"Navigating Fantasy Realms: Comparative Analysis of World-Building in Howl's Moving Castle and Charmed Life”

Delić, Lucija

Sveučilište u Splitu

Filozofski fakultet

Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost

Lucija Delić

"Navigating Fantasy Realms: Comparative Analysis of World-Building in *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Charmed Life*"

Završni rad

Split, 2024.

University of Split

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

"Navigating Fantasy Realms: Comparative Analysis of World-Building in *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Charmed Life*"

BA Thesis

Student:

Lucija Delić

Supervisor:

Simon John Ryle, Associate Professor

Split, 2024

Contents

1. Introduction

Fictional worlds, no matter whether they're fantasy or not, more or less imitate our own world. No matter how unlikely it seems that fantasy worlds resemble reality, they still can, and they do. Just because they deal with imaginary situations, in a very unreal world, they still deal with very real issues and emotions like any other story. After all, we all live in a society, we all are subjected to the rules of our reality (whether it's societal norms, social hierarchy, economic systems, etc.), and so are those characters subjects to the rules of their reality (where science may mix with magic systems, or where societies are built different). So, putting, for example, a real-life issue in a fantasy world rather than in a more realistic world opens a huge space for freer critique and dealing with that same problem. Therefore, in order for the story to make sense and be believable to the readers, the society that the characters are part of need to be well structured, the magic systems need to be limited at some point and carefully used in the context of the story (not just exist for the sake of existing). As well as limitations of magic, there need to be limitations of used technology in the said world, and this does not mean that technology needs to be equivalent to our world one, but believable in the context of the world it exists. The creation of the new world requires a creation of social spaces as products of societal structures and are a reflection of the ideologies and power dynamics within them. While creating space for the narrative to fit, it's impossible for a writer not to be influenced by their own culture and ideologies (such as capitalism). To create a world means to create a space, not only a narrative, and that space is merely an imaginary construct but made real through the interactions between the characters. To achieve a quality fantasy world to set the plot in, a writer needs to be familiar themselves with the said world they're using in the narrative.

Diana Wynne Jones, a British novelist (poet, literary critic, short story writer, etc.), impacted literature greatly with her fantasy novels, her said to be favourite genre. The genre of fantasy is dependent for effect on strangeness of setting and of characters. Her quality world-building resides in features such as providing us with rich details about the settings and mixing magical systems with cultures within her novels. That magic is often a central element in her novels, but it's treated as a tangible force with its rules and consequences, enhancing the believability of the worlds she creates. This, combined with other elements, like societal structure and social spaces made alive through the interaction of the characters with their surroundings, as well as cultural significance of those lived spaces is all what shapes these fictional environments. But what brings meaning to her novels are the themes and messages she deals with and the well-developed three-dimensional characters she creates. These

techniques and concepts of building an imaginary plot setting world are going to be looked at the examples of her novels *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Charmed Life*. Through the comparative analysis of Diana Wynne Jones's *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Charmed Life*, as well as Hayao Miyazaki's adaptation of *Howl's Moving Castle*, I will argue that the construction of an immersive narrative, besides depending on the author's consistency, is possible to establish when creating multiple layers of reality (producing space, time – history, societal structure, magic restrictions, etc.). I will take a look at how taking a different approach from one another they manage to create unique avenues for social critique, which they do by integrating realistic elements (layers of our reality) within fantastical settings. It not only enhances the immersive nature of the narrative, but also allows for that more profound exploration of social and cultural themes, thus making fantasy a powerful medium for critical reflection on real-world issues.

2. World-building concepts

2.1. Magic systems

Among numerous definitions of fantasy, the one from *The Dictionary of World Literary Terms* states that fantasy includes that which is impossible under the ordinary conditions or normal human events, in the actions, characters, or setting of the story. Despite so many definitions of fantasy, the key element of it remains the same, which is the presence of magic (Saricks, 2009; Nikolajeva, 1988). Magic always occurs in fantasy and can be depicted through both magical abilities and/or magical creatures and objects related to characters. To put it in other words, the mere presence of magic in a fantasy novel is a must. Another key to fantasy, besides magic, is believability. A fantasy novel is the combination of fantastical elements with realistic ones, not just the fantastic or magic elements (Greenby, 2008).

A successful fantasy is achieved with the author's skill in creating a believable magical world with an internal consistency through its rules. This discussion of consistency in fantasy text has already been discussed by Nikolajeva (1988) who makes a distinction between consistency and limitation as two types of magic laws which are crucial in a fantasy text. Limitation refers to the notion that magic must be limited. As the key element of fantasy story, magic cannot be left unlimited and omnipotent (Nikolajeva, 1988). On the other hand, consistency means that this secondary world must be constructed logically, which is achieved by creating and then obeying its rules. Swinfen (Swinfen, 1984, as cited in Nikolajeva, 1988) finds that when making a secondary world acceptable to the readers, the physical nature of the it should be comprehensible and logical, having rational cause-and-effect relationship.

2.2. Cultural and social aspects

Though magic is very prominent in the books, the culture and its effect on the creation of social spaces is crucial for good world-building of fantasy realms. That's why it's necessary to take a look at how Lefebvre in his book, *The Production of Space,* discusses social aspects of creating a new society within these new fictional worlds, and therefore a culture for itself as well. He suggests that a social space is a social product; a reality which exists on its own, which is clearly distinct from our own but still much alike in aspects which are usually assumed. The conception of reality and "our" world is based on the experience of living in a society, which is an artificial construction much like any other, and is present in the two novels from the paper's title. The structure and the rules, as well as the entirety of the our-world's society is fictional in its core but made real by people obeying it by living in it, just like the characters

from the two novels do by obeying and living in their own world's reality. To conceal the fact that social space is ultimately a social product a "double illusion" is needed where "each side of which refers to the other, reinforces the other, and hides behind the other" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 27). Then, what's needed within a well-constructed narrative is an illusion of transparency and opacity (a so-called "realistic" illusion). His claim is that those already assumed aspects are simply commodities, such as money and capital, which become a symbolic means to determine the relations of power within a society. This is true for the fictional societies as well as for the society in which we live because, for example, in Jonse's *Charmed Life* magic is just one of the commodities affecting other aspects of society (e.g., politics, social hierarchy, values, etc.). The space serves as a "tool of thought and action" which, besides being a means of production, is also a way in which control, domination, and power, are all established. He shows how space in any society, therefore fictional one as well, is a reflection of its social structure including its hierarchies, cultural practices, and economic systems. (ibid., pp. 26-28)

