"It was a sensation, of course, of desire… and even before I knew what I desired, the desire itself was gone, the whole glimpse withdrawn and the world turned commonplace again, or only stirred by a longing for the longing that had just ceased…"
[C.S. Lewis]

A discussion of 'longing' in modern fantasy.

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[C.S. Lewis, *Surprised By Joy*, 23]

A discussion of 'longing' in modern fantasy.

"A longing for a longing" [C.S. Lewis] – The desire for other lands as a form of nostalgia.

The notion of 'longing' lies at the heart of fantastical experience. Often, readers of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis can be heard wishing it were possible to travel to Narnia or Middle Earth. Longing implies an ache, an almost painful desire – and in the case of Lewisian fantasy it is a desire expressed in spatial terms, a desire for a utopic and magical 'other land'. Yet this yearning is ultimately unfulfillable, its objects existing in a spatiality separate from our own. What makes such places enchanting is the very fact we cannot go there. When Lewis describes his longing, he does so in a strangely recursive manner, with the experience of desire becoming the very thing he desires, "a longing for the longing" [C.S. Lewis, *Surprised By Joy*, 23]. Under this model readers could never fully grasp the object of their longing, otherwise their longing for it would end; however much they might wish to take ahold of the fantastical, in the actualization of their dreams, they would lose the very thing they dreamt of. Such a structure might best be clarified by relating it to Stewart's discussion of nostalgia, where she proposes that the nostalgic yearning for home is rooted in the gap between sign and signified [Stewart, 23]. Paralleling fantastical other lands, the object of nostalgia lies beyond our reach, inaccessible except where mediated through narrative or memorial experience; it is lost to time. For Stewart, however, it remains impossible for the sign to "capture" the referent, for "narrative to be one with its object" [Stewart, 23], and it is the inability to bridge this rupture that sparks nostalgic emotion. Lewis' 'desire for a desire' might be expressed in similar terms, where it is the gap between the signifier of *Narnia*, and the referent of 'Narnia' that creates our hunger for the other land. For Lewis, the desire to read

the fantastical becomes a desire to experience this gap, a longing for the ache of longing. Here, it is the inability to experience the fantastical that is key, the unreachability of 'other lands' becoming essential rather than incidental to our yearning for them.

In this context, the comparison of Lewis to Stewart becomes particularly apt, for there is an unacknowledged parallel between fantastical and nostalgic longings. Whether or not she echoes Lewis intentionally, Stewart also describes nostalgia as "a desire for desire" [Stewart, 23], proposing a structure identical to that of Lewis. Accordingly, the two desires appear highly symmetrical, and I would go so far as to suggest that Lewis' longing *is* a form of nostalgic longing – one where the nostalgic object is relocated from a home of the past to a distant 'other land'. Indeed, there are several commonly accepted features of nostalgia which are paralleled by Lewisian longing. Critics such as Muller and Boym often agree that nostalgia originated as a spatial yearning, constructed from the Greek *nostos* ("homecoming") and *algos* ("pain, suffering or grief") [Muller, 747]. As such, it connotes a painful desire to return home to one's roots, mirroring the desire felt by Odysseus to return to Ithaca in Homer's *Odyssey* – the most iconic example of *nostos*. In 20th century criticism, however, the 'home' that acts as the object of nostalgia was frequently argued to be a construction on the part of the nostalgic, a memory rather than an object which actually existed. As Muller and Hutcheon suggest, nostalgia connotes a hunger for a *past* home, a home that is absent even when the nostalgic returns to the location he longs for. As such, while the longing may be spatial, it is seen through a sentimentally temporal lens. The lost space is constructed in contrast to the present, after "the ideal that is not being lived now" [Hutcheon, 1]; nostalgic roots are built from past memories, with all the distortion and idealisation that process implies. When the narrator of Neil Gaiman's *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* [2013] returns to the location of his childhood home, for example, the house has been "knocked down and… lost for good" [Gaiman, The O*cean at the End of the Lane*, 4]; the spatial location becomes a mere sign of home, with home itself residing in vague memories of the past. The nostalgic object does not exist, then, except as

imagined by the one imagining it, often becoming a romanticised alternative to the present.

