this dissertation. While Arya might be viewed as my first participant through her involvement with the initial pilot project conducted in 2014, this journey was begun in earnest when I interviewed Christopher to discuss how an author projects his own sense of place into a fantasy map of his own creation. As she was in the beginning, so too was Arya with the project in the end; data collection through Internet ethnography methods was complete when Arya and I traveled to Montana in October of 2015. The choice to begin with Christopher and end with Arya in the presentation of data below, in the “Genesis of Alagaësia and Projective Place” and “A Footfall Journey to Alagaësia” sections, respectively, simply honors their positions within the narrative of my research. Again, as Tolkien alluded to in *Leaf by Niggle*, a work of art is not created solely by the artist; an author’s Secondary World is never complete, nor does it exist independent of the reader. All my participants are co-creators of this project, and I honor them equally and eternally.
It is worth noting that while some participants demonstrated multiple modes of interaction with the map of Alagaësia. For example, Murtagh both created an original map and recreated the map of Alagaësia; Firnen’s recreation of the map in the computer game Minecraft could be placed under “Recreating the Map of Alagaësia” or “Playing in Alagaësia.” When this is the case, participants have been placed in the thematic category that was most strongly described during their second interviews.

This research project, then, can be said to focus on those fantasy works where the narrative is set entirely in the Secondary World, whose maps are meant to aid the author in the genesis of, and to lend themselves to the verisimilitude of, that Secondary World—maps with which the reader will interact and in which they will become immersed (Ryan, 2001), become co-creators. Paolini’s novels, like Tolkien’s, are set entirely in the Secondary World of Alagaësia; there is no Actual World or Primary World, which appears to be of benefit to the reader’s sense of being “lost” in Alagaësia when reading the Inheritance Cycle, a theme that occurs in the interview data with several participants. It is this immersion, this sense of being a co-creator, which has emerged in my research. The attachment readers have formed to Alagaësia—the sense that the novel is set in a world that exists and into which they can escape and, importantly, create their own meaning—is an attachment that is potent enough that traveling to Alagaësia by reading the text is no longer enough; it has become a larger part of their lives.
Participants and Projective Worlds

As Tolkien and others have described, the setting of a work of fantasy—particularly a series such as *The Inheritance Cycle* where there is only one setting in which the narrative takes place—is known as a Secondary World, while the world in which the reader exists is known as the Actual World. As the participants invariably described during their first interviews, the key to the success of their immersion in, or transport into, a Secondary World is the skill of the author in building that world—a skill that is, in varying degrees of success, reflected in the paratextual fantasy map that accompanies more than a quarter of all fantasy novels (Ekman, 2013). The experience each participant had with fantasy maps demonstrates an understanding of what scholars presume to be the purpose of the genre’s convention: to create verisimilitude; to help the reader believe, as Tolkien wrote, that the sun is green (Tolkien, 1964/2001).

As each interview progressed, the participants described an attachment to the map—to the Secondary World of Alagaësia—that indicated an engagement with the Secondary World that confirmed belief that the term “reading transaction” involved more than the “reading” of a text, or the participant reading the text of the novels. For Rosenblatt and others, reading also includes the types of activities my participants were describing: imaginatively playing within an imagined version of Alagaësia, or recreating the map, for example. Where most scholars, dealing primarily with an Implied Reader (Iser, 1974), had ended their interest in the reader’s sense of immersion in the Secondary World with the reader’s closing of the book’s cover, I saw a continued sense of immersion that reflected my own experiences as a reader. Similar to what Fischer (2015)
described in her research on children’s literary life-worlds, the participants in this project were carrying their interactions with the Secondary World of Alagaësia—and particularly interactions with the map of Alagaësia—beyond the moments when they were reading Paolini’s novels. The immersion of the readers’ identities does not stop each time their reading stops. As Gee (2007) described, their identity is forever changed, and forever changing; so too is their sense of place of the Secondary World. The scholarship relating to fantasy maps does not have a means of describing this evolution of place; Secondary World places authority in the text, suggesting a permanent setting that awaits a reader’s immersion, a backdrop—no matter how well-crafted so as to seem alive—against which the narrative is set. Yet the artifacts and transactions described by each of the participants below indicates that Alagaësia is no mere backdrop. For some, it is a world in which they continually play; for others, an inspiration for their own world building; for one, Alagaësia serves as an example of an earnest yet partially unsuccessful attempt to contribute to a difficult and demanding genre. For all of them, though, Alagaësia is a palimpsest, is more than a Secondary World; their own sense of place has been written onto the map of Alagaësia. They have all interacted with the map in unique, meaningful ways beyond, and yet connected to, their reading(s) of The Inheritance Cycle, and they all—author, readers, footfall wayfinder—are ultimately co-creators of Alagaësia, in Tolkien’s sense of the term; they have each contributed a leaf on the canvas. For each of them, Alagaësia is a Projective World.
The Genesis of Alagaësia

As an avid reader of the fantasy genre, Christopher describes his appreciation of the paratextual convention of fantasy mapping, an appreciation echoed by most of the participants in this research project.

I always loved maps in books, especially fantasy books. To me, they lend a sense of reality to the story (and world) that they would otherwise lack. Plus, from a strictly aesthetic point of view, many fantasy maps are beautiful pieces of art in their own right, and as an artist myself, that appealed to me. There’s a tactile pleasure in a good map, and they often feel like a strange and precious artifact full of secret knowledge. After all, maps are the only documents that can say, “Here Be Dragons” and mean it. Among my favorites are Tolkien’s own map for The Hobbit; Tad William’s maps for the Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn trilogy and the maps Shelly Shapiro drew for the Lord of the Rings as well as for The Belgariad, The Mallorean, and The Elenium, by David Eddings (Christopher, Interview Part One).

Perhaps surprisingly for someone with a complex appreciation for fantasy maps, Christopher did not initially intend to create the map of Alagaësia, wanting the text to “stand on its own” and wishing to avoid creating additional work for himself (Christopher, Interview Part One). The map, however, would become an integral part of the writing process.

…by the time I was a quarter or so of the way into the book (around when Eragon and his companions leave Palancar Valley and head toward the village of Yazuac), I found that I was getting lost in my own world. It was too difficult to hold in my head all of the distances and the physical relationships between the various points in the land of Alagaësia. So I took a piece of printer paper and sketched a map that encompassed everything I had mentioned in the story so far, as well as everything I might need in the future (Christopher, Interview Part One).

The initial map of Alagaësia is shown in Figure 4-1 below.
As other participants would describe, the map not only aided in the organization of place and plot in the existing narrative; it would come to generate new elements of the story for Christopher.

When I outlined the story, I hadn’t decided on every single landmark and feature of the land, so drawing a map forced me to work out far more of Alagaësia than I would have if I’d stuck with text alone. What’s more, the act of doing that gave me additional story ideas, both for the Inheritance Cycle and for additional books down the road. The mere act of making the map ended up significantly altering the story itself.
To wit: as I got further and further into *Eragon*, I began to realize that the map I’d first drawn wasn’t big enough. I was running out of room for my story. So, I got a legal-sized piece of paper, traced my original map of Alagaësia onto the left-hand side, and—since I was in a hurry to return to the actual writing—I filled in the top of the right-hand side with a couple of swishes to indicate a forest, and bottom with a series of marks to indicate mountains [see Figure 4-2 below]. Because I was in such a hurry, the marks I used for the mountains were much, much larger than the mountains I’d drawn on the left of the map. As the days rolled past, I kept referring to the map, and as I did, I began to wonder, *What if?* The basic question of all authors. What if? *What if those mountains really were ten times bigger than a normal mountain?* And since I could justify it in terms of both story and world-building, and since it seemed like a cool idea, I did it. I made those mountains ten to twelve miles high. …

That may be the biggest example of how my map influenced my story, but it was hardly the only one. I would have written a very, very different story if I’d not drawn that map (Christopher, *Interview Part Two*).
While the mountains—later named the Beor Mountains on the map of Alagaësia—were in fact higher than “normal” mountains, or mountains found in the Actual World, the map of Alagaësia was still notably influenced by Christopher’s experience of the Actual World.

In finding details for my world, I took inspiration from both where I grew up (Paradise Valley, MT) and the places I’ve traveled. Helgrind, for example, was based on Shiprock in NM. The sandstone hills where Brom dies were based on Arches National Park, UT. The Carlsbad Caverns in NM shaped how I described the caves where the dwarves live. But my biggest influence was probably the gorgeous Beartooth Mountains, which I see out of my windows every day (Christopher, Interview Part One).

Christopher’s investment in the map of Alagaësia as its creator extends beyond its relation to the narrative of The Inheritance Cycle. He considers himself an artist as well, and has created a great deal of work surrounding series, including the dragon’s eye that appeared on the cover of the first book, Eragon, shown in Figure 4-3 below.

Figure 4-3: Christopher’s drawing of the dragon Saphira’s eye.
I’d only drawn one real map before: a map for a children’s book I’d considered writing before Eragon. For that, I’d used pencil. It had a tendency to smudge, however, so when it came time to draw the final version of the map for Eragon, I decided to use ballpoint pen instead. As with the earlier map, I chose to use axonometric projection (although I couldn’t tell you if it was isometric or diametric) because it gave more visual depth and interest to the map than a standard, straight-down view. I also chose to fully shade objects in the map, again because I felt it would give it greater visual impact, and because none of the maps I was familiar with had done so and I wanted my own map to stand out from the crowd. (In fact, even to this day, almost no one creates fully shaded maps.) All told, the final version of the map took me about a week to draw (Christopher, Interview Part One).

The final sketch of the map of Alagaësia (see Figure 4-4 below) represents, for Christopher, the aesthetic value he appreciated as a fan of the genre of fantasy.