He further on explores how different models of production lead to distinct types of spaces. Each mode of production, such as capitalism or feudalism, creates its own space, meaning that as society evolves, so do its spaces. These changes in society change its spatial organisation, environment, and architecture as its necessary response to great shifts in a society. His observation is that societies tend to express their understanding of space through the design of their temples and palaces, while their means of cultural expressions are those such as art, writing, or even textiles, all reflecting their living spaces. To prove the case in point, Lefebvre gives an example of the Chavin of the Peruvian Andes as a society whose "representation of space is attested to by the plans of their temples and palaces, while their representational space appears in their art works, writing-systems, fabrics, and so on" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 43). He questions this relationship between the two aspects (spatial and cultural) within a particular period, highlighting the challenge of reconstructing this connection using abstract concepts. This difficulty arises because symbols that are easily understood intuitively may not align with this abstract knowledge, which tends to be disconnected from the tangible realities of the past. He explains this thought with the relationship between the façades that were harmonised to create perspectives, leaving entrances and exits, doors and windows subordinated to façades. Therefore, it's clear that "a spatial code is not simply a means of reading or interpreting space: rather it is a means of living in that space, of understanding it, and of producing it." (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 43-48) And, just as we're producing the space through all these aspects (e.g., neocapitalism combined with minimalistic architectural designs), so do characters in any story

or a novel by “creating” such spaces. Even though they don’t necessarily “create” those spaces, they inhabit it through the timeline of the story, while the one actually producing and “guiding” the creation of the story’s spatial code is the outer force, i.e., the writer. In the case of creating fiction, the writer has a role of the omnipotent being by creating worlds for characters to inhabit, letting the characters “take the credit” for the world’s history, established society, culture, architecture and etc.

But Lefebvre extends this localised limitation within both space and time, and globalises that aspect. This “absolute space" is loosely discussed by Gaston Bachelard in connection with “intimate immensity”. He claims that absolute space can be interpreted as those spaces that evoke a deep, almost primal response in people; spaces that transcend mere physical dimensions and connect deeply with our emotions, memories, and imagination. He claims how those are spaces that feel almost timeless and unchanging, offering a sense of permanence and stability in our mental landscapes. These spaces, though vast and potentially overwhelming, become intimate through the imagination. They become absolute not because of their size or dimensions but because of the profound, almost metaphysical connection they evoke in the human mind. (Bachelard, 1994, pp. 201-210)

This vision of the absolute space aligns with Lefebvre’s example of carefully chosen natural spaces that became populated with political forces and became symbolic (e.g., statues of local gods in Greek temples, or a Shintoist’s sanctuary which is either empty or contains only a mirror). He defines absolute space as a space that is religious and political in character, “a product of the bonds of consanguinity, soil and language, but out of it evolved a space which was relativized and *historical*.” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 48) These absolute spaces embody antagonism between full and empty. For example, he uses “nave” of a cathedral which has this invisible fullness of political space (a nucleus of a town) which is set up upon emptiness of a natural space confiscated from nature. Such spaces are spaces of accumulation of all wealth and resources, like knowledge, money, technology, precious objects, works of art and symbols. Building on this, he deals with how various modes of production (capitalism, feudalism, etc.) shape distinct types of spaces. As societies evolve, their spatial organisation, environment, and architecture transform in response to these shifts. Thus, the physical spaces and cultural representations of a society are deeply interconnected, evolving together as a reflection of underlying social changes. (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 48-49) These absolute spaces can be applied specifically to Jones’s two novels but especially to the two focal points, one in each novel,

which embody this notion. The specific places in question are Howl's and Chrestomanci's castles, as well as Miyazaki's version of Howl's castle which leans more into depicting a symbolic sanctuary, both of which I will discuss more about in the analysis.

These social spaces are never neutral. Because they carry the ideologies of the dominant powers within a society they are ideologically charged. And, while the approach Lefebvre takes does involve a politics of space, it extends beyond traditional politics by requiring a critical examination of all forms of spatial politics and politics in general. Such spaces are produced and highly influenced by a certain ideology he defines as abstract spaces (e.g. abstract space of "world of commodities" produced by capitalism and neocapitalism and founded on the network of banks, business centres, etc.). He discusses a need for a possibility of a reappropriation of social space, though practice showed how this is usually only temporary, he questions if there's a possibility of reappropriating a social space by destroying the preexisting completely. His aim is to be able to envision a new kind of space, one that supports a different social life and mode of production, one which bridges the gap between science and utopia, reality and ideal, the conceived and the lived; and overcoming these oppositions by exploring the dialectical relationship between what is possible and impossible, considering both objective and subjective perspectives. (Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 49-61)

The approach of production of space by Lefebvre has a counterbalance in the work of Gaston Bachelard whose approach is focused on how space is experienced and imagined. It's not merely a physical space but a lived experience shaped by memory, imagination and emotion. As he claims "it is often this inner immensity that gives their real meaning to certain expressions concerning the visible world" (Bachelard, 1944, p. 185). Because he focuses on the images which do not need to wait for "the phenomena of the imagination to take form and become stabilized in completed images" (ibid., p. 184), his approach is tightly connected to the philosophy of experience - phenomenology. Its primary objective is the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions. The "production" of space in Bachelard's terms could be understood as the way in which individuals and cultures shape their perceptions of space through these subjective experiences. Gaston Bachelard's exploration of "intimate immensity" reveals how the imagination can transform vast, seemingly impersonal spaces into intimate realms, reflecting the personal and emotional significance we attribute to our surroundings. His concept of space is profoundly personal; he

examines how homes, rooms, and corners are not merely physical locations but are imbued with emotional and cultural meanings that resonate with individual experiences. Bachelard's work highlights that space becomes "social" when it is shared and experienced collectively, suggesting that our environments are deeply intertwined with cultural narratives and collective memories. For instance, he portrays the house as a “universe” or “cosmos”, indicating how deeply cultural values and practices are embedded in our living spaces. This immersion of culture within social space is evident in how spaces symbolise particular cultural or social values, making them more than just physical structures. The interplay between culture and space is crucial to his view of the matter. He emphasises that the poetic imagination shapes our perception of space, influencing how we experience and interact with our environments. For example, Bachelard discusses how different spaces, whether they’re intimate corners or vast landscapes, evoke specific emotions and memories. This dynamic interplay between "inside" and "outside" spaces, or the notion of “inhabited space”, transcends mere physical dimensions, suggesting that the environment is an active participant in daily life and rituals. Bachelard’s discussion extends to psychological techniques, such as Philippe Diolé's method of filling a dry desert landscape with the memory of seawater. Illustrating how the mind can transform harsh environments into more hospitable ones through imagination. Bachelard, after citing Diolé’s example, points out how Diolé gives us “a psychological technique which permits us to be elsewhere, in an absolute elsewhere that bars the way to the forces that hold us imprisoned in the "here." This is not merely an escape into a space that is open to adventure on every side… Diolé transports us to the elsewhere of another world” (ibid., p. 207). This is significant for Bachelard’s theory because it showcases how both time and space are under a domination of the image, in other words, how individuals can mentally adapt to or transform their surroundings. (Bachelard, 1994, pp. 184-210)

3. Narrative impact of world-building

The entire point of previous sections is to show how much thought needs to go in world-building and now show how world-building as a part of a narrative can either elevate the work, if done well, or undermine its own purpose by not doing it thoroughly. Claire Corbett (2021, pp. 67) suggests that by wowing the story world into the character's point of view can make the reader make unaware of the exposition, and therefore writer not falling into the into the trap of meaningless invention for its own sake. The broadest and most popular definition of the term ‘worldbuilding’ that refers only to the construction of imaginary worlds in science fiction or fantasy. But the more literary term for worldbuilding is the *donnée*, that which is given, the

setting, times, society, and culture in which our story takes place (Corbett, 2021, pp. 68). The dictionary definition of the *donnée* defines it as a set of literary or artistic principles or assumptions on which a creative work is based.