Such craving for a constructed spatial ideal encapsulates the desire to read about 'other lands'. Like the reconstructed past, both Narnia and Middle-Earth act as canvases on which to project a utopic image that contrasts with the present, and it is their very idealisation that prevents us from bridging the rupture proposed by Stewart. Ideals operate in contrast to realities, and to actualise such dreams would be to render them mundane. Accordingly, spatial distance becomes necessary for their operation. In Lev Grossman's *The Magicians* [2009], it is the fact that 'Fillory'[1] contrasts with life on earth that makes Quentin long for it, creating a dichotomy between here and there, "In Fillory, things mattered in a way the didn't in this world" [Grossman, *The Magicians*, 8]. In a recent lecture he gave at Oxford University in May 2015, Grossman explicitly suggested that our *separation* from magical lands is what makes them appear enchanting [Grossman, *Tolkien Lecture*]. Quite clearly, Lewisian longing is a form of nostalgia – one where the 'homeland' is displaced beyond this world.

This conclusion might help explain a common question posed by critics of fantastical literature, namely the connection made between children and fantasy. Alongside Tolkien and Lewis, modern critics such as Immel note that fantastical literature is often aligned with children and childishness, by readers and critics alike [Tolkien, 'On Faerie Stories', 15]. Naturally, there is disagreement over *why* this occurs. Immel suggests that the child's ability to "move between contradictory realities and mental states" [Immel, 239] facilitates an affinity for the fantastical, explaining the connection as the result of some innate ability in children. Both Lewis and Tolkien disagree with this, arguing that the association is "local and accidental", based on mere coincidence [Lewis, 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children', 3]. Both angles are unsatisfactory. Immel falls into the common trap of positing a universal 'Child', knowable to the adult writer – a premise that has been highly contested ever since Rose published *The Case of*

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[1] A literary parallel for 'Narnia' within Grossman's fictionalised America.

Peter Pan [1984]. According to many critics[2], it is impossible for adults to generalise about children in the manner Immel does, and the point is contentious enough to merit an essay of its own. As is stands, Immel's arguments are too uncertain to be taken at face value, and it seems far more plausible to address the connection between children and fantasy as a constructed one. Tolkien and Lewis, however, are far too dismissive, failing to explain *why* this construction occurs.

Accordingly, I would argue that fantastical literature is so often aligned with children's literature because they contain parallel longings, producing similar reading experiences among adult readers. As Nodelman argues, children's literature can be thought of as a "literature of nostalgia" [Nodelman, 85]. As an entity written by adults looking back on childhood through an "adult lens" [Nodelman, 86], it can be seen to figure childhood as a location of *nostos*, a lost homeland idealised by the adult writer. 'Lostness' is important here, for the object of children's literature is as lost to the writer as 'other lands' are to the reader of fantasy. On a cognitive level, adults are invariably more sophisticated than children are, and accurately imagining oneself as a less sophisticated being is a task Nodelman deems impossible. When adults write children's fiction, they cannot lay aside an adult mind-set, for even their memories of their childhood roots are tainted by an adult frame. As such, the 'childhood' they portray is inevitably a reconstruction, a memory distorted by time. It produces a similar nostalgic gap between sign and referent as that which occurs in fantastical literature, creating a parallel "longing for [a] longing". I propose that it is this parallel which so often leads critics to associate the two genres – genres which can appear so disparate in other regards [Tolkien, *On Faerie Stories*, 12].