![Figure 4-4: Christopher’s Final Sketch of the Map of Alagaësia.](image)
Christopher’s description of the creation of the map of Alagaësia shows the inspiration this paratextual convention of the fantasy genre has provided his own work that has become part of the history of fantasy mapping, and in turn inspires the readers of *The Inheritance Cycle* to share their own interactions. The published version of the map of Alagaësia is shown below in Figure 4-5.

![Published Version of Map of Alagaësia](image)

**Figure 4-5: Published Version of Map of Alagaësia.**

While Christopher is responsible for the genesis of Alagaësia, the map is by no means entirely original, but draws from what Tolkien has called the “Cauldron of Story” (1964/2001) and what we now refer to as the genre of fantasy. Familiar in Western fantasy is the orientation of the map and its boundaries—the popular forbidding forest to the North (“Du Weldenvarden”); the ocean to the West, peppered with islands; the unknown, mysterious East, which exists somewhere off the edge of the map; Baker (2006) provides a detailed analysis of the subject, and Ekman’s work (2013) goes into even greater detail on the conventions of “high” or “epic” fantasy mapping.
The mixture drawn from that Cauldron, however, is but the base of Christopher’s creation—the foundation of the palimpsest, multilayered though it already is. As a fan of the fantasy genre, those influences, those echoes, are undeniably present; but they are no more dominant in the reading of the map of Alagaësia than Christopher’s own sense of place that is woven throughout Alagaësia. Living in the shadows of the Beartooth Mountains in Montana, Christopher’s experiences of the landscape of the Actual World greatly influenced how he constructed Alagaësia, evidenced not only in the narrative but also in the map of Alagaësia. His travels found their ways into various settings, as is likely the case with every author, and those senses of place were projected into his writing. Alagaësia was, from its genesis, both a Secondary World and a Projective World. But its formation was by no means finished.

Creation of Original Maps

The theme that recurred most frequently with participants was that of being inspired by Christopher’s map of Alagaësia—and, presumably, any other maps they had encountered as fans of the fantasy genre—to become creators of their own unique Secondary Worlds. During the initial collection of data the assumption was that connections between a person’s Actual World and their Secondary World as evidence of the projection of their identity and sense of place into that Secondary World would be expressed through language, and the questions in Section Four of the Interview Part One packet (see Appendix B) were designed to investigate that assumption. The answers I had expected to receive, based on my previous research with Christopher and Arya, were not
found in the data I was collecting. While some readers expressed an occasional connection between their own Actual World and the Secondary World of Alagaësia, many more indicated that, like me, they had never seen mountains, or ventured across a desert, or lived on a Western coast. The connections I had anticipated did not exist.

As my own understanding of the nuanced relationship between readers and fantasy maps evolved, in part after reading Tolkien’s *Leaf by Niggle* and reflecting on the relationship between author and reader, my expectations of the data gave way to curiosity. Why were so many readers also creating their own fantasy worlds, and why were they citing the map of Alagaësia as the inspiration for their own Secondary Worlds? Six of the seven participants recruited through social media had described creating their own Secondary Worlds, and five had provided artifactual evidence of those creations.\(^7\)

Much like Christopher, these world builders had drawn from their previous experiences with the genre of fantasy, and the convention of paratextual mapping, in the creation of their own Secondary Worlds. Their descriptions of their interactions with the map of Alagaësia evidence their having projected themselves into that Secondary World, adding another layer to the palimpsest, creating for each of them a Projective World. Their own Secondary Worlds, however, are also palimpsests, a mixture from the Cauldron of Story and their own Actual World experiences. Traces of Alagaësia are in each of the maps below, regardless of the geography presented in each; one might also see Le Guin’s *Earthsea* in Brom’s map of Eldorann. The conventions of Western fantasy mapping described by Baker (2006) are as evident in each as they are in the genre at large, and would be the focus if examining the maps as part of the paratextual convention.

\(^7\) Orrin did not provide any of the maps he had created.
of the fantasy genre—considering them only as maps of Secondary Worlds. Instead, in choosing to consider how Alagaësia inspired and influenced each participant, and considering that influence as one of many alongside the Actual World and the reader’s experience within the genre of fantasy, they may be considered maps of Projective Worlds.

**Nasuada**

Nasuada is one of several participants who describe being inspired to create a fantasy maps as part of their writing process. She describes her interaction with the map of Alagaësia:

> Whenever Eragon is traveling, and especially when he’s flying on Saphira, I can picture their course on the map. I also like to stare at the map when I first open the book and imagine what all of the different locations look like. I also try and memorize names and relative locations of all the cities, so I don’t have to look them up when they’re mentioned. I really like to just look at the map itself, because Mr. Paolini [sic] does such a beautiful job that it’s a work of art in itself, and really sets the atmosphere for the book (Nasuada, Interview Part One).

Nasuada’s interactions with the map of Alagaësia suggest that while the map plays an important role in creating verisimilitude for her as a reader, she has an aesthetic appreciation of the map itself that exists independent of, while still being intimately connected to, the literary landscape of the novels. This appreciation is carried outside of the reading transaction and is expressed in Nasuada’s own fantasy world-building.

Nasuada has written her own fiction inspired by Paolini’s dragons, and she has also created a hand-drawn map (Figure 4-6 below) to accompany her work that she uses “as part of [her] plotting process” that she strongly suspects is “related to the Inheritance
Cycle having a map, or perhaps the fact that many/most fantasy stories include maps” (Interview Part One). Nasuada provided a detailed description of her fantasy story, despite claiming it is still in the early plotting stages. Most of the information provided relates to world-building, and how she has modified the character classes typically found in fantasy literature, such as dwarves, elves, and dragons.

In her second interview, Nasuada provided more detail about the role the map played in her writing process:

I felt that the location that the events took place in, and the surround area, would have a large effect on why the characters took certain actions. Sedkern’s family travels along established trade routes, and to know where those are, I needed to know what kind of resources were available and where they were in relation to various towns and settlements. I also felt the geography would influence the political climate to a large degree,
and wanted to help straighten that aspect out a little (Nasuada, *Interview Part Two*).

As Nasuada had obviously spent a great deal of time on world-building, questions relating to her creation of the map naturally flowed from the first interview to the second. Her responses provided a great deal of detail into the way the Actual World influenced her creation of the map of her unnamed Secondary World.

I didn’t have any particular places in mind when I created the first draft, but as I tried to make the features seem realistic I visualized several different regions for believability. The central river, before it meets the more southern one, behaves like the Mississippi floodplains. The main mountain range (the mountains of which are not drawn to scale, but I was too impatient to redo them) is modeled after the Himalayas to some extent, in terms of their formation history, as the upper is modeled after the Andes. The northern hilly region is based off of a Mediterranean climate, and the southern is closer to a cold Russia/Kazakhstan terrain. The dracones [dragon-inhabited] region is definitely based off of a massive caldera, in Yellowstone, and the Great Bluffs are based off those giant chalk cliffs in England. The region surrounding the dracones area is based off the badlands, and the area surrounding that is vaguely similar to the Great Plains. The northern island chain is based off the Aleutian islands [sic], and the southern islands were formed like the Hawaiian islands, albeit in a totally different climate. Overall, I found myself basing regions after general trends more than specific places. I did find myself googling [sic] a lot of maps of France to get the regional transitions right, but any relation there is, I believe, coincidental (Nasuada, *Interview Part Two*).

Nasuada describes a detailed use of Actual World features in the creation of her Secondary World that demonstrates her understanding of the role a fantasy map plays in establishing a believable Secondary World for readers as described by Tolkien.

**Oromis**

Oromis, who created an original map for her own fantasy narrative, describes her interactions with the map of Alagaësia in a manner that suggests a familiarity with the
convention of fantasy mapping and the expectations it might create for a reader—and the
disappointment that may occur when those expectations are not met.

The map is about the first thing I look at before starting a book. It gives
me an idea of what kind of journey the characters are going to go on and
what kind of world they’re going to experience. Also, I like to be familiar
with the names of the places before starting so when a character is talking
about here or there, I know what’s going on. I assumed because it’s so
huge that the characters [of Eragon] would spend a lot of time in the
Hadarac Desert, which unfortunately wasn’t the case. Sad day. The map
also gives an idea of the type of world. Is it frigid and icy? Is it a bunch of
islands? Is it a temperate place? Alagaësia looks like a pretty standard
temperate fantasy land based on the map. While reading, anytime a
location was brought up, I would flip back to the map to see where the
characters are and how far they’ve come (Oromis, Interview Part One).

By highlighting expectations created by the map and the failure of Paolini’s narrative to
meet them, Oromis described a deeper level of engagement with the map of Alagaësia.

Based on the size of the Hadarac Desert, she had expected it to be an important setting
within the narrative, rather than it being simply a location through which the characters
passed on their journeys to other (smaller) landmarks on the map.

In the second interview, Oromis described the role a fantasy map from another
series, Redwall by Brian Jacques, influenced the fan fiction she created.

I didn’t really look at maps while writing, but at the point, I didn’t really
need to; I was a pretty hardcore fangirl. Location was as much a feature of
the books as anything else, and so my fanfics naturally took a lot from the
locations. A Long Patrol hare runs across the sandy dunes hear
Salamandastron, for instance. The geography is important in determining
what kind of adventures your characters are going to have, or how your
bad guys are going to take down the abbey. Traveling through the swamp
means encountering herons and toads. Traveling through the woods means
you’re more likely to run into tribal weasels or eccentric hedgehogs. So
while I didn’t necessarily incorporate the maps themselves into my fics, I
was relying a lot on my knowledge of the geography, if that makes sense
(Oromis, Interview Part Two).
Oromis’s immersion in the Redwall world, which was established as a reader and involved the map as previously described, was such that she understood the geography of the series with a depth that transcended the map.