She describes worldbuilding as something similar to scripting, production design, continuity and cinematography in a film, about which one may not think about in a good film but it's something viewer can notice if they're poorly done (ibid., pp. 69). The very ineffective and ungraceful approach is to treat worldbuilding or the *donnée* as something separate from other aspects of writing, for example characterisation and dialogue. This can lead to the 'info dumping', a term commonly used for writing a clumsy direct exposition (ibid., pp. 75). Corbett (2021, pp. 75) continues to argue that the key of making worldbuilding integral to a story and immersive to a reader is to introduce it through point of view, which then relies on the characters and how they apprehend the world. Integrating worldbuilding and character should be done, as much as possible, by showing the character move through and engage with the world, so readers see it through their eyes and know what they know (ibid., pp. 77). When a story moves across a world filled with striking physical feature such as the forest, the path, the cottage, the palace, the dungeon, the treasure chamber in a fairy tale; or the heath, the drawing room, the ballroom, the theatre, the river, the slum, the club in a nineteenth-century novel, etc., the map is a desired feature of many stories and can be a potent story generator. What's important to accentuate is that maps are not reserved only for epic quests. (ibid., pp. 78).

On the other hand, Mendlesohn takes a different approach to worldbuilding by making a classification of essentially four categories within the fantastic: the intrusive, the estranged, the portal, and the immersive fantasy. She admits that, inevitably, there will always be texts which appear to cross multiple categories, but these exceptions, she claims, test the rule by authors moving from one category to another within one text, therefore authors like those assume new techniques: the cadence shifts, and both metaphor and mimetic writing take on different functions to accommodate the new category. While a particular book may move internally from one category to another, they do not work within more than one category at any one time (Mendlesohn, 2002, pp. 171-172). The two categories I will mention are the ones which are present in both *Charmed Life* and *Howl's Moving Castle*, them being the portal and the immersive fantasy.

A portal fantasy is, in Mendlesohn's words, simply a fantastic world entered through a portal which allows and relies upon both protagonist and reader gaining experience. Portal

fantasies do not tend on surprising the reader, a technique used quite commonly in horror, but rather lead them gradually to the point where the protagonist knows their world enough to change it and to enter that world's destiny. One way to envision this is that the reader resides in the protagonist's brain, hearing only what they hear, seeing only what they see and is provided by the protagonist with a guided tour of the landscape (Mendlesohn, 2002, pp. 173); or the reader can be guided by the narrator, which may express protagonist's thoughts and experiences of the world surrounding them through the free indirect speech. One way or another, the protagonist or the narrator is the reader's guide within those fantastical lands. Contrary to the portal fantasy, the immersive fantasy invites readers to share not only a world, but also a set of assumptions. It presents the fantastic without comment as the norm both for the protagonists and for the reader. Mendlesohn describes it as sitting on the protagonists' shoulders and while the reader has access to their eyes and ears and are not provided with an explanatory narrative (Mendlesohn, 2002, pp. 175).

These two categories of fantastic are mentioned only because Jones in her novel *Howl's Moving Castle* combines both: it's an immersive fantasy that contains within itself a portal fantasy when, towards the end, Howl, Sophie, and Michael travel through the entrance door of the Moving Castle to Wales. The difference between the worlds, regarding language, is present, even though Howl speaks English just like Sophie does, but, since the author is Welsh, there is a so called “Saucepan Song” sang by Calcifer, which is not actually sang in any invented language, but in Welsh, since it’s a traditional Welsh folk song (*Sosban Fach*).

As the story converts from immersive to portal fantasy it's submitted to portal fantasy rules: the other characters (Sophie and Michael) obey their guide, in this case Howl, ask him questions, and describe for the reader what they see. But this type of fantasy is inverted in the novel, instead of them becoming the reader’s interpreters of a foreign language, they become (mis)translators of the world which readers know better that they do. Despite this diversion into our world, the novel never ceases to be high fantasy because the world we're more familiar is within the context of seeing it through Sophie's eyes as a fantastical world which evokes feelings of awe and wonder. This way Jones challenges the reader towards the acceptance of the protagonist-interpretation intrinsic to the functioning of portal fantasy (Mendlesohn, 2002, pp. 175-176). These types of fantasy, as well as the provided theoretical background will contribute to the following analysis of Jones’ world-building in her two fantasy novels.

4. Comparative analysis of *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Charmed Life*

4.1. Magic systems

Despite them both being immersive fantasy *Charmed Life* immediately depicts magic as something quite common in that world and normalizes it for the reader very quickly. This is achieved by elements such as telling us from the very start that one of the main characters, Gwendolen, is a witch, and having a whole part of the city reserved for trade between witches: "That neighbourhood was full of witches. People in the same trade as to cluster together. If Cat came out of Mrs. Sharp's front door and turned right down Coven Street, he passed, besides the three Accredited Witches, two Necromancy Offereds, a Soothsayer, a Diviner, and a Willing Warlock." (Jones, 2001, p. 13).