The association remains important of course, rather than the mere 'accident' Lewis describes it as, for it has influenced the entire evolution of the genres. The parallel yearning for childhood and fantasy has grown particularly important in recent years, with the coming of modern fantasists such as Gaiman and Grossman. While Tolkien and Lewis sought to stress the genres as separate,

[2] Rose [9] and Nodelman [86], for example.

except where incidentally connected, their successors have brought them increasingly closer together. With Grossman and Gaiman in particular, desires that were once parallel have begun to converge and intersect. Their texts no longer express the longing for childhood and the longing for fantasylands as separate emotions, instead desiring a childhood experience *of* fantasylands. Notably, Gaiman's *Stardust* and Grossman's *The Magicians* exist as adult rewritings of childhood texts; as Grossman stated in his Tolkien lecture, *The Magicians* is written as an adult re-imagining of the *Narnia* series, targeting an audience of children who have grown up. For modern fantasists, then, 'longing' has shifted from a merely spatial desire for 'other lands' into that of a particular temporal experience of them, paralleling Hutcheon's comments on nostalgia as temporally mediated. This convergence can best be explained as a biographical phenomenon, for both Gaiman and Grossman were born in the 1960s, and would have first encountered Lewisian fantasy as children. Accordingly, their texts hark back to a particular *manner* of encountering it, placing Narnia and Middle-Earth in the realm of the idealised past. As such, the emphasis of their nostalgia shifts from a spatial to a temporal one, becoming associated with ideas of loss, mourning and exile. Both writers appear intimately aware that childhood experience remains inaccessible to them, presenting its absence through images such as the demolished house in *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*. Today, fantastical lands are set at a double-remove, becoming lost, rather than simply distant – as Grossman would put it, we experience a "requiem for a longing" [Grossman, *Tolkien Lecture*].

"A requiem for a longing" [Lev Grossman] – Mourning, exile, and the stressing of *algos*.

It is often said that children experience fantasy differently to adults. Immel, for one, has suggested that children have a natural affinity for fantasy [Immel, 239], and as Rose notes there is a common desire to view childhood reading experiences as more "direct" than those of the adult [Rose, 9]. However, this is a highly contested point, and ever since *The Case of Peter Pan* it has lost its credibility. Given Nodelman's suggestion that we cannot access a childhood

mindset, it is doubtful the question will ever be answered. In a sense, however, this is a moot point. When it comes to the adult reader, it matters less whether children *do* have a more direct experience of literature, and more that adults *think* they do. For adult readers, the constructed image of the childhood reading experience appears somehow more idyllic and sublime than their own. Mourning occurs due to a contrast between present reading experiences and an imagined, idealised one.

When Grossman echoed Lewis in his 2015 lecture, therefore, his suggestion that he feels a "requiem for a longing" played upon a constructed past. Requiem implies mourning – grief for something dead and gone – and by revising Lewis' formulation of "a longing for a longing" Grossman suggests it is lost to him. Instead, he relegates it to his childhood self, hints at a previous state he can no longer access, where the longing was somehow more pure and intense. This state is, of course, a fabrication, idealised through contrast with the present. Yet it is an important fabrication, for it prompts mingled feelings of mourning and desire. I have argued that 'longing' implies an ache, but for Grossman and Gaiman this ache is more pronounced. As such, it is reminiscent of a distinction Boym makes between two types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective [Boym, 41]. The first places emphasis on the *nostos*, the homecoming, stressing the notion of reunion with an absent space. Here, nostalgia becomes an emotion of desire, marking an attempt to restore a lost homeland. Reflective nostalgia emphasises *algos*, however, placing the pain and grief of distance at the forefront. Those who feel reflective nostalgia remain aware that *nostos* is impossible, mirroring the focus on temporal separation that so characterises the works of Grossman and Gaiman. While the two writers wish to access a lost and idealised manner of experiencing fantastical longing, they also lament their inability do so, maintaining a constant awareness of the contrast between adult and child experiences of the literature.