Like Nasuada, Oromis created a map to accompany a fantasy piece that she was writing, although her map was created in a digital environment instead of being hand-drawn (see Figure 4-7 below).

![Oromis’s Map.](image)

Oromis appears to have applied the same critical eye to her own map that she used to examine Paolini’s map of Alagaësia.

I started writing a hero-goes-on-a-journey story (which didn’t get too far, unfortunately), and if you’re going to have a hero go somewhere, you need to know what kind of places it is and what they’ll encounter along the way. Drawing the map was also a big part of helping me establish the landscape and cultures present in the world. I was sure to put my cities and towns in places where there was water. Using the “Settlers of Catan” approach, I also used the landscape to figure out what kind of resources each place would supply. What do they import/export? What do they
value? What kind of culture would that create? The Garronlands, to the left, are a lot more arid and flat. If you go farther west than that, you run into wild open country that’s really not fit for anybody except the nomadic tribes and the horses they raise. The Svartsish lands, on the right, get a lot more rain and are a lot more lush. The Garrish people, therefore, tend to be a lot more conservative and hardy, whereas the Svarts are more cultured and relaxed. The map also helped me figure out what kind of government I wanted the people to have; the Garrons are more independent nation-states with a governing council that meets in Axis. The Svarts are more imperial and sea-based. So basically, building the map was building the world my people would inhabit. That world dictated what kind of culture they’d have and what kind of adventures they might enjoy (Oromis, Interview Part Two).

The concern for consistency between geography and culture denotes a sophisticated understanding of the potential for a map to either create verisimilitude or to be a destructive presence in allowing a reader to be immersed in the landscape of the Secondary World, and signifies that the other maps Oromis has encountered as a reader are part of the palimpsest that is her own Projective World.

**Glaedr**

As many of the participants indicated, Glaedr expressed an appreciation for maps that related to an interest in geography in general.

The map was, besides the cover, the first thing I ever looked at, even before cracking the first page. I often wish authors would scatter relevant sections of their map throughout their work, so I wouldn’t have to keep flipping to the front or back to follow along where the characters and events are happening. I like to study the geographical markers to help my imagination have general image of what the land is like. I also love reading and translating place names—both for sheer pleasure, and as a way to psychoanalyze the people of a given region (Glaedr, Interview Part One).
Glaedr’s interest in the names of places was unique among the participants, and additional questions elicited more information about this approach to fantasy maps:

I was recently re-reading The Silmarillion (I re-read Tolkien’s stuff once a year, usually during the fall…) and I looked back at the map again. Years ago, when I had first begun writing my own stories, I took the time to translate each of the map’s place names. As I’ve continued to delve into ancient northern European languages, I’ve noticed how the people who name places and geographical locations in different ways. Norse and High Old German typically names places via description… it’s similar with Tolkien… think places like ‘The River Running’ and Lothlorien… (most of the elvish words work this way). They describe. While I’m no expert, I’d like to imagine that the people who name places thusly are explorers. They want to know what they’re looking at, and if they, along with others, can find it again.

In a different field we find Celtic names (which are my favorite). They are far more poetic and come from a different mindset. The Celts are storytellers…I should know—that’s my heritage! Their naming has more to do with the land’s relationship to people/gods/other beings etc. … There is nearly always a reason WHY a Celtic name is what it is… there’s a story behind it. Ireland is named after one of three Celtic goddesses…

So, when I read other works, I love it when the author has taken the time to match the people with their place in their respective worlds. It’s not just that these people are randomly here because it’s convenient for my story… there’s a whole reason behind it— and even if the land itself barest not only what its people have named it, but why and how, as well.

Glaedr’s analysis does not include Paolini’s map of Alagaësia, but when read along side his descriptions of the genesis of his own original map (discussed below), his relationship to mapping and place emerge.

Glaedr’s fantasy map is of a land named Dardania, and consists of multiple sheets of ruled notebook paper that have been taped together to form a larger map (see Figure 4-8 below).
Unlike Brom’s map\(^8\), which was created in its entirety prior to its accompanying narrative, Glaedr’s map grew and evolved as the narrative did, similar to Paolini’s description of his creation of the map of Alagaësia. Like Brom, Glaedr describes the map as being generative:

It was my original compass. My key. I kept it up on my wall and referenced it on a regular basis. The stories nearly always begin with *it*, and not the other way around. The reason it’s colored in several spots is because I was expressing with cartography what I had not yet expressed with words (Glaedr, *Interview Part Two*).

As a result of Glaedr’s interest in the etymology of place names in fantasy mapping, the second interview involved questions related to the inspiration for the locations on Glaedr’s map of Dardania, to further understand the role the Actual World played in its creation.

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\(^8\) Brom’s data appears in the next section, “Playing in Alagaësia.”
Yes, some places are inspired by real places… but only loosely, and more when it comes to physical descriptions within the actual written work. I grew up in Oregon, and spent a lot of time in the forests and mountains… by rivers and oceans… so naturally, my experience influences my art. I also grew up later in New Mexico – so there’s deserts and plains… even some of the forest and mountain scenes are inspired by places in the Santa Fe National Forest near Las Vegas, NM.

On another tack – I love places… and they can be many and perilous… where they appear to go on and on… or places where, as you hike along… suddenly lead you to new, unexpected places or routes… even though you’ve traveled them a hundred times before. The idea got stuck in my head that perhaps, in a way, all those places are actually other worlds… or perhaps somehow other worlds all share these places in common… like focal points… But that’s just something fun I like to play with in my stories… (Glaedr, Interview Part Two).

Glaedr, in addition to (in spite of?) having focused on the importance of names within mapping Secondary Worlds, describes a relationship between place and fantasy mapping that echoed back to the connections I had expected to see in my initial data collection, with explicit correlations between the Actual World and his Secondary World being named. While unexpected, given the shift in my assumptions about where I would find evidence of the existence of a Projective World, it was another moment of connection I saw among my participants as cartographers of fantasy worlds.

Each of the maps above expresses their creators’ connection to the genre of fantasy, their knowledge of the deep roots of its history and the ever-expanding reach of its branches. The maps may be viewed as maps of Secondary Worlds, but to do so is to overlook the identity of the participants, to ignore them as co-creators. Instead, they are maps of Projective Worlds, the strata of which may be traced through and across time, and understood as representative of one moment of pause in their continuing creation. As a researcher collecting data through Internet ethnographic methods, I am both witness to
and participant in the genesis of each of these Projective Worlds, as are you in your role as audience of this research project.

**Playing in Alagaësia**

As many have noted (Gee, 2007; Paley, 2004; Ryan, 2001; Wohlwend, 2011), play itself may be viewed as a literacy practice. Citing “cultural historical activity theory (Leont’ev, 1977; Vygotsky, 1935/1978) and practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977),” Wohlwend proposes that play be theorized as a nexus of socially-situated literacy practices, involving reading, play, writing, and design (2011; pp. 10-12). Wohlwend also uses Brian Street’s work in New Literacies to assert that play may be considered a text to be read (p. 3). The imaginative play of Brom, which grew out of his immersion in the Secondary World of Alagaësia while reading and thus may be defined as part of the reading transaction (Rosenblatt, 1978), became another expression of a Projective World.

**Brom**

As many of the other participants have done, Brom describes the convention of including a map as adding to the verisimilitude of fantasy landscapes.

I like watching an author explore the issues and complexities of our world in another context and develop characters in an organic way that fits the world in which they live. I like seeing an author create a world that fits together well, that feels real and consistent and alive, that is populated by believable creatures and beings. Sometimes, maps really add to the general sense of coherence and believability in the world (Brom, *Interview Part One*).
Brom indicated that his interactions with the map of Alagaësia while reading *Eragon* were different than while reading other fantasy texts.

I started reading the *Inheritance Cycle* when I was fourteen. I have always been fascinated by maps and map-making and was constantly consulting the map of Alagaësia as I read. I always wanted to have a sense for where the characters were in the story and to see where they were headed and how long it would take to get there. I was especially fascinated by the Hadarac Desert and the Beor Mountains. I also wanted to see if I could find any hidden hints or guess which points on the map would be used as part of the story next. I don’t always devote this much attention to the maps in books. I seldom consulted Tolkien’s maps, for instance.

In his second interview, Brom elaborates on why his interactions with the map of Alagaësia were unique, contrasting them against his experience with Tolkien’s map of Middle Earth, in part while playing the *Lord of the Rings* online computer game (“LOTRO”).

Furthermore, LOTRO’s maps are beautiful and match the complexity, richness, and vastness of the game world perfectly. These organically aesthetic maps make consulting a map even more enjoyable and give the player a reason to rely on the maps if for no other reason than that they are “pretty.” In contrast to this, Tolkien’s books carry the reader along in such a way that the need to consult maps is much lower and the act itself is time-consuming and even distracting from the story itself. I am far less likely to consult the map along the way, though there are exceptions to this. With Paolini’s world, I felt like I was able to keep places and travel straight, so I would periodically check the characters’ progress on the map to both add to my mental picture of a scene and to make me aware of what lay ahead. In contrast to this, Tolkien’s world had so many places and names that the reader encountered in the midst of a flurry of action that I did all I could to just keep a grip on the story itself. When it came to Tolkien’s books, I usually glanced over the map when I started the book and then didn’t look at it again until after I had finished it (Brom, *Interview Part Two*).

Similar to the descriptions Oromis and Orrin provide for their critical readings of Paolini’s map, Brom considers the performance of the map of Alagaësia in comparison to
other fantasy maps—in Brom’s case, Tolkien’s map of Middle-earth—and the ways in which the construction of the narratives influenced his interactions with each map.

Brom has also created his own map of a fantasy world, “Eldorann,” around which he has done some creative writing (see Figure 4-9 below).