But when it comes to *Howl's Moving Castle* the magic is not depicted as something so common as it is in *Charmed Life*, it feels distant most likely due to Sophie not knowing she had power to "talk life into things" until later. The system of magic in *Howl's Moving Castle* is less regulated compared to the one in the other novel, and is also more whimsical, which often leads to the chaotic use of magic by Howl himself, but also by the Wicked Witch of the Waste. Howl's magic is more personal than the one we are introduced to in *Charmed Life* because at times his whims and emotions overtake, and magic becomes something spontaneous. One example of such a happening is him throwing a tantrum after his hair is seemingly "ruined": "And he was covered all over in thick green slime. There were horrendous, dramatic, violent quantities of green slime-oodles of it. It covered Howl completely. It draped his head and shoulders in sticky dollops, heaping on his knees and hands, trickling in glops down his legs, and dripping off the stool in sticky strands. It was in oozing ponds and crawling pools over most of the floor. Long fingers of it had crept into the heart. It smelled vile." (Jones, 2000, p. 89). This situation, and many more, is an example of how Howl's magic, though powerful, is still unpredictable, and in the book itself there's no formal magical hierarchy or governance. But scenes like those served Jones to portray Howl, the way she liked to call him, as the "drama queen", and therefore not the classic fairy tale hero. Magic serves as a mean of characterising protagonists and side-characters by amplifying their characteristics, on Howl's example, to the verge of mockery. But not without a reason, because in the specific case of Howl's character Jones ridicules the fairy-tale notion of a classic hero or a knight in shining armour. Since the magic in this world is clearly very personal element and not something strictly bound by laws (of magic or of a country), it consequentially makes the world of *Howl's Moving Castle*

instantly feel less bound by any clear rules by having this more fluid approach to magic: who and how can use it.

In contrast to this notion that almost everyone has the potential to learn magic with no certainty that they could be any good at it, in *Charmed Life* witches, warlocks, necromancers and others who can cast spells are born with the gift, and their potential for magic is usually transferred from parents to children, though there are exceptions. Besides the magic in this novel being more common, what's more important is the fact that it's highly structured and hierarchical. Magic, as a deviation from the familiar world we're experiencing outside of the novel's world, can be seen as one in the world of the novel as well. What makes use of magic quickly normalised, on top of the immediate immersion of it from the first page, is the stable political and social structure that is implied. The power of magic actually lays in its ability to affect or determine social status. Magic users have an official organised hierarchy with Cherstomanci as an enchanter at the top of the social pyramid and connected to the Government, embodying a political representation of magicians as a social group regardless of them being either minority or majority (just as we're familiar with law-abiding rule that the Government should represent all people, majority or minority). Then again, there're a lot of characters like Ms. Sharp who's only a "Certified Witch", the lowest status a witch can have after schooling. Ultimately, with magic so seamlessly integrated into everyday life and more explicit structures, rules, and hierarchy it brings with its own existence, it becomes something like a ground level from which the immersive world is created. But this notion of immersive fantasy is accomplished in *Howl's Moving Castle* as well, only a different way, relaying on fairy tales and folk tales with which most people are acquainted with from the young age. One of the great examples of how a common belief such as Midsummer's Day being the one day of the year during which all magic is amplified and anything becomes possible is used in the novel. By Howl's curse ending on Midsummer's Day, it most likely stops being a coincidence, but an introduction of a familiar element that connects our world with Sophie's. It becomes a comprehensible but also familiar element functioning as a connection between the two worlds from the readers perspective, making the magic element feel less distant and easier to be immersed in.

4.2. Societal structures and it's reflection on spatial structure

Besides magic, what helps create these immersive worlds is the creation of social structure, thus special structure affected by society and culture. So, when it comes to societal structure, the one in *Howl's Moving Castle* is not rigid, despite being an immersive fantasy, which tends

to have more elaborate societal structures tied to the magical nature of the world. It's more reflective of an already-mentioned traditional European fairy tale setting. But the society is still divided into social classes that are defined by traditional roles familiar to our world, such as the royalty on the top (Ingray is ruled by a king), then nobility and the rich citizens of town of Kingsbury (the residential city of Ingray's king), after them other commoners with scarcer income, and last come witches which divert this social class from the one familiar to the reader.

This, of course, is reflected on the description of the places Sophie visits on her adventures. One of the most prominent features which depict how the space is created with the influence of the social structure (feudalism remains combined with early stages of capitalism in the means of trade) is the king's palace. The entrance of the palace is described as "a huge flight of steps" with "a soldier in scarlet standing every six steps" (Jones, 2000, p. 172). These grand steps are symbolic of the power distribution within the society. The palace is high above the rest of the town and is far from the reach, while also being tiring to reach (this is also explored in the animated version), which reflects Lefebvre's review of the specific placements of palaces and temples, depending on the culture of the specific society. In here, the palace is part of the Kingsbury, but it's also detached from the rest of the town with its altitude and architectural design (grand archways, halls, corridors, lobbies, etc.), setting it visually apart from the rest. This is merely an example of how the space serves as a tool for production in a way in which it establishes control, domination, and power. Depending on the culture, power can be symbolically shown through colours, so by this novel being written by a Welsh author writing a story highly influenced by European traditions, the choice of soldiers dressed in scarlet is not a random choice. Alongside with purple, scarlet is also a colour of power and royalty, but a symbolic representation of connection between the royalty and the military.

Within a society such as this one, wizards and witches seem to loosely fit the world, either living on the margines of the society (like Howl in his castle and Witch in her Wasteland) or climb the social ladder so high that they become Royal Magician (like Suliman). Wizards do have their own small businesses, not as common as ones in *Charmed Life* and not so imbedded in the societal structure as they are in the other novel. But Howl's castle is still an interesting structure to analyse precisely because it's a nomadic building on the margins of the society. The castle's façade Sophie describes as "far too tall for its height and not very regular shape" and was built out of "huge black blocks, like coal" which were all in different shapes and sizes. This outside picture is unwelcoming and serves to keep people away (castles had a military function as well as the residential after all) but the interior is a complete contrast. A small and

cramped main room of the castle, with a fireplace always burning, creates an intimate space. This disproportion between vastness of the castle's exterior with the cramped interior can be observed as the absolute space that Bachelard discusses. That is because the immensity of the castle's structure seems to be overwhelming to the people, its massive walls wondering lonely on the outer corners of the society could have all made it distant. Instead, what overpowers that is the cramped interior which feels intimate and the element of the fire demon being the "engine" of the castle makes it feel more connected with the nature. The castle embodies his idea of intimate immensity, i.e., the deeply personal space created with emotional significance attributed to certain surroundings. The castle throughout almost the entirety of the novel gives this feeling of timelessness and a sense of permanence and stability despite its nature of moving around. What makes it an intimate, even absolute space is the characters, such as Howl, who perceive it as their own sanctuary and safe space. This is visible through Howl's habit of not changing anything within the castle, whether it's the dirty bathroom or the messy bedroom. This is the picture of his version of stability, which is challenged when Sophie arrives. Bachelard examines homes and rooms as these extremely personal spaces and when discusses about houses (which is the castle is this case) he portrays them as "universes" or "cosmoses", emphasizing how cultural values are reflected within these personal realms. The castle, therefore, becomes a small universe affected and shaped by the people occupying it, whether it's through their cultural background or through interactions among them.