Indeed, for Grossman, adults returning to the texts of childhood find themselves experiencing different texts to the ones they remember leaving,

mirroring the formula of the home-away-home narratives[3] that so populate children's literature. When Quentin travels to the magical land of Fillory in *The Magicians*, a land he thought was fictional when he read 'The Fillory Novels' as a child, he finds it to be very different to how he remembers:

> What kind of political situation were they walking into here? Bugs and bulls, nymphs and witches – who were the good guys and who were the bad guys? Everything was much less entertaining and more difficult to organize than they'd counted on.

> [Grossman, *The Magicians*, 365]

Quentin's reaction to Fillory contrasts greatly with the Pevensies' reception of Narnia in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, where they readily accept the good-versus-evil morality proposed by Aslan. Though Quentin searches to apply a similar moral lens, splitting the world into "good guys" and "bad guys", he appears unable to re-access the Pevensies' child-like viewpoint; having developed a more nuanced perspective, he can no longer view Fillory as the paradise he once did. His attempt at restorative nostalgia fails, for while he accesses the object of his yearning, he can no longer access it in the same *manner* he once did. Because Fillory fulfils the role of the 'home' in the home-away-home narrative, Quentin appears to feel as though it should remain static and familiar, yet his own maturation precludes this possibility. Such inevitable change conjures up a sensation of reflective nostalgia for the reader, where they must grieve the land lost to Quentin – and to themselves. Indeed, our inability to access fantastical children's literature in the manner that Quentin desires to is stressed both by Grossman and Gaiman, placing an emphasis on *algos*.

This is nowhere more apparent than in Gaiman's *Stardust*, which dwells upon the conventions of children's fantasy from an adult perspective, marking

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[3] A common narrative structure identified by narratologists, where the protagonist of a tale leaves home on a journey. He subsequently grows and matures while he travels, and then returns home to perceive it differently from when he left it, due to his own maturation. Examples include *The Odyssey*, Bilbo's journey in *The Hobbit* [1937], and that of Diggory in *The Magician's Nephew* [1955].

the contrasting manner in which readers of different ages receive them. Most notable is Gaiman's commentary on the 'happily ever after' convention, so common in the fairytales of his predecessors. The commentary is an important one, for as Luke notes in his introduction to Grimm's Fairytales, 'happily ever after' endings work against the "conflicts and ambivalences of the world", performing a "deeply relieving, reassuring function" [Luke, 40]. In the face of a reality where morality and justice appear not to cohere, with little correlation between evil and punishment, or good and reward, a 'happily ever after' ending paints the world as we wish it could be, affirming a sense of justice. According to the version of childhood constructed by critics such as Immel, children take to this belief more easily; not having experienced the conflicts and ambivalences of the world, they are readily able to believe it operates according to a 'happily ever after' function. Gaiman reflects upon the disparity between this constructed childhood perspective and his adult one, forging a bittersweet outlook where the 'simple morality of childhood' is both longed for and acknowledged as defective. He presents a world where adults know that fairytale morality doesn't apply, and yet wish it did, mourning a time when they supposedly could have believed in it.

> Tristran and Yvaine were happy together. Not forever-after, for Time, the thief, eventually takes all things to his dusty storehouse, but they were happy, as these things go, for a long while.

> [Gaiman, *Stardust*, 193]

Here, adult perspectives quite literally infringe upon fairytale convention. Knowledge of "Time" invades the gap between the halves of "happily ever after", forcing them apart and separating happiness from eternity. The idiomatic phrase is broken up, the knowledge of its falsity acting as a wedge between its parts: "[They] were happy together. *Not* forever-after"[4]. Accordingly, adult readers are presented with the fragments of a shattered unity: while they can seek to imagine it whole, they cannot put it together again. Grossman describes fantasy in a similar manner, figuring it as a shattered vase, and the creation of Narnia and Middle-Earth as an attempt to imagine the original by gesturing a lost

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[4] The emphasis is my own.