![Brom's Map of Eldorann](image)

**Figure 4-9: Brom’s Map of Eldorann.**

When asked to further describe his fascination with maps and map-making from *Interview Part One*, Brom described map-making as the genesis of story, rather than a paratextual device to assist in the plotting of his narratives.

When it comes to my maps, I normally create them first and then create the story around them. I will sometimes sit and just draw a map and give random names to places with no story in mind. I will then consult said
maps if ever I need a setting or feel depressed. Seeing how “creative” I can be when it comes to designing fictional landscapes gives me hope when it comes to writing fictional characters and dialogue (Brom, Interview Part Two).

In response to the questions in Section 4 of his Interview Part One packet, Brom unexpectedly provided a description of imaginary play, expressing a unique connection between his own Actual World and the Secondary World that is suggestive of the existence of a Projective World:

Having grown up in the foothills of Georgia, I didn’t have a category for what a true mountain actually looked like let alone a mountain range. I would oftentimes imagine the woods that were in my own backyard when reading forest scenes in the novels. I thought about the woods in my own backyard because those were my second home growing up. My family owned 73 acres of land, and I would spend nearly every day exploring the land from one end to the other in my barefeet. Paolini’s description of the woods sounded similar to my woods. I always thought of Ellesmera as being the woods in my backyard as they ought to be. I would sometimes imagine the woods became Ellesmera and wondered what mysteries lay hidden in its depths (Brom, Interview Part One).

Brom describes a blending of the Actual World and the Secondary World when discussing the woods of his childhood that was expressed by several participants, including Paolini and Arya. Brom’s immersion in Alagaësia transcends his reading of the novels, creating what Fischer (2015) refers to as a “layering” of literary landscapes; in this case, the Secondary World is layered over—or perhaps through—Brom’s Actual World of the Georgian foothills. Again we have the layering of the palimpsest; Alagaësia and forested acreage combine to form the Projective World in which Brom spent days playing, imagining he was in Ellesmera, rather than Georgia. Brom’s description of his imaginary play relating to Alagaësia reflects the importance fictional landscapes played in the reading transaction. As my earlier research with Arya had indicated, the player’s
location in the Actual World was changed to better represent the Secondary World of the narrative.

The setting generally greatly influenced how I played, and the setting would usually increase in vibrancy for me the more I imagined myself exploring it. I normally chose certain settings for my reenactments that really captured my imagination. Off the top of my head, I can remember acting out a number of different stories in the cities of Tronjheim and Ellesmera when I was younger. Most of the time, I didn’t alter the environment as much as I altered the location I was in or the “props” I used to interact with it. If I wanted to fight in Ellesmera, I would go to an area with denser leaves where fewer people had been and would find a certain stick shaped like a bow; I would occasionally even climb up into some trees and imagine myself being able to walk from tree to tree through the forest (Brom, Interview Part Two).

Brom’s immersion in the Secondary World of *The Inheritance Cycle* demonstrated the transcendence of the reading transaction beyond the reading of the novel, resulting in play that occurred in the Actual World but was imagined to be set in Alagaësia. These interactions suggest a deeper connection between Brom and the map of Alagaësia that are representative of Projective Place.

In considering imaginative play as a literacy event, that play may be read as a text, set within a Secondary World—in this case, the forest of Ellesmera in Alagaësia. Brom’s awareness of the characteristics of the Secondary World, and his attempts to adapt his Actual World to better represent those characteristics, demonstrates the interactions between those worlds—the genesis of the Projective World in which Brom spent his days. In adjusting his Actual World to be more harmonious with his Projective World, Brom was yet another co-creator of Alagaësia.
Translating the Map of Alagaësia

The interactions of the participants with the map of Alagaësia were varied, in their theme as well as their complexity. While several of the participants above were more metaphorical in their interactions—citing the map as inspiration, or reimagining the map in a play world—other participants expressed their connection in a more literal manner. The following two participants, Murtagh and Firnen, performed what can be called a “translation” of the map of Alagaësia in that they have created copies of the map as it was created by Christopher, although with adjustments that reflect their interests and identities. For Murtagh, this involves a literal translation of names from English to French; for Firnen, the map is translated from paper to a 3-D digital medium. The effort expended to create their translations, described by them during their interviews, is evidence of a level of immersion that clearly transcends the reading transaction. While the Actual World may be less obvious in their maps of Alagaësia, their passion for translating the Secondary World illustrates the complexity of their Projective Worlds.

Murtagh

Murtagh’s description of her interaction with the map of Alagaësia was brief. When asked to describe her interactions with the map of Alagaësia while reading, she stated, “I like to know where the characters are going and compare how long they take to go from here to there to another place if they are on foot, riding horse or dragon” (Murtagh, Interview Part One). While she seems to describe a fairly superficial
relationship with the map of Alagaësia, the time and attention she invested in recreating
the map indicate the sophisticated and nuanced nature of her reading transaction.

The map of Alagaësia created by Murtagh is hand drawn and represents her native
language, French (see Figure 4.10 below).

![Figure 4.10: Murtagh’s Map of Alagaësia](image)

She created the map in connection with fanfiction she was writing based on The
_Inheritance Cycle_ because she “wanted to own a large map of Alagaësia to illustrate” her
fiction (Murtagh, _Interview Part Two_), and provided the following detail on the creation
of the map itself:

The map is around 65 x 50 cm (around 25 x 20 inches). I made it with
d-paper that I “made old” like old parchment, by putting the sheet in a large
plate with hot tea and some spoons of coffee. A few minutes later I pick
[sic] up the sheet and made it dry outside then finished with hair dryer. To
draw I used a pencil and then ink and pen (as if it would make some kind
of medieval-cool effects !).
To copy the map quite easily, I had a photocopy of the original one on which I have drawn a grid. I made the same grid (with proportions) on my big sheet of paper, then I could draw the map following where were the lines or symbols in the little squares. I don’t know if it is a technic [sic] really used to do such thing, but it was very useful (Murtagh, *Interview Part Two*).

In addition to her recreation of the map of Alagaësia, Murtagh has created maps of other fantasy settings that she has never finished completely, as well as maps of Japan and Great Britain “for fun” (Murtagh, *Interview Part Two*). Her original fantasy map appears below (see Figure 4.11); however, she did not provide any information regarding the narratives she is creating in relation to the map.

![Murtagh’s Original Fantasy Map](image)

*Figure 4.11: Murtagh’s Original Fantasy Map*

As with other participants, Murtagh’s experience with the map of Alagaësia and other fantasy maps indicates an understanding regarding maps as a convention of the
genre, but also suggests that the interactions with such maps occur beyond the moments when a participant is reading the novels.

**Firnen**

Firnen’s description of his interaction with the map of Alagaësia was ironically brief, given the amount of time he later describes spending interacting with the map and the narratives of *The Inheritance Cycle*. His response to the first interview – one of the earliest received – prompted the evolution of this research from the examination of language for traces of the existence of Projective Worlds to examining how readers are interacting with the map of Alagaësia when not reading the books as evidence of the same.

A map is a constant companion on a journey, and should also be a constant companion when you’re on a journey through a book. Every time Brom, Eragon and Saphira travel to a new location, I think “Where is that!?” and flick back to the beginning of the book. In addition to this, I have spent a total of about 30 hours staring at the map of Alagaësia whilst painting the terrain for MCAlagaesia in WorldPainter. No, not all at once! That would be crazy! :-) (Firnin, *Interview Part One*).

The “MC” of “MCAlagaesia” that Firnen refers to is the computer game *Minecraft*, a survival-themed game where players interact with their environment by cultivating dwellings, weapons, and other tools out of “blocks” of materials available in the game, and represents the majority of Firnen’s interactions with Paolini’s original map of Alagaësia.

As stated earlier, Firnen’s interaction with the map of Alagaësia when not reading the books was expressed through the video game Minecraft. While this expression could
also be categorized as play—a virtual version of Brom’s imaginative play within the Secondary World—at the time of the interview, the creation of MCAlagaesia was still in its infancy, and was not, or is it yet, open to having players interact with the Secondary World beyond construction tasks.

Firnen described the genesis of MCAlagaesia and its development through several iterations/versions in his second interview, and provided website information so that screen captures could be obtained.

MCAlagaesia started out as a small private server among a group of friends, but it wasn’t called “MCAlagaesia” then. We were inspired to create something unique and different after playing Minecraft games like Shotbow’s MineZ: They had a huge, hand-made map, gigantic and detailed cities and towns and server plugins that added new features to the game. My brother [redacted] and I had recently read the Inheritance Cycle [sic] for the first time. The world of Alagaësia seemed so vivid; it was the perfect world to become the base for this project.

On the 29th of September, 2012, I began creating the first version of the map in a program called WorldPainter. The map wasn’t very good, and to this date, we’ve been through 5 iterations, with each getting bigger and better than the last. We’re very happy with the current one, and we probably won’t change it any time soon (Firnen, Interview Part Two).

A screen capture of this “current” version of MCAlagaesia is included below (see Figure 4.12). While the orientation of the map is different due to the limitations of Minecraft’s programming, as is the amount of detail in this extreme “zoom-out” screen capture designed to extend to the borders of the map, the similarity to the published version of Christopher’s map of Alagaësia (shown previously in Figure 4.5) is notable.
Firnen’s second interview also included questions regarding the choice of Alagaësia as the Secondary World to be built in Minecraft, and the challenges encountered with the project.

As I mentioned in a previous question, we thought Alagaësia was a rich and vivid world, and we knew that we could create something unique with it. We had seen other projects that attempt to recreate lands like Westeros from A Song of Ice and Fire, or Middle-earth from The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit in Minecraft. Nobody had attempted to create Alagaësia, so this was a new challenge.