The relation between the social structure, culture and space is a little bit different in the *Charmed Life* than it is in *Howl's Moving Castle*. It is clear from the text above that when we talk about society in *Howl's Moving Castle,* we notice it's not revolved around magic despite it having a significant role in this world; it doesn't create a whole social structure around itself. On the contrary, in *Charmed Life*, we're met with a world that is, in accordance to the expectations of an immersive fantasy, heavily influenced by the presence of magic. In this world exists a clear class system, with non-magical people generally having less power and influence (with exceptions like the Mayor of Wolvercote) because the society of *Charmed Life* is built around the existence of magic. The structure is manifested through specialised schools for magic, existing government regulations on its use (e.g., prohibition of dragon's blood), as well as the social hierarchy being influenced by magical ability where people like Chrestomanci are on the top overseeing everything. The maintenance of that balance between magic users and non-magic people is, as mentioned, kept with help of the apparat appointed by the Government, and Chrestomanci, as a powerful enchanter on the top of that hierarchy of

witches and magicians (the title Chrestomanci obliges him to do so); as Mr. Saunders explains it: "… We're all Government employees here. The job Chrestomanci has is to make sure this world isn't run entirely by witches. Ordinary people have rights too. And he must make sure witches don't get out into worlds where there isn't so much magic and play havoc there. It's a big job. And we're the staff that helps him." (Jones, 2001, pp. 255-256).

Chrestomanci's high social status is manifested through his wealth, especially the castle and the vast castle grounds. Since most of the novel's storyline is happening within the castle or in the gardens of the castle, it's hard not to notice certain aspects of social space discussed by Lefebvre. The description of this grand castle, which has this even older part connected to the newer, is definitely striking. It embodies the contrast between full and empty. It, as Lefebvre exemplifies with a cathedral, takes away from the natural space and fills the confiscated space with emptiness. The descriptions of these vast indoor spaces always come with the illogical occurrence of a lack of echoes; no matter how strongly someone yells or stomps, their noise remains quiet and without echoes, allowing a sort of intimacy in the wide space. Despite it allowing intimate conversations in the plain sight, it also distances people with many rooms and empty spaces. When it comes to these vast open spaces that are the gardens all around the castle, despite their vastness they become intimate through characters' interaction with them. Just like in the other novel, the castle with its grounds becomes a reflection of Bachelard's idea of intimate immensity, and how certain rooms of the castle are more personal than the others simply by being a socially occupied space (e.g., the playroom). The castle and its grounds become a small universe impacted greatly by the values that Chrestomanci as a political body represents and which his family and close friends try to embody as well. So, in accordance to Bachelard, just as Cat and, even more, Janet adapted to the social space created by Chrestomanci, they also irreversibly transformed it by bringing different cultural background and affecting the people who occupy that same social space.

All these characters interact with each other and with the world through these structures, this way the world feels ordered, with social hierarchies clearly defined by one's magical abilities or the lack of the same. Nonetheless, both of these worlds follow basic concepts derived from our world, whether it's the feudalism leftovers manifested through existence of a kingship, but having also capitalist oriented elements (wage labour, trade, money and price system, etc.) which are more merchant-like in *Howl's Moving Castle* (resembling early stages of the development of capitalism as we know today), while in *Charmed Life* it's more modern, but still hasn't reached the extreme of the modern capitalist society we live in. This perfectly

exemplifies how, even when were immersed within a new fantastical world, the familiar reality is subtly layered in the basis of the new one, takes subtle but prominent role in creating the "new" society. This "new" society is important because it's familiar enough for a reader to be immersed in it, but distant enough to open a neutral space for the critique of issues we face in our world such as power abuse (whether it means conquering other "worlds" or spreading the "waste"), disbalanced family relations, exploitation (discussed among Sophie and Calcifer), or even growing up (as the main characters of *Charmed life* are children).

4.3. Worlds Histories and Related Worlds

Related worlds exist in both novels by Diana Wynne Jones, and as the author herself says (282, *Charmed life* e-book) there are hundreds of different worlds. In *Charmed Life* we learn that a new world is formed every time when there is a big event in History, such as a battle or an earthquake after which two or more very different outcomes are possible. Those different outcomes can happen, but they cannot exist together, so one world splits into two and histories continue in their separate ways. This notion of splitting worlds is interesting to discuss because it can be applied to how our known world could have looked like today if certain outcomes were different. The world probably would not split into two and make space for two possible outcomes, but it would become a different world if outcomes of certain global events were different. This opens a space for discussion of how world's history shaped the world we know and how it could've looked if history was different. This notion of world's history and related worlds Jones does not explore in *Howl's Moving Castle* as she does in the *Charmed life*. What she does is introducing the castle door as a portal to different places in Sophie's world, but towards the end we are shown that the portal door can lead to another world, our version of Earth (specifically they arrive in Wales). This way she introduced an image of our world, a version of it just as the ones in contemporary fiction, for which creation a type of world-building is needed as well.

In the second half of *Charmed Life,* we gradually learn how there are twelve known Related Worlds and how each of these worlds is divided into sets that are called Series, usually nine of them, which are categorised according to the events in History that were the same in them. The Related Worlds are numbered, and the numbering goes backwards because it's thought that Series One is the original world of the twelve, and the great Mages of One who first discovered the other worlds and did the numbering. The worlds may contain certain elements that are almost the same. For example, having several counterparts in the Related Worlds is explained as normal and the only ones who don't have any are people with nine lives (Cat and

Chrestomanci); even though those counterparts may be the exact doubles, on the example of Gwendolen and Janet it's clear how their characters can differ significantly. The author explains in more detail (in the e-book edition extras) how, just like Gwendolen Chant's, Janet's world is in Series Twelve, but whereas World A (Gwendolen's world) is oriented to magic, Janet's world split off in the Fourteenth Century and turned to science and machinery, therefore being similar to our own world, giving an example of two worlds splitting.

She explains, partially within the story of *Charmed Life* and partially in the extras, that to physically travel from one world to another the gateway, or an opening between worlds, is needed, which gets clearer across the novels of the series. In *Charmed Life*, through the example of Gwendolen and Janet, it's shown how when relocating from one world to another a chain rection in which the counterparts are dragged to replace the gaps left behind in each world. Jones, in the additional part of *Charmed Life*, explains that for such permanent relocation strong magic is needed because, usually, when traveling from one world to another a person needs to leave a part of themselves behind. Gwendolen performs such a permanent relocation towards the very end of the novel with help of using dragon's blood to enhance her powers. Jones also mentions different ways travelling among Related Worlds: moving in body (i.e., moving your physical body from one world to the next), moving in spirit (a spirit trip or spirit traveling). The difference between the two is that in spirit travelling another medium is needed to anchor them to their own world. All these parallel universes function as what we would call a multiverse. In contrary to this well-developed system of worlds, the portal travel in *Howl's Moving Castle* is not explained in that much detail, leaving a sense of mystery common in fairy tales. This inspiration taken from the folk tales is quite common in creation of fantastical worlds, after all, Jones drew inspiration from various fairy tales like *Cinderella* (deceased father; step-mother raising the protagonist and using her to slave away as free work force, etc.), or *Beauty and the Beast* (at first glance Sophie is the unpleasant-looking one and Howl is the pretty one, but their roles are reversed as she's the one with kind heart while Howl's is corrupted). What's here important regarding the world history is that the history of created world is vaguer than the one in the other novel, yet with same strong immersive nature. This is accomplished due to familiarity of readers with fairy tales and common tropes that occur in them. This novel does mock certain tropes, but also embraces some and builds its world off of our world traditional tales. In this way, the history of our world folk tales and fairy tales became the basis for the new and distant world on top of which the author builds this new world. This

created world can and does serve as a ground on which the author critiques war threats, abuse of power, exploitation of work, and etc., which are all issues we deal with in our world.