'dream' [Grossman, *Tolkien Lecture*]. Yet for Grossman – and Gaiman too – this broken vessel cannot be fixed. Childhood, fantasy, and childhood perspectives on fantasy have been lost. All that is left is *algos*.

Indeed, for Grossman any attempt to fix the vase is doomed to failure, and robs fantasy of its enchantment. As a reflective nostalgic, Grossman appears to view the restorative nostalgia of some writers – the attempt to recreate the lost dream in the present – as an irreverent project. When he speaks of a "requiem for a longing", he talks not only of a lost childhood experience, but also about a transformation of fantasy in general. While Tolkien and Lewis were clearly pioneers of fantasy, the years following their publication led to a slew of imitators[5], many of whom can be seen as restorative nostalgics, in light of the way Grossman describes them [Grossman, *Tolkien Lecture*]. Such writers, according to Grossman, attempted to reconstruct the shattered vase of fantasy, rather than acknowledging its loss, as he posits Tolkien and Lewis do. This might be seen as an attempt to close the gap between sign and signified, privileging the creation of setting above all else. As Mendlesohn argues, 'world-building' conventions have increasingly focused on detail since Lewis' day, with writers attempting to delineate every aspect of their worlds in an almost anthropological manner [Mendlesohn, 84]. This tendency appears to be based on a will to make fantastical worlds appear more 'real' – to grasp the object readers long for. According to Grossman however, such reconstructions are naught but facsimiles. They obstruct the process of "longing for a longing" by presenting us with a substitute for reflective nostalgia – a substitute that fails to capture the enchantment of the nostalgic object, as all signifiers must. Consequently, restorative nostalgia fails as a means to experience a "longing for a longing", indicating that the reflective nostalgia of Grossman and Gaiman is a more apt descriptor. After all, if it is our distance from idealised 'other lands' that makes them enchanting, attempting to bring them close can only debase them.

Such debasement is visible in Beddor's *The Looking Glass Wars* [2004], where he attempts to restructure *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* [1865]

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[5] Robert Jordan and David Eddings, to name but a few.

according to modern world building conventions. Throughout his re-writing, he attempts to systematise and 'order' the fragmented nature of Carroll's original, explaining Alice's strange experiences in Wonderland through a set of organized rules. Yet much of the wonder in *Alice* occurs because Alice's experiences do *not* conform to the order of the real world, adopting a dream-like quality that does not make logical sense. In Carroll's text, Alice's experiences are often disconnected, with objects appearing and disappearing depending on her perspective. In one notable instance, Alice wishes she could "shut up like a telescope", and a bottle labelled 'Drink me', which will help her shrink, appears on the table [Carroll, 13]. Reality becomes disconnected as the laws of object permanence disappear, forging a strange and wondrous reality – one that Beddor robs of its enchantment in his attempt at restorative nostalgia. When he tries to explain the dream-like qualities of *Alice* through a set of 'rules', he creates a detailed magical system, leaving much less to the imagination than Carroll does. Suddenly, the fragmented nature of Carroll's text becomes less fantastical, as Beddor seeks to make it appear realistic, closing the gap between ideal and reality. When the fantastical is actualised and made *too* real, it seems to lose the very thing that was most important to it – the experience of longing associated with reflective nostalgia.

As such, mourning seems to be an essential component of fantastical experience, as much as it does the result of a maturation process: while readers may long for *nostos*, "the longing *for* a longing" is an experience of *algos*. Grossman implied as much in his lecture, when he discussed the works of Tolkien and Lewis as if they were a requiem for a lost past, suggesting the writers were looking back to an 'old world'. Whenever he discusses Tolkien and Lewis, Grossman emphasises the fact they lived in what many would call a 'time of change' [Grossman, 'What is Fantasy About?']. It is a critical commonplace to refer to the first half of the 19th century in such terms, for it marks an era of rapid industrialisation and globalisation, characterised by social changes and two world wars. Critics of the Modernist movement often suggest it was influenced by this turbulence, yet Grossman argues that early fantasists were too, their creation of 'other worlds' constituting an attempt to mourn the fading world of

the pre-19th century. Beyond this, Tolkien's preoccupations with Anglo-Saxon England and Lewis' mixing of different mythologies speak of a peculiarly historical mourning, for a distant chivalric era. Both Tolkien and Lewis appear to place as much emphasis on *algos* as their successors do, suggesting that modern fantasy was *born* in a state of grief – a state that has been carried forwards by Grossman and Gaiman.