I’ve spent hours in WorldPainter tracing over the map multiple times, raising mountains and carving rivers. Through this, I’ve learned more about the geography of this land than I could have simply reading these books.

Overall, this project and interacting with the map makes me think more deeply about the entire series and Alagaësia (Firnen, Interview Part Two).

Firnen and the rest of the MCAlagaesia team, which now numbers in the thirties, have devoted dozens, if not hundreds, of hours to the recreation of the map of Alagaësia in Minecraft. Due to the immersive quality of the Minecraft game, what appears as a simple map in Figure 4.12 above is actually a detailed, interactive environment built from...
nothing, requiring the reimagining of a two dimensional drawing into a three dimensional landscape. An example of such detail is shown in Figure 4.13 below, a screen capture of the Beor Mountains (located in the lower right corner of the published map of Alagaësia in Figure 4.5). If the player were to travel across the water to the base of the mountains, inspired by the mountains of Paradise Valley where Christopher grew up and now lives, they would find that the mountains consist of layers of individual blocks, shown below in Figure 4.14:

![Figure 4.13: The Beor Mountains.](image-url)
The devotion to accuracy described by Firnen and present in the website devoted to the recreation of Alagaësia in Minecraft, www.MCAlagaesia.com, signifies a deep connection to the Secondary World of The Inheritance Cycle that clearly extends the boundaries of the reading transaction beyond the participant reading the novels. In recreating the setting of The Inheritance Cycle in a 3-D digital environment, Firnen and his team are not only experiencing their own Projective World; they are creating the potential for others to likewise immerse themselves in the Secondary World through MCAlagaësia in addition to, or instead of, while reading the novels. He has become, and will continue to be, both reader and creator.

These translations of the map of Alagaësia demonstrate the complexities within each participant’s response. Murtagh’s translated map was created with an eye for authenticity, attempting to make the map look “ancient” and real. Firnen’s work continues to expand inward; with the overall framework of the map having been
established, the MCAlagaësia team now works to “zoom in” on each area to build intricate micro-settings, as detailed as the furniture in Eragon’s chambers or the specific dimensions of the mountain fortress of Farthen Dûr. Both participants were/are focused on the ability of their respective artifacts to create a sense of immersion, for themselves and, in the case of Firnen, for all those who would in the future play in MCAlagaësia. They are perhaps the most active of the co-creators, building their Projective Worlds to share with others.

**Close Reading of the Map of Alagaësia**

While all of the participants demonstrated a certain amount of knowledge and expertise with regard to the genre of fantasy and the convention of paratextual mapping, few of them addressed any indications of evaluating the map of Alagaësia. Brom made some comparisons to Tolkien, and Oromis indicated expectations with regard to the narrative and the Hadarac Desert, but their engagement with the map outside of those comments overshadowed their critical readings of the map. In describing the map’s purpose as being to help the reader feel immersed within the Secondary World, in conjunction with having been recruited through Christopher’s social media accounts, the participants all seemed to be affirming the effectiveness of the map of Alagaësia in creating the verisimilitude so often referenced by scholars.

Baker (2006) had alluded the effectiveness of various fantasy maps, writing that she had “looked at the brilliant and the mundane, from Earthsea to Eragon (Paolini 2003) (and if you want to draw conclusions about the former and the latter, feel free)” (p. 239).
Having done my recruiting through Christopher’s fan base, I did not expect to encounter any participants who would share Baker’s criticism of his work. When I did, I was unsure of how to deal with the data; my concerns were that a reader who did not feel Christopher had made the sun green would not be engaged with the Secondary World and would therefore not be creating a Projective World. What I found, however, was that lack of verisimilitude did not equate to a lack of engagement; rather, this particular participant’s engagement was based on his identity as a scholar, instead of a reader.

**Orrin**

Orrin was an intriguing participant in that his interactions with the map of Alagaësia were more concerned with cartographic and geographic aspects than others. Where Oromis had indicated some inconsistencies with Paolini’s map while describing her interactions with it, Orrin devoted both interviews to a critical reading of the map of Alagaësia. In fact, Orrin was critical of the research project in general after having received and responded to the first interview packet:

I’ll admit I was surprised at the lack of critical or analytical questions, such as whether participants thought the map was well made, or geologically/environmentally realistic, or whether we thought it was necessary for the story or added merely because of previously-established convention by works such as Lord of the Rings, Conan the Barbarian, A Song of Ice and Fire, the Belgariad, and so on (i.e. was the map necessary for Inheritance, or added simply because other similar fantasy series also had maps?), etc., which I think would have added greater depth of discussion to your research project (Orrin, *Interview Part One*).

Orrin’s responses anticipated the questions I had been asking other participants in the second interview, and so I allowed him to direct his *Interview Part Two* by
incorporating his questions and supplementing them with my own. The results of the second interview were a sophisticated, critical reading of Paolini’s map that is included here in its entirety to honor the voice of the participant. The interview questions are in bold and italicized; Orrin’s responses are in plain text block quotes.

**Did you feel that Paolini’s map was geographically/environmentally realistic?**

In some parts, but there are many aspects/elements that stretched the limits of my suspension of disbelief both in isolation and when seen in the context of the story.

For example, from my understanding, the distribution of forest, desert, and mountains is highly unlikely to occur naturally, usually because mountainous areas tend to have higher levels of precipitation, and therefore tend to have forests nearby, rather than far away. Second, the physical/geologic processes of mountain-formation mean that mountains almost always form in ranges or chains; the Beor mountains in Alagaesia, being shaped more like an amorphous blob than any kind of chain, are an extremely unlikely formation, excluding the presence of magic in their formation.

Last (that I want to mention, but not actually the last problem with the map), putting a sandy Sahara-style desert (as described in the books) including extremes of heat and cold, sand dunes, and sandstorms, immediately south of a temperate forest and bordering on fertile temperate grasslands, is so geologically unfeasible as to be laughable.

**What does it mean for a map of a fantasy world to be geographically/environmentally realistic? Does the fantasy map have to have a “real-world” geographical correlation to be realistic? Does the fantasy setting have to obey the laws of nature of the “real world”?**

Geographic/geologic realism in a fantasy map is really important, barring magical or scientific (in a sci-fi, steampunk, or ‘future fantasy’) interference, because in order for a reader to suspend their disbelief of story-critical fantasy elements (magic, elves, etc.), they must be given something ‘real’ or ‘familiar’ that doesn’t strain their credulity. This also applies to psychological realism in the story, but with specific regard to

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9 In addition to making room for the reader’s voice as a goal of this project in general, I felt compelled to allow Orrin’s voice to be heard by the audience as he had described a poor reception to criticism in the past by the fan community.
fantasy maps, that includes not placing geographic features that are physically impossible or unrealistic.

I do not think fantasy maps must have a real-world analogue in order to be realistic, only that the geographic features appear to have formed by processes that comport with reality. That is, mountains being formed by orogenic processes (for example subduction, obduction, fault-block movement, or volcanic activity), rivers and lakes that do not run uphill or make u-turns toward mountains or hills, or stop in the middle of a plain with no reason (another problem with the Alagaesia map, especially with the Ramr river), and the existence of ecotones or ecoclines transitioning between different environmental areas (forest, scrubland, grassland, etc.).

I think I also answered the third question in there, fantasy maps that abide by real-world processes are preferable so the reader doesn’t have to exert more effort than necessary in suspending their disbelief in order to accept the story premise. Generally speaking, the more (and more outlandish) fantasy elements you include, the more rigidly realistic the ‘ordinary’ elements must be in order to ‘ground’ the reader in some familiar territory. Take Perdito Street Station, for example, by China Meiville. Almost nothing is ‘familiar’, and everything is weird and different and fantastic. The only way the reader is able to find their feet is through the realistic lifelike psychologies and emotions of the characters. If the emotional reality of the characters came into question even for a moment, the reader’s suspension of disbelief would be lost and the story would have fallen into an irreparable mess.

*Did you feel that the map of Alagaësia was “necessary” or added simply as a convention of the genre?*

I think the map was added from convention, rather than necessity, because the places visited in the books are described and contrasted adequately enough that there is no real need to reference a map to follow the story.

However, just because it is unnecessary doesn’t mean it should have been avoided, as many readers (myself included) do enjoy having supplementary materials to refer to. I especially refer to the player manuals for video games, which often have unnecessary information (or redundant materials that are covered during gameplay), which are included for the enjoyment of such gamers (and younger-sibling-audiences-of-gamers) who like such things.

Given the level of detail and sophistication present in Orrin’s analysis, the second interview included follow-up questions relating to his education and experience in
geography and cartography, to gain a better understanding of the context in which such an analysis was conducted.

Aside from an interest in fantasy maps from different stories/media I have consumed, I have also done a fair amount of layperson research into relevant topics such as plate tectonics and geography for the purpose of developing my own maps for stories/games I have planned or designed. I have a strong interest in “ground-up” worldbuilding, from languages to cultures and, yes, map/location development. In the latter case, a literal ‘ground-up’ approach, starting with an outline of continental and oceanic plates and ocean currents, and how they might interact in the formation of a land mass.

I would like to stress, however, that I am still only a layperson. I have no professional qualifications in cartography or geology.

Orrin’s excitement for the research project, his concern regarding the depth of the research questions in light of his own passion for fantasy maps, and the detail displayed in his analysis of Christopher’s map of Alagaësia, suggest an engagement with the Secondary World that transcends the reading of the novels. In being analytical—and at times, critical—of the Secondary World, Orrin has added his own unique layer to the palimpsest of Alagaësia. His reading of the map sees it for both its faults and its potential; as a co-creator of what he sees to be an improved Alagaësia based on his criticisms above, Orrin has created his own Projective World.