4.4. Integration of real-world elements

To start with Charmed Life, one of the first element that shares close resemblance to our own world are descriptions of the scarce usage of electricity and cars, more common usage horse-carriages and even type of wardrobes, which Janet notices, all resemble 20th-century England, notwithstanding magic. Not only that, but the societal norms, the structure of the educational system, the landscapes, all of that reflects our reality, though in a slightly altered way. The one who questions those norms, education, and double petty coats, is Janet. As someone who is originally from a world very similar to ours, she points out what to reader is acceptable as the logic of the immersive world they're presented with. Yet, this notion of not understanding the ways of the other worlds can reverse and show readers how something we are familiar with from Janet's world brings confusion to the characters in Cat's world. For example, when Cat was puzzled hearing about Janet wearing trousers in her world daily, or when he wouldn't understand certain terms, such as hitchhiking.

On the other hand, in *Howl's Moving Castle*, the blend of real-world elements is done in a subtler, even more fantastical way. We see Ingray as a very distinct and a separate world since it draws heavily upon European fairy tale traditions and tropes. For example, the Wicked Witch of the Waste embodies the trope of a wicked older woman who torments the protagonist (Sophie). Sophie also has a few magical helpers along the way, instead of traditionally the protagonist having one, and they take a form in characters of Calcifer the fire demon and Michael who's Howl's apprentice magician. One already mentioned trope which Jones used is the one present in *Cinderella*: a deceased father and a stepmother (Fanny) being left to raise children, but poorly takes notice of their needs and wishes. Within this fairy tale-like narrative Jones manages to unnoticeably embed elements well known to us from our lives, such as May Day, a holiday celebrated in Ingray as well as in Howl's world. Besides the already mentioned, the blend of real-world elements with otherworldly ones is embodied in the almost symbiotic relationship between Howl and his Castle. With Howl being from our world, he becomes a direct link between fantasy world and the real one, while the Castle itself represents a departure from real-world logic with its impossible architecture and mobility, making *Howl's Moving Castle* more otherworldly than *Charmed Life*. What Jones accomplished, with well-balanced layering of realistic and the fantastic while creating the world of *Howl's Moving Castle*, Hayao

Miyazaki will take as basis to build his own version of the story, influenced by his life experiences and culture in which he grew up.

5. Comparative analysis of studio Ghibli's animated adaptation of *Howl's Moving Castle* to the source material

5.1. Visual interpretation

When it comes to animation, Hayao Miyazaki believes that animation itself is far more than cartoons, comics, a children's book or even a film. His view is that animation opens up a way to build the imaginary and make fantasy come alive. This allowed Miyazaki to establish himself as a focal figure within the animation world, mainly in Japan but across the world as well. He not only changed but also revolutionized the way animated cinema was seen in Japan. (Miyazaki, 2008, p. 205) His dedication to animation is what makes his films captivating too watch, and the same stands for this book adaptation. To analyse his version in comparison to the source material, in terms of world-building techniques, it's necessary to take into account that he and Jones use different media to tell the same story. Miyazaki has a visual and auditive means of producing the new world, while Jones depends on written text and a reader's imagination. Beside these differences of media, they both use their narrative spaces to deal with topics that are relevant to our world today. So, when it comes to the vision of the basic storyline, it remains somewhat the same. The plot of *Howl's Moving Castle* is set in the magical country of Ingary, and its story revolves around Sophie, an eighteen-year-old girl who has been cursed and transformed by the Witch of the Waste into a ninety-year-old woman. The story follows her adventures alongside the young Wizard Howl, his apprentice Michael/Markl, and the fire demon called Calcifer. Cavallaro (2006, p. 158) says how Jones' book is, at the same time, a light-hearted yet a tantalizing fantasy story that draws you in by deconstructing several familiar fairy-tale conventions. This fairy tale inspiration is somewhat reflected in the film.

When it comes to telling a story through the visuals, the most prominent visuals are the ones which added something new to the story (elements which were never even mentioned in the book). The most noticeable is the depiction of Sophie, her sudden aging induced by the curse, then slowly de-aging as the film progresses (with a couple of depictions of her suddenly going back to being eighteen again, then ninety seconds after). This added a new layer to her character, while using the animation to tell this rather than have a narrator explain. Her plotline of this back and forth aging and de-aging ends with a fairy tale symbolism because after she breaks the spell and can continue living her life as an eighteen-year-old, she's left with her hair

being silver in colour. On the other hand, in the book her hair returns to its pervious colour (ginger). This is left symbolically in the film to mark her experiences on the adventure that started with the curse. It's symbolically left silver so the character, along with the viewers, doesn't invalidate her gained knowledge and life experience.

According to the author herself, the book is highly visual, and Miyazaki was most likely drawn to this specific aspect when adapting it. Even though these two artists come from different cultures, both the novel and the animated version share same basis of the storyline, which still had European-inspired landscape visuals, the most prominent one being the inspiration for the look of Market Chipping which was drawn from the French city of Colmar. This is how Miyazaki used a piece of our world's social space as the inspiration and used it as a base for creating a visual representation of an entire city. This made the city feel more familiar to the western audience and easier for them to immerse themselves into this fictional world he presents. Multiple snapshots of the film depicting imaginary city, Market Chipping, showcase almost precise image of Colmar, and below is one of the many examples of it.

1.1. Colmar, Maison Pfister *(Pfister House)* https://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/Colmar

1.2. Hayao Miyazaki, Studio Ghibli, *Howl's Moving Castle*

When it comes to the exterior shots, the landscape dominates the frame. Lonely houses, but also villages, towns, and cities, all rest within fields of seemingly infinite grassland. These wide shots give better perspective of the vastness of the world the story is in, making it feel almost tangible. So, when a massive object, such as the castle, lumbers and strains across the middle distance, the mountains always seem to be flanking it to a roughly equal height, while mountain clouds tend to envelop the puffing castle. With nothing but the natural landscapes in the background, the castle stands out, not blending seamlessly into the background. The castle looks completely different than in the book descriptions, but remains this motif of industrialization (in the book it's coal and puffing, in the film it's messy mixture of engine-like exterior and puffing as well). It looks nothing like a traditional castle but Miyazaki used visual media to connect the castle image with Howl's personality as a troubled hero archetype that he represents.