Yet this stressing of *algos* emphasises longing as a temporal emotion, leading to the same pitfalls and criticisms that befall nostalgia in general. By localising ideals in the past, nostalgia can be thought of as a backwards-facing sentiment, arresting rather than edifying. To consider Lewisian desire an edifying passion, we must note how it looks outwards from contemplation of the past, and towards new lands.

"A spell for making a land..." [Lev Grossman] – *Nostos* and the finding of a new home.

The suggestion that nostalgia is 'backwards facing' is perhaps its most common criticism. According to theorists such as John Su, it implies a dissatisfaction with the present while precluding improvements for the future: it causes us to ignore the imperfections of history and search for solutions behind us, rather than in front [Su, 5, 8]. By dreaming of other lands, of course, fantastical nostalgia directs the reader's gaze outwards as well as backwards, locating the *nostos* beyond this world *and* in the past. Yet the criticism still applies, for in doing so it might cause readers to long for an ideal that can never be met, arresting any pursuit to improve the here and now. Grossman appears keenly aware of this problem in *The Magicians*, when upon finding Fillory, Quentin is accused of always searching for "the next secret door" [Grossman, *The Magicians*, 406] – always feeling dissatisfied with the present, and locating 'happiness' in an imagined elsewhere. This line is a clear allusion to both the wardrobe in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and the stable door in *The Last Battle*, both secret entrances into a more magical world. The first door is found by the Pevensies, and begins their adventures in Narnia – whereas the second is found only once Narnia has

become familiar, leading to what Lewis deems a more fantastical land: Aslan's country. Here, a recursive dilemma is set up, whereby the land beyond the "next" door always appears more magical than the one currently occupied. Aslan's country is to Narnia what Narnia is to earth, and according to Grossman, this is because Aslan's country is the "next" country, not the current one. When ideals are associated with 'the elsewhere', the here and now is made to appear dissatisfying – so much so that the 'elsewhere' is rendered dissatisfying once it becomes familiar.

Of course, what Su discusses and Quentin experiences is clearly a restorative not a reflective impulse. The cause of Quentin's dissatisfaction is the desire to reach for and actualise the nostalgic object – for Quentin, *opening* the "next door" is his ultimate aim, whereas for a reflective nostalgic like Grossman, acknowledging that he can never do so is essential. Yet while the restorative impulse is certainly more arresting than the reflective, the reflective cannot always be said to be edifying either. The great pitfall of reflective nostalgia is that it is fundamentally static, often failing to look forwards beyond itself. By mourning the past, the nostalgic can become trapped in the present, figuring the here and now in relation to what has been, not what *may* be. Grief is often thought of as an emotion that must be moved *past* before the griever can hope to 'recover', marking it as an obstacle rather than a useful process. Perhaps it is wrong, then, to reduce Lewisian longing to mere 'reflective nostalgia', for while it contains many aspects of the reflective impulse, it also moves beyond them. Notably, fantastical desire seems uplifting in a way traditional grief isn't. While grief is necessary for the process of longing, it also implies a level of despair which does not appear to cohere with Lewis' descriptions, especially when he defines his 'longing for a longing' as a sensation of "Joy" [Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 24]. Notably, 'Joy' carries connotations of sublimity and even renewal not apparent in grief, indicating an emotion that might be considered inspirational, rather than reductive.