**A Footfall Journey through Alagaësia**

Beginning at the age of six and continuing up to the time of our initial interview in the Spring of 2014, Arya—with her younger sister and several neighborhood children—had been playing an imaginative fantasy game set in a Secondary World they
named Arcanus. When she was eight, Arya created a map of Arcanus (see Figure 4.15 below).

![Arya's map of Arcanus](image)

**Figure 4.15: Arya’s map of Arcanus**

While Arya had not read extensively within the genre of fantasy at the time she drew the map of Arcanus, she indicated in her interview that she was aware of maps as a paratextual convention of the genre. Her reasons for creating the map related not only to this convention, but also as a means of assisting the players in blocking their narrative play in the manner a director might do with a script.

We originally decided to make a map just because maps are so cool and every fantasy thing has a map. But then we realized that we kind of needed it to decide where the heck we were going to go for different things, ‘cuz [sic] like half of us would be over by the see saw and then the other people would be in the sandbox and we were like, what are you doing? (Arya, *Interview Transcript 031114*).
The narrative play performed by this group of children spanned years; plots were carried out over days and weeks, often times repeated and edited to explore different outcomes within the same basic plot structure. The landmarks mentioned in Arya’s previous comment—the sandbox, the see saw—were present in the Actual World of the adjoining backyards of the children’s homes, but were reimagined in the Secondary World of Arcanus as different positions on the map. To the outside observer, this situation appeared to be a small group of children, whose homes shared adjoining backyards, moving among various areas of play, including a swing set, a sandbox, and a small pond that would develop after heavier rainfalls. Those involved in the play, however, understood that those connected yards were more than grass and toys and playground equipment; that land was Arcanus, a vast fantasy realm full of warring factions and evil forces. This interaction between the Actual World and the Secondary World of Arcanus were the genesis of my thinking relating to Projective Worlds; the beginning of my belief that something more took place when a reader interacted with a fantasy map.

Arya represented a unique opportunity to explore the concept of Projective Worlds in “real time” with a reader. In October of 2016, Arya and I traveled to Paradise Valley, Montana, to journey around the landscapes that Christopher described as having influenced the creation of the map of Alagaësia and the setting of *The Inheritance Cycle*. As I had already interviewed Arya two years earlier for a tangential pilot research project—the project from which my thinking surrounding Projective Worlds was born—she was not provided with the same interview packet(s) that the other participants received. Instead, I purchased a journal for Arya (see Figure 4.16 below), a set of artist’s
sketching pencils and markers, and a digital camera, and I requested simply that she think about the setting of the novels and the map of Alagaësia as we made our journey to Paradise Valley. Arya’s awareness of the project was minimal; she knew simply that I was interested in how readers interact with fantasy maps, and that I had already conducted an interview with the author about how he created the map. While we were both hopeful that we would get to meet with Christopher, his travel schedule conflicted with ours, and we instead spent an hour with his mother, who provided additional information about Christopher’s having grown up in the area and how Paradise Valley inspired the setting of *The Inheritance Cycle*.

Figure 4.16: Arya’s Journal.
Arya’s journal features a wolf on the cover, and was selected specifically because of Arya’s identity as “Wolf” in the pilot research project mention previously. Arya identifies the wolf as her “spirit animal” in her imaginative play and writing. The contents of the journal are a combination of sketches and text, and were kept private during the course of the trip; I did not ask to see her work until after we had completed our travels, although she was aware from the beginning that I would be reading her journal as part of my research and using its contents as data in my dissertation.

Arya’s sketches were a combination of figures—often dragons—and landscapes (see Figures 4.17 and 4.18 below). All her drawings related to the fantasy genre; there were also sketches of swords, a ring, and a dragon rider’s bedroom, all of which emerged during our flight to Montana when she was unable to decide what to sketch and we were both too tired to think of original material.
Figure 4.17: Arya’s Journal Entry – Dragon and Landscape.

Figure 4.18: Arya’s Journal: “The Bridger Mountains”.
Arya’s textual journal entries continually connected the landscape we were seeing in Montana to the Secondary World in *The Inheritance Cycle*, as well as suggesting that original fantasy narratives were being written in her mind:

The mountains in the books, based off these, were aptly named, and definitely have a live, serpentine feel, like old dragons buried in dust, waiting to shed the earth loose and rear their stony heads, seeming to slither slowly through the ripple of time. The trees, too, feed the imagination. Their branches are dark and wild, like black, haunted skeletons, adorned with light and sin-shaded feathers for leaves. Pale fields, long roads, sleeping monsters, haunted rivers, golden sunlight, blue sky, and biting wind. Montana begs for a fantasy (Arya, *Journal Entry*).
One of the journal pages includes “Ideas” for fantasy stories, which have been excluded to respect Arya’s privacy. As our journey continued, covering not only Paradise Valley but also Yellowstone National Park, Arya continued to remark about the fantasy elements she perceived throughout the landscape.

[After meeting Christopher’s mother], we drove around while listening to the Lord of the Rings soundtrack and clawed our way a bit up one of the sleeping giants, through rock-strewn fields and under sunlight-studded, arching forests. Hundreds of pictures were taken, private property was probably trespassed, and a creep robbed some guy’s car, but everything is bright and pretty and windy and overall just epic (Arya, Journal Entry).

I came to recognize that Arya had a flair for the “epic,” a term she used to describe not only her favorite genre of music, but anything that related to the genre of fantasy. The language in her journal entries continued to reflect this playfulness and creativity.

I’ve never seen golden, rippling, bush-studded hills like this. They seem to roll and tumble like colossal [sic] felines, or flow like ragged flesh. I like them. They are a gilded dragon sleeping soundly under age-old moss.

Today we went to Yellowstone. It was breathtaking, full to the brim with rolling forests, fields, and creeks. Every place was named as if it were ethereal; Wraith Falls, Nymph Lake, Magical Flying Unicorn Mountains, and so on, and it was easy to see why. The mountains are in and around the winding way through a world of singing grass and smiling shadows. The soundtrack from LOOR [sic] spun webs through my mind as I watched (Arya, Journal Entry).

While Arya seemed to be enjoying experiencing the mountainous Montana landscape that her own Ohio home would never be able to offer, it wasn’t until her final journal entries that connections between the Secondary World of Alagaësia and the Actual World of Paradise Valley were being made.

Today we leave. Hours of driving, waiting, flying, flying, waiting, waiting, waiting, flying, and driving are ahead of us. The clouds are
melancholy feathers that hover over the mountains, the sun reaching its arms through the edges like flame. This place would be great to run away to or travel in, and Chris made good use of that. The tale of the boy and his dragon going on a journey, is only enhanced by the mysterious smiles of the mountains. Dragons and bison [sic] and bears, oh my! It seems that a story was hidden here, and Christopher merely plucked it from the forests and put it down in ink. How could anyone leave this place once they are captured by its spell? Ah, but still, I have to go back to my oh-so exciting life of walls and towns and school and Ohio. I will come back some time. There are more stories to be told (Arya, Journal Entry).

Chapter Summary

Each of the participants’ stories above illustrates an interaction with the paratextual convention of fantasy maps that occurred in addition to interactions with the map while reading the novels. These interactions were unique among the larger pool of research participants who responded to the initial interview packet, and suggest the potential for a different way of understanding the interaction between reader and Secondary World.

The data presented in this chapter represents the information needed to address the research questions posed in Chapter One. Data collection was intended to address two goals: (a) to understand the participants as readers within the genre of fantasy, and to further understand their knowledge pertaining to the paratextual convention of fantasy mapping often considered to be the hallmark of the genre; and (b) to explore the ways in which readers interacted with the map of Alagaësia beyond moments when they were reading the novels.

The goal of this chapter was to present each of the participants as co-creators of the Secondary World of Alagaësia, and to represent their own unique Projective Worlds,
the concept of which is not represented in scholarship relating to fantasy maps. While the interviews varied—the interviews of Christopher and Arya did not follow the same document/structure as the others—the goal of this section remained as originally intended.

The evidence of each Projective World emerged from analysis of the initial data. The original intention had been to examine readers’ experiences with the geography of the Actual World to determine if they had developed a connection between those experiences as the Secondary World of The Inheritance Cycle, as expressed in Christopher’s map of Alagaësia. What emerged was unexpected; the readers, rather than describing how X mountain in the Actual World reminded them of Y mountain in the Secondary World while they read The Inheritance Cycle, were interacting with the map of Alagaësia in unique ways that took place during moments when they were not reading the novels. In answer to the evolution of thought that these interactions were indicative of the existence of a Projective World, the data presented in this section were grouped by interaction type: Christopher’s creation of the original map of Alagaësia; readers’ creation of their own original fantasy maps, inspired by the map of Alagaësia; play—either literal or virtual—within a recreation of Alagaësia; translation of the map of Alagaësia; a close reading of the map of Alagaësia; and, finally, the journey of one reader to the Actual World inspiration for Eragon’s home in The Inheritance Cycle.
Chapter 5

Discussions and Conclusions

“I am glad you are here with me. Here at the end of all things, Sam.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*

Introduction

The purpose of this research project was to study the interactions of participants with fantasy maps in order to understand how the map in a fantasy novel might be interpreted as having purpose beyond creating a Secondary World that seemed “real” to the reader—how those interactions might be interpreted as evidence of a Projective World. The findings in Chapter 4 described the interactions of each participant with fantasy maps, and set forth several types of interactions participants shared with the map apart from the moments when they were reading the novels.

This chapter considers the findings of this study in light of the research questions set forth in Chapter 1. I begin by describing the participants as readers of the genre of fantasy, comparing their interactions with the map of Alagaësia during the reading transaction to those of the Implied Reader invoked in the scholarship surrounding maps of Secondary Worlds. Echoing the movement of the reader’s immersion in the Secondary World, this chapter explores the interactions of the participants with the map of Alagaësia.
that occurred when they were not reading the books. While these transactions are grouped into themes identified during data collection and set forth in Chapter 4, the boundaries are fluid and often crossed within the expressions of each participant. Finally, each of these themes is revisited through the framework of Projective Worlds. The chapter concludes with the implications of this study for future research in the field of fantasy literature.