1.3. Hayao Miyazaki, Studio Ghibli, *Howl's Moving Castle*

Ultimately, when it comes to visual representation of spaces in the animated version of the *Howl's Moving Castle*, it's clear that Bachelard's idea of intimate immensity is accomplished here, as it is in the novel. The vast landscapes give the feeling of intimacy, whether it's with lonely houses in the frame, or the prominent visual of the castle wondering about. This is best exemplified with the image of Howl's cottage he wishes to give Sophie as a new home because the cottage is a lonely house in the middle of endless fields of grass and flowers. With a pond in front of the cottage, as a tranquil body of water, it's made into

a peaceful place, and what makes it intimate is the very personal and emotional significance that the characters attribute to the place. We, as viewers, can see how this space evokes memories which Howl experienced there as a child. For Sophie, who sees Howl's memory of catching a falling star, it's a space that starts evoking emotions and connects her emotionally with the space as well. These intimate spaces are present throughout the film, Howl's castle being, of course, a universe in the means of the absolute space (until it changes the appearance at the very end of the film).

5.2. Emphasis on certain themes

Hayao Miyazaki's version of the *Howl's Moving Castle* is filled with similarities to his other works and some of his reoccurring themes and motifs have been implemented in the story, changing it ever so slightly and making it his distinct work of art. For example, the film focuses greatly its plot on the theme of War, a theme which, is barely mentioned in the book (the King planning a war after a disappearance of the prince). This way, he uses this media to create a fictional world that can resemble our own but differs greatly from ours, therefore opening that neutral space which he uses to deal with tricky topics. The book, on the other hand, focuses mainly on the character development of Sophie and Howl, making more subtle critique, often masked in humour. The film version does not ignore their character development, but focuses on it in a different way, by visualising Sophie's inner struggle and self-worth issues with ageing a de-aging her as her courage and self-worth oscillate.

The plot differences are to be expected when a novel is adapted into a film format, making the original plot slightly shorter and shifting the focus only on certain themes, but remaining very faithful to the original story because the key plot points are still there. Miyazaki made the narrative more complex than in the book, as some segments of the story are left unanswered, allowing the viewers to complete the story by using their imagination to derive a personal interpretation of the film on their own.

When it comes to motifs and themes present in Miyazaki's works, he has always been consistent, and the most common are environmentalism, flying, children, anthropomorphism, zoomorphism, metamorphosis, wind and weather, worlds within our own, Shinto and Japanese mythology, social community, European influences, Japanese culture, and war and death. Some of these themes have a close connection with his life, such as war because of him having lived through World War II, and flying, since he grew up surrounded by airplanes, both of those themes are present in his version of *Howl's Moving Castle*.

Miyazaki's version of *Howl's Moving Castle* mainly focuses on four of those themes and motifs: war and death, metamorphosis, flying and European influences. Because of Miyazaki's childhood being highly influenced by war and airplanes, the themes he often chooses to approach in his work reflect exactly that. Airplanes contributed to one his relevant themes in Miyazaki's works, flying. His love for airplanes grew thanks to the airplane business that his father and uncle ran. In his works, he always depicts some sort of flying motion, and it usually involves airplanes. In *Howl's Moving Castle*, the director added futuristic flying machines to the film version of the story, which were never even mentioned in the original work. But, besides flying machines, he also introduces flying as a skill that wizards and witches poses (Howl flying while holding Sophie over Market Chipping). Another theme is explored through Sophie's physical age floating from old to young age through the film, consequentially a theme of metamorphosis becomes prominent as well. It mirrors her psychological age, as well as showcasing her self-esteem crumbling and rising, but also the way she portrays herself. This theme is presented throughout the film in visuals I've previously mentioned, of Sophie jumping from old to young age depending on her image of herself. Third prominent theme in the film is affected by Miyazaki being born in the middle of World War II, and having it shape his childhood. Because of that, he has become sensitive to war-related themes, and these play a large role in most of his films. These themes that he is prone to cover are sometimes very sensitive and by using *Howl's Moving Castle* as a neutral ground for exploring such themes (like war, death, environmentalism, etc.), he creates a space in which he can freely critique the meaningless wars and the wasteland which is left after each one, or the disbalance between nature and industry. Among the themes he touches upon in the film, one of the more prominent is the wasteland. It can serve symbolically to represent one of the greater issues that post-World War II Japan has faced. Because if that it's more understandable why would Miyazaki use European city landscape because this way, he not only appeals to the wider audience but also avoids triggering Japan's collective trauma of the nuclear wasteland. This is a great example of how creating a fictional space for exploring certain themes and dealing with tricky topics can be a powerful tool for allowing a more profound exploration of them.

5.3. Japanese cultural influences

Howl's Moving Castle bears heavy European influences, as the sceneries, buildings and settings, specifically Market Chipping itself, are a display of European characteristics. While cities draw inspiration from the European culture (mainly because the original story was based in a fictional European-inspired country named Ingary), the landscapes, particularly the

mountains and fields, are reminiscent of Japanese settings. The film's portrayal of misty mountains, serene lakes, and sprawling green fields evoke the aesthetics of traditional Japanese art and the deep reverence for nature in Japanese culture.

In *Howl's Moving Castle* Miyazaki explores themes of war, industrialization, and metamorphosis which then compete, contrast, and comment on notions of peace, nature, and self-understanding. These themes are showing Miyazaki's interest in harmony, especially the theme of war and depiction of devastation which it brings, always cautioning against violence and the destruction it brings. He explores harmony through Taoist beliefs, specifically the notion of ying and yang, whereby oppositional forces are complementary, interrelated, and a part of nature. Such oppositions are present when contrasting industry versus nature (where nature is perceived through the use of magic); or man versus nature (as magic); and so, on are all encapsulated within Howl's conflicted being as he fights soldiers, wizards, and flying machines. Therefore, he's the reflection of how both ying and yang can coexist in one being in the form of the environment which has been manipulated by humankind (Wilson & Wilson, 2015, p. 189). Harmony within his being depends on an interconnected natural balance rather than denial, suppression, and exclusion. Since nature is perceived as magic, it's important to highlight how the use of spell craft is never suggested to be inherently malevolent or corrupting, showing how magicians and witches that are corrupted are that way because of greed or power hunger. This perspective affected his world-building because the European fairy tales and folk tales that inspired Jones always have a clearly distinguished good from evil, while Japan's traditions are affected by beliefs such as Taoism, therefore having the tendency to search for a balance between these opposites.