In this manner, it appears more appropriate to compare fantastical yearning to the nostalgic journey undertaken in the *Aeneid* rather than the

Odyssey, for while Odysseus attempts to return to an old homeland, Aeneas aims to find a new. The fantastical projects of Tolkien and Lewis clearly mirror this model, for while Grossman might associate Narnia and Middle-Earth with their creators' scholarly interest in a medieval past, this connection must be stressed as an *association*, rather than a reproduction. Narnia moves beyond the myths that inform it, creating its own spatial reality with its own mythology and history. While the dryads and nymphs, satyrs and fauns that occupy Narnia find their origins in ancient legend, Lewis' project isn't one which looks *back* to or attempts revisit these origins, but one that looks forwards, attempting to reinvent them through new narratives and realities. Neither Lewis nor Tolkien seem satisfied in simply reproducing their interests, but must build new worlds informed by them, taking individual myths and expressing them in terms of a fresh spatial domain. Having left the shores of one mythology, they seem to discover a new, grounding it within a concrete geographical object. This is most obvious in the case of *Narnia's* Christian parallels, for while many critics reduce them to mere allegory, Lewis predicates them on a more creative impulse, as he notes in 1954:

> I did not say to myself "Let us represent Jesus as He really is in our world by a Lion in Narnia": I said "Let us *suppose* that there were a land like Narnia and that the Son of God, as He became a Man in our world, became a Lion there, and then imagine what would happen."

> [Lewis, *Letters to Children*, 44-45]

For Lewis, Narnia becomes more than a mere illustration or symbol of his Christian beliefs. While representation carries connotations of imitation – of looking back to a previous myth and creating a new signifier for it – supposition is generally more creative, involving imagination and re-invention. Representation is more in line with the restorative impulse, attempting to relocate a pre-existing myth into the present space, while supposition re-figures mythical desires into a new space, creating fresh referents. It seems we must expand the definition of Lewisian longing, for while traditional nostalgic sentiments may constitute an important part of it, it eventually moves beyond them. As Stewart argues, nostalgia arises from the gap between referent and

signifier – between the imagined ideal and our representation of it – and as such, nostalgic texts remain focused on this divide [Stewart, 23]. While restorative nostalgia attempts to close the gap, and reflective nostalgia mourns the inability to do so, both figure themselves in relation to the object on the other side. In creating new referents, Lewis redirects this obsession, looking forwards to a new homeland, rather than back to an old. He still remains aware that fantastical objects must sit at a distance if longing is to function, yet this awareness seems celebratory rather than mournful, recreating the divide rather than merely arising from it. Perhaps we must define a third type of nostalgia to better describe Lewisian longing, then, borrowing elements from the other two. Unlike Boym's categories, however, this third nostalgia – which I will term recreative nostalgia – seeks to update and reinvent rather than revisit the object of desire. As such, it appears more applicable as a descriptor of fantastical desires. Indeed, Lewisian longing is primarily an imaginative impulse: as well as encouraging a mourning of a lost space or past, it also inspires creation of a new future. It might even be argued that the outward facing aspect of fantasy is the root of this inspirational quality, for it encourages readers to gaze outwards to new and undiscovered realities, rather than continually revisiting past ones. Writers of fantasy become explorers searching for new shores, rather than travellers returning to old ones.

This inspirational aspect of longing is clearly visible in the final book of Grossman's *Magicians Trilogy* – *The Magician's Land* [2014] – where Quentin finds "a spell for making a land" [Grossman, *The Magician's Land*, 249]. In doing so he creates a world inspired by his childhood obsession with Fillory, engaging in the same creative instinct the Grossman did when he wrote *The Magicians Trilogy* as a successor to *Narnia*. The Lewisian desire felt by both instigates them to create new spatial realities, at once both original and familiar:

> Quentin recognized this land and yet at the same time he didn't. Could this be home? He didn't see any reason why not. But it was a strange, wild country. It was no utopia. It wasn't a tame land.
>
> [Grossman, *The Magician's Land*, 399]