**Readers and Fantasy Maps**

The scholarly thought surrounding fantasy maps had reached a consensus that has alluded attempts to define the genre itself: maps are thought to aid in the construction of the Secondary World—to help the reader remain immersed in a fantasy world, to believe that the sun is green. This level of verisimilitude is not dependent on the reader’s willing suspension of disbelief, as is often incorrectly asserted; rather, the Secondary World must be so well-constructed that the Actual World (Ekman, 2013) has no space to intrude in the reader’s sense of place while they are reading, for if it does, it is *then* that the reader must suspend disbelief (Tolkien, 1964/2004). Once the foundation has cracked, it may be beyond anyone’s ability to repair it. For a genre that is frequently located in worlds that have little resemblance to our own, maps have become a paratextual convention that strengthens that foundation.

All of the participants in this study—whether author or reader, artist or critic, or, more often, bricolages of several identities—have acknowledged this consensus belief in the map’s ability to create verisimilitude on behalf of the reader. They describe referring back to the map of Alagaësia to track the movement of characters throughout the
narrative; they are familiar with other fantasy works that also contain maps; and they often have experience, as writers of texts, with the role a map can play in the genesis of a world. Their familiarity with the genre was expected, as they were recruited through their identity as fans of a fantasy series; the participants in my study could easily be cast in the role of the Implied Reader (Iser, 1974) that the literature around the genre of fantasy presents. Yet these participants had described experiences that went beyond what the Implied Reader is described as having experienced. The Secondary World of Alagaësia was unique for each of them, and as individuals, it was incorrect to assume that their uniformity of understanding of the purpose of a fantasy map equated to a uniformity of perception of the fantasy map. After all, if a map is a text, and each reader’s interaction with that text creates a new text (poesis, in Rosenblatt’s (1978) terminology), then the artifact they saw when looking at the map of Alagaësia could no longer be representative of a Secondary World. Further, in understanding that a reader is always (a) culturally situated, and (b) an evolving identity, both being and becoming, then the Actual World’s presence in the interaction with the fantasy map might not be in intrusion or disruption, as previously assumed. Rather, the map of Alagaësia, as read by a participant, is a palimpsest; a multilayered artifact that represents a reader’s experience of immersing themselves in the Secondary World, bringing with them their experiences of the Actual World; it is now a map of a Projective World—Projective, rather than “Projected,” because each interaction with the map, each immersion in the Secondary World, each new experience in the Actual World; all of these add new layers to the palimpsest.
Alagaësia Beyond *The Inheritance Cycle*

Each of the participants in this study—with the exception of Christopher and Arya—had described an interaction with the map of Alagaësia that extended the boundaries of the reading transaction beyond the actual reading of the books. Several became world-builders, drawing inspiration from Alagaësia; others chose to immerse themselves in the Secondary World during play; one brought his considerable knowledge of geography and geology to bear on the map in a close reading of Alagaësia. Arya had worn several of these thematic identities throughout her engagement with fantasy literature before reading *The Inheritance Cycle*, including world-builder and role player. Common across all these themes was the notion that readers spent time immersed in the Secondary World of Alagaësia outside of the reading of the novels. The assumption that the map was an object of verisimilitude was not rendered false; rather, it became necessary to expand the understanding of what constituted immersion to include events that took place when the participant was not reading. Ryan (2001) and Gee (2007), in writing of video games and virtual reality as literacy events, provide a foundation on which these non-reading transactions may be considered as engagement with the text of *The Inheritance Cycle*. This step is necessary in order to bring the participants’ immersion under the consideration of the scholarship relating to maps and their ability to create verisimilitude, to help the reader effectively engage with the Secondary World of the text. In considering the interactions presented in Chapter 4 as literacy events, a space is created for the individual’s experience of the map of Alagaësia, to be heard in chorus with the voice of the Implied Reader.
Projective Worlds

An admirer of Tolkien as both artist and scholar, I found myself turning frequently to his work throughout this project. While it had been expanded upon in Ekman’s work (2013) in a particularly useful way—adding the realm of the Actual World to Tolkien’s Primary and Secondary Worlds—Tolkien’s work regarding the importance of fantasy settings remains the foundation upon which my thinking about Projective Worlds was built. And “here, at the end of all things,” as my research project concluded (at least as far as needing to draw a line in the sand with regard to the collection of data and the narrowing of focus) I found myself again in the company of Tolkien—but this time with the writer and artist, rather than the scholar.

‘It’s a gift!’ he [Niggle] said. He was referring to his art, and also to the result; but he was using the word quite literally. He went on looking at the Tree. All the leaves he had ever labored at were there, as he had imagined them rather than as he had made them; and there were others that had only budded in his mind, and many others that might have budded, if only he had had the time (2001/1964, p. 110).

Niggle did not create the Tree he found in (what I read as) Heaven entirely on his own. In life, his masterpiece amounted to a single leaf on a corner of canvas, the larger, incomplete work having been sacrificed to mend a neighbor’s roof. He played a role in its genesis, of course; and yet the Tree possessed a life of its own that continued after Niggle’s had ended.

A Secondary World does not exist without a reader. While Christopher may have created the map of Alagaësia, he is not wholly responsible for its existence. The deep roots of the fantasy genre, of which Christopher was a fan, fed his work in creating the map of Alagaësia; and after what may be perceived as the end of his role as creator of the
Secondary World—its publication and “release” to readers—Alagaësia continued to grow, a palimpsest upon which each reader would add their own layer.

The participants in this project each interacted with Alagaësia in contexts outside the reading of the books. These interactions were expressed in the artifacts presented in Chapter 4: maps, both original and translations of Alagaësia; descriptions of play and close readings; and journal entries, sketches and photographs that illustrated a blending of the Actual World and Secondary World. In considering its genesis, we see this blending of worlds from another angle, of the building of the foundation of Alagaësia.

To think of Alagaësia as a Secondary World is to exclude the role the readers have in its existence; to place the text in a position of authority; to deny the collaboration between author and reader in the formation of the text. Instead, as this project illustrates, each reader co-creates Alagaësia; for each participant, and for me as a researcher, Alagaësia is a Projective World.

**Implications**

The question that often remains at the end of a qualitative research project—one that I have been asked throughout my research, most often by me—is the dreaded “So What?” What is the point of a research project that argues that each individual will see something different when they examine a fantasy map? What is the use of it? In concluding his book on the importance of research in the field of cultural geography and place, Jon Anderson (2010) addressed this same question in a manner that gave voice to my own stubborn and ineloquent stomping of feet:
All our ideas and actions combine to produce new generations of places. As a consequence, it is not enough to chart the different cultural traces that come together to form places. We must see ourselves as part of these places too (p. 182).

Much like my own original intention to understand how my participants were engaging with the map of Alagaësia outside of the reading of the books, Anderson asserts that cultural geography—a form of qualitative research—helps us to “better understand our place in the world around us” (p. 182).

The implications of this project extend beyond my own understanding to creating a space within the scholarship surrounding fantasy maps and Secondary Worlds for the voice of readers such as my participants—several of whom were children or young adults during their interactions with The Inheritance Cycle; colonized identities that are overlooked in favor of an Implied Reader. The ways in which the readers were expressing their Projective Worlds could easily be extended into separate research projects. Of particular interest to me were Brom’s descriptions of playing in his family’s forest, which he thought of as Ellesmera; this type of play invoked memories of my own childhood play, as well as Arya’s play in Arcanus. With the perpetual popularity of renaissance festivals and the building of theme parks based on Secondary Worlds (the Harry Potter parks in Florida and California; Dr. Seuss’s land in Universal Studios, Florida, and several others), the interaction between Actual World and Secondary World, and how individuals develop a sense of place through such immersive imaginative play seems rich and inviting.

Likewise, I would be curious to work with readers who were not necessarily experienced with the genre of fantasy, who had not been recruited through the methods
used in this project, to understand how deeply the identity of “fantasy fan” influences the relationship between reader and Secondary World.

I had not considered it to be of interest while collecting data, but a previous committee member had asked about the significance of the pseudonyms each participant had chosen, and whether or not they saw themselves as having anything in common with the characters whose names they had chosen. While I did not include the data because I had played a role in the selection of their names—I had requested that they provided a list of five character names (in case names were already assigned to other participants), one of which I would choose on their behalf and use in my writing—I did ask them to describe any connections (or lack thereof) between themselves and the characters. The weak response rate to this question (only two out of eight participants responded) also led me to exclude the topic from my dissertation.

Finally, there are other elements of fantasy that are expressed outside of the reading transaction that are also of interest to me. Using the research on “play as literacy” that I began with this project, the concept of LARPing (live action role playing) demonstrates another means of engaging with text. In particular, the emergence of Quidditch tournaments (based on the sport from the *Harry Potter* series) and Zombie Nerf wars on college campuses appears to be a rich research opportunity.