The film also uses Howl to depict transformation though shapeshifting, the ability of his to transform onto a bird-like creature. This can also be seen as a reflection on both, Miyazaki's recurrent theme of flying, but also reflecting the Japanese mythology in which shapeshifting spirits such as *tengu* can change forms the way Howl did. In contrast to Howl's development and abilities, Sophie is struggling to attune herself to her new environment and see herself not as a hatmaker or cleaning lady who distances herself to a safe vantage point from which she's able to help others. Once her self-confidence and self-worth resurface, she, at times, becomes able to transform from the old woman to her young self, but that's only temporary because only after she becomes truly self-confident woman that the spell is lifted. Despite her transformation being connected to her perception of herself, her fluctuating age throughout the film mirrors the dual nature of multiple figures in Japanese mythology, where characters often possessed

both human and supernatural side. Duality is a common motif reflecting the fluid nature of identity and the connection between inner and outer forms.

The Witch of the Waste can be seen as iteration of *yōkai*, withes in Japanese culture which are often depicted as malevolent and powerful beings capable of cursing others or altering their appearance. She's shown as greedy due to capture of Howl's heart, while Madame Suliman is not depicted as black or white character despite her manipulation of the war effort (at the end calling a war a "game" to be brought to an end after the return of prince Julian) and disempowerment of rival wizards. Both characters have attained their place through an abuse of the equilibrium, these characters are shown to know nothing about interpersonal relationships while being desperate to manipulate and control the environment in which they exist.

Howl's Moving Castle is "set in a world conceived by the late 19th century European neo-futurist painters where magic and science coexist" (Miyazaki 2005, 10). Within this Victoriana steampunk world, where coal powered trains are juxtaposed with electrically powered air-battalion bombers, Howl takes refuge in his moving castle, where "powered by the fire demon Calcifer, the noisy castle emits steam and roams around like a living creature . . . covered with houses, cannons, and other disparate parts including ears and assorted junk" (Miyazaki 2005, 37). But technology as such, just like the wizards fighting the war, "pollution," or even becoming old; is neither inherently good nor bad, but rather the one who wheels it decides to use it in one or the other way (similarly to the example of Howl and Witch of the waste). Once when Howl encounters the various enemies in actual combat (battleship flotilla) while a bomber partially destroys Sophie's hometown, the magic, hate-fuelled war machines appear to become even more feral in their appearance and actions, as misappropriation of nature (channelled through magic) does not reduce its presence but distorts it. Consequentially, the castle mirrors some of the more bloodthirsty enemies or even personal impulses that Howl encounters. Yet given the symbolism of his heart being in the centre of it, which significantly differentiates his mobile home from the militaristic flying machines, as a representation of domesticity and perpetually internalized tensions.

Along with Taoism, Shintoism is a key concept to understanding the way that the environment works in *Howl's Moving Castle*. Generally, in Japanese culture, but especially in Shinto, the natural world is often inhabited by spirits known as *kami*. In Shinto shrines, fixed focal points where *kami*, or spirits, converge and share their interrelated energies with receptive

visitor are present in certain Ghibli films, and in this film the titular castle can be seen as a type of such Shinto shrine, a deeply personal and intimate space occupied by the protagonists who are emotionally tied to it. The castle enables Howl to keep his heart safe, while also being a representation of real and symbolic barriers between spaces and worlds in the form of the magical portal door. What can also be considered as representation of Shintoism are impure pollutants called *kegare*. Bathing in Shintoism is a frequently practised cleansing and purification ritual, which can be connected to how Howl repeats this ritual quite often, until his potions are "completely ruined" by Sophie. At that point the viewer is able to sees *kegare* in the form of green slime when Howl's narcissistic behaviour resurfaces after despairing about his "ruined" appearance. *Kegare* is also present in the globular footmen of the Witch of the Waste which seem to be made of black oil-like sludge. The assumption about the footmen being made of oil is not coincidental because Miyazaki himself said how, at the time, he as profoundly affected by the war in Iraq (one of the world's largest producers of oil). Therefore, the witch's servants represent the impure fuel that drives her sedan chair and powers warring ships (impure fuel fuelling the war), while their counterbalance that represents purer energy is that of Calcifer, who operates the castle.

This layering of the Japanese culture, on top of which a whole new fictional world is built is allowing Miyazaki to talk through his characters and visuals, and reflect on the themes he wants to. What's important is that by dealing with themes that are representing our world he's sending a powerful anti-war message. But not everything in this film is about war. As it's mentioned, the core of the Taoist belief is the existence of ying and yang, i.e., of balance between complementary forces, where nothing is inherently only good or bad. The movie explores this through the reflection on the environment in search for harmony between nature and industry. Nature is represented by magic forces, while industrialization is represented by war machines and Witch's footmen made of oil-like substance. This impure fuel that powers the war machines, and therefore war, show imbalance in the relationship of the people with nature. Miyazaki offers an image of balance between the two within an almost symbiotic relationship between the castle, Calcifer and Howl. The castle is moved by Calcifer's fire, but the pure element of this symbiosis is that the only reason why Calcifer can power the entire castle is the fact that in his core is Howl's heart, which saved him (and made him a fire demon). The three of them represent the balance between ying and yang, or between people and nature, which is in threat because the Witch of the Waste wants Howl's heart, thus his fire demon.

(Wilson & Wilson, 2015, pp. 192-193) She represents the threat to this fragile balance with her wants of more power to abuse and turn against nature and in favour of desolation.

In both the novel and film versions of *Howl's Moving Castle*, magic operates within defined restrictions that mimic the complexities of real-world power dynamics. For example, in Jones' novel, hearts are taken by the saved falling stars which survive through becoming a fire demon without true freedom because they, and the one who gave up their heart, are tied to a "contract". These contracts reflect our world ones: one side gives up their freedom to survive and the other side gives up their "heart", i.e., their humanity and compassion towards others. Similar is present in Miyazaki's version of the story where demons also corrupt the owners of the taken hearts, but where, again, the character of the owner is playing major role. The resilience toward the evil is what made Howl go through all those years uncorrupted and the lack of the same is what doomed Witch to become evil. This is a great example of how a fantastical setting allows for both of them to reflect more deeply on the human nature and greed. This serves as one of many examples of how integrating realistic elements within the magical world enhances the narrative's immersive quality, making it a profound exploration of societal and cultural themes through a fantasy lens.

6. Conclusion

With this thesis I aimed to research how immersive worlds of Diana Wynne Jones are constructed based off of the two novels from two different series: *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Charmed Life*, which is later extended with Hayao Miyazaki's animated adaptation of *Howl's