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Here, Quentin's new 'other land' is one that looks both forwards *and* backwards, in a manner which parallels Lewisian myth making. The land is both recognizable as a successor to Fillory, and yet a new and unfamiliar formulation; it invites an experience of recognition and *nostos*, while simultaneously evoking foreignness and *algos*. Notably, it lacks the utopic lens through which many fantastical lands are viewed. This might function as an allusion to Grossman's own creative process, with *The Magicians* working to refigure *Narnia* through an adult lens, a lens which renders the world "more difficult to organize" than a utopic childhood lens might [Grossman, *The Magicians*, 365]. Indeed, for readers of Lewis, Grossman's novels will appear both familiar and unfamiliar in a manner that parallels Quentin's 'new world'; while they recollect and mourn lost childhood experiences of *Narnia*, *The Magicians* novels also offer up an unfamiliar figuration, inviting new experiences at the same time as recollecting the old. Perhaps this might explain the tentative emphasis on 'home', phrased in the form of an interrogative. While the concept of *nostos* places a firm emphasis on where home *is*, Quentin's new land defines home as a more speculative and fluid concept, able to shift from old to new lands.

If Quentin's creation *is* to be considered home, of course, it implies he has undergone a successful *nostos* in a manner that the restorative nostalgic never can – for it is a homecoming linked with the creative act. Here, 'creation' is figured as a means of transcending the divide between sign and signified by reforging them. Indeed, it becomes an experience that gives the writer special access to his texts which surpasses that of the reading experience. Notably, Quentin experiences his new land as an object before any signifier for it exists – there are no novels describing it as there are for Fillory. In *The Magician's Land*, then, the creative act is one where the signifier and referent exist as one in the imagination, only being prized apart by subsequent mediated experience.

Furthermore, Grossman figures his texts as a means of *re*-accessing previous texts, after old experiences of them have been lost. Quentin eventually discovers that his 'new land' contains an entrance into Fillory, suggesting that, by

providing his readers with an adult version of *Narnia*, Grossman creates an alternative lens to view it through, the old one having been lost:

> You meant to make an island, but you also made a bridge. A bridge connecting Fillory and Earth.
>
> [Grossman, *The Magician's Land*, 401]

This bridge can be thought of as a spatial manifestation of the 'portal fantasy' genre, where characters are portrayed moving from this world to the other world, as the Pevensies do in *Narnia*. As well as functioning as its own space, Quentin's land mirrors 'the woods between the worlds', providing the reader with narrative access to an 'other land'. Grossman's text works in a similar manner, telling its own tale whilst simultaneously acting as a portal for adult readers to return to and re-experience the *Narnia* texts[6], allowing them a glance – albeit a mournful, knowing one – at the fantasy of their childhood. In this manner, fantastical nostalgia becomes a process which mixes new and old, marvelling over the blossoms while glancing to the roots. By targeting 'other lands', Lewisian desire directs readers to seek the distant and unfamiliar, as well as searching out the well-known shore of accepted fantastical ideals.

As I have argued, the feeling of "longing for the longing" is an emotion which arises from the disparity between the 'here' and the 'there', from a comparison between the ideal and the real. Yet while this process might be thought to devalue the world itself, this is not so. As Lewis suggests, when one reads faerie stories, "he does not despise real woods because he has read of enchanted woods: the reading makes all real woods a little enchanted" [Lewis, 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children', 4]. Fairytales and fantasy enhance the here – far from submitting to the criticisms which Su applies to traditional nostalgia, the fantastical can be seen as uplifting rather than inhibiting. By reading about fantastical worlds, we enter into a reality where everything *could* be magical, despite our knowing it isn't. The wondrous is made to appear just out of reach, where we might grasp it if only we could discover how. Longing becomes a

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6 Or at least an adult equivalent.

sensation that enriches the world, rather than diminishing it. After all, doesn't the world seem like a much more magical place, when every other wardrobe could hide an entrance into Narnia?

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