In discussing these implications and potential areas for future research, I must also acknowledge the unique circumstances under which this project was conducted, and the likelihood that any future research plans will fail to possess the same—for lack of a more appropriate term—“magic” that surrounded this project. As I have previously mentioned, Christopher was instrumental in the success of this research project. Not only
did he participate in interviews with enthusiasm and honesty, always responding promptly and fully, but he partnered with me as a researcher, reviewing artifacts provided by his fan base and then helping me to communicate with those same fans to recruit additional participants. As my thinking evolved and more questions arose, he responded to one-off e-mails quickly and without complaint; he offered encouragement upon reading my initial dissertation proposal and always concluded his correspondence with kindness. Apologetic that his own travels would take him away from Montana during my visit with Arya, he arranged to have his mother meet with us, to answer all our questions and provide us with some signed souvenirs. Having observed Christopher’s interaction with his fan base as I began my research, I grew to understand that he was very much a member of that community, rather than a disengaged figurehead, and my surprise at his level of engagement with my research project lessened. It is only in my discussions with other researchers and scholars that I am reminded of how unique and precious these circumstances are. The opportunity to partner with an author is not without its complications; at times, I was concerned over my position in the eyes of the author and fans—that my research might cross the lines into journalism if I was viewed as a fan rather than a scholar. There were moments when answers to my questions would appear in someone else’s interviews of Christopher that made any exclusivity of my own data impossible. Yet here, at the end of this particular phase of my research, I am thankful that I allowed—and was permitted to allow—the project to evolve as it did. Doing so strengthened me as a scholar, built my confidence as a researcher, and allowed me to experience firsthand the unique benefits of conducting qualitative research.
Conclusion

A project such as this is a journey that is never complete. Even the subtitle “conclusion” implies a sense of finality that I, as a researcher who has risked much and invested all to begin, am unwilling to accept. Having spent so much time immersed in the genre of fantasy, I am tempted turn one final time to Tolkien’s words to express how I feel at the project’s conclusion.

The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.

In choosing to invoke Tolkien’s words, I express the emotion I feel about letting go of the research conducted thus far, albeit through a safe distance. But to do so is to betray one of the true purposes of my research project—to give voice to the reader who is so often silenced in the literature about the genre of fantasy. So in conclusion, I turn to Arya, the youngest of my participants—the colonized child—and her final journal entry: “I will come back some time. There are more stories to be told” (Arya, Journal Entry).

Figure 5-1: Arya’s Final Journal Entry
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papers from the Annual Conference of the International Association of School 


Appendix A

Interview Part One (Christopher Paolini)

Interview: Christopher Paolini (Part One - July 2014)

I have designed the first phase of this interview to be a series of reflection prompts more than structured questions that are likely to have brief, limited answers. I have found that this creates an atmosphere of discussion that is more productive than a formal interview. Also, by using prompts rather than more pointed questions, I worry less that I am soliciting a specific response by the way my question is structured. (This is of greater concern for me when interviewing children, but I try to be conscious of asking leading questions in all my interviews.) If, however, you find the prompts to be too vague, please feel free to ask for clarification. The second phase of the interview will involve more specific questions designed to obtain more detail or address any areas that were not covered in your initial responses.

If at any time you are uncomfortable with responding to a prompt, or with the interview in general, you may simply indicate the same and ask that the interview be stopped.

For each category of questions, unless otherwise specified, please provide information pertaining to that category from the time period up to and including your completion of *Eragon*. (You are welcome to include information beyond the scope of what is requested if you feel it is relevant; at this time, my research is focusing on individuals who are (or were) children or young adults at the time of their creation of maps.)

**Experience as a Reader**

Describe your experience with reading as a child/young adult. (For example, did you enjoy reading? What types of texts did you read? Where did you read – did you have a favorite spot? Did you read books more than once? [Note: for the purposes of our discussion, I am using the New Literacies definition of “text,” which can include books, film and television, graphic novels and comic books, music, etc.; your response does not need to be related only to books.])

[RESPONSE]
Experience as a Writer
Describe your experience with writing as a child/young adult. (For example, when did you begin writing stories? What did you enjoy about writing? Did you listen to music when you wrote? Did writing change the way you read other books?)
[RESPONSE]

Experience with Play
Describe your experience with play – specifically imaginative play – as a child/young adult. (For example, were the texts you described above ever part of your play? Did the type of play vary depending on with whom you were playing or where you were playing? Was play ever part of your writing process?)
[RESPONSE]

The Map of Alagaësia
Describe the creation of the map of Alagaësia. (For example, at what point in the writing process did you create the map? Why did you choose to create the map? Was the map influenced by your surroundings? Was this the first map you created?)
[RESPONSE]
Appendix B

Interview Part One

The Fantasy Map Project

Interview Part One
Greetings!

My name is Laura, and I am so glad that you have agreed to participate in this project. I have a few instructions for you before you get started on the interview questions.

1. Please type your responses in this document, save it, and return it to fantasymapproject@gmail.com.
2. If at all possible, please submit your responses on or before September 30, 2015. If you will need additional time to respond, please let me know via e-mail. If I do not hear from you by that date, I will assume you have decided not to participate.
3. If there are questions that do not apply to you (for example, if you are not currently in school and you are answering the “Current Grade Level” question) please respond with “not applicable” or “N/A.”
4. If there are any questions you are not comfortable answering, please type “no response” so that I know you didn’t miss something by accident.
5. Have fun! I hope that you find these questions to be easy and fun to answer – after all, they’re about reading fantasy literature, which you probably love since you’ve made it this far. Please answer honestly and as fully as possible. If you worry about such things, there is no length requirement or limitation for any of your answers – write as much as you like!

Now, on to the interview!
Interview Part One

Section One: General Information

Name:
Age:
Current Grade Level:
City/State/Country (where you currently live):

Section Two: Fantasy Literature

How would you define or describe what makes a book a “fantasy” book?

What are some of the fantasy books/series you have read?

What do you enjoy about reading fantasy literature?

Do you enjoy other types of fantasy, such as movies, games, etc.? If so, please list some of your favorites and describe why you like them.

Describe your reading habits in general. How often do you read? Do you read outside of assigned reading?
Section Three: Eragon and the Map of Alagaësia

Which books in the Inheritance Cycle have you read?

Have you read any of the Inheritance Cycle books more than once? If so, how many times?

Describe how you interact with the map of Alagaësia when you are reading.

Have you created any artwork inspired by or related to the Inheritance Cycle?

Have you created any artwork inspired by or related to the map of Alagaësia? (If so, and you are willing to share, please attach a .pdf image of the artwork when you e-mail me your responses to Interview Part One.)

Section Four: The Map of Alagaësia and Places in Your Life

While reading about Alagaësia, did you picture any places from the "real world"? If so, where are those places?

For those places you named above, if any, describe why you thought of them when reading about Alagaësia.
Section Five: Additional Interview Questions

Would you be willing to participate in a second interview if I have follow-up questions about your answers to Interview Part One?

Thank you!

I really appreciate your taking the time to answer my questions. Again, please e-mail your responses to me at fantasymapproject@gmail.com no later than September 30, 2015. I look forward to hearing from you soon!

All my best,
Laura
Appendix C

Waiver of Written Consent Form

CONSENT FOR RESEARCH
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: In search of Alagaësia: a journey toward understanding the interactions between readers and the maps found in the fantasy book Eragon (aka “The Fantasy Map Project”)

Principal Investigator: Laura D’Aveta
Address: 263 Chambers, University Park, PA 16802
Telephone Number: (330) 416-0602
Advisor: Dr. Jacqueline Reid-Walsh
Advisor Telephone Number: (814) 867-2732

We are asking you to be in a research study. This form gives you information about the research. Whether or not you take part is up to you. You can choose not to take part. You can agree to take part and later change your mind. Your decision will not be held against you. Please ask questions about anything that is unclear to you and take your time to make your choice.

Some of the people who are eligible to take part in this research study may not be able to give consent because they are less than 18 years of age (a minor). Instead we will ask their parent(s)/guardian(s) to give permission for their participation in the study, and we may ask them to agree (give assent) to take part. Throughout the consent form, “you” always refers to the person who takes part in the research study.

We are asking you to be in this research because we are interested in understanding how readers interact with fantasy maps.

You will be asked to complete an interview questionnaire describing your appreciation of fantasy literature and your interactions with the maps found in fantasy books. You will then be asked to return the completed questionnaire via e-mail to the researcher. The researcher may contact you via e-mail to ask for additional description based on your responses.

There is minimal risk associated with this research project. There is a risk of loss of confidentiality if your information or your identity is obtained by someone other than the investigators, but precautions will be taken to prevent this from happening.
Being in this research study will take approximately 20 minutes of your time, and does not require any additional time on your part beyond responding to the questionnaire and returning your responses to the researcher.

In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

We will do our best to keep your participation in this research study confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, it is possible that other people may find out about your participation in this research study. For example, the following people/groups may check and copy records about this research.

- The Office for Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- The Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) and
- The Office for Research Protections.

Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you. Reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Taking part in this research study is voluntary.

- You do not have to be in this research.
- If you choose to be in this research, you have the right to stop at any time.
- If you decide not to be in this research or if you decide to stop at a later date, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

Please call the head of the research study (principal investigator), Laura D'Aveta, at (330) 416-0602 if you:
- Have questions, complaints or concerns about the research.
- Believe you may have been harmed by being in the research study.

You may also contact the Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775, ORProtections@psu.edu if you:
- Have questions regarding your rights as a person in a research study.
- Have concerns or general questions about the research.
- You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to talk to someone else about any concerns related to the research.

**INFORMED CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN RESEARCH**

Tell the researcher your decision regarding whether or not to participate in the research. Your participation implies your voluntary consent to participate in the research. Please keep or print a copy of this form for your records.
Laura D’Aveta  
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EDUCATION
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Committee: Daniel Hade (Chair), Jonathan Eburne, Jamie Myers, Anne Whitney  

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TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Children’s Literature Instructor  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Pennsylvania State University  
• Instructor of record for one section of Fantasy Literature for Children in Fall and Spring semesters through World Campus (Penn State’s online system).  
• Analyzed existing course for areas of improvement based on personal experience and student feedback.  

Children’s Literature Instructor  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Pennsylvania State University  
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• Modified course to incorporate current issues in education and increase variety of materials examined.  

Teaching Assistant  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Pennsylvania State University  
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RESEARCH EXPERIENCE
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Research Assistant  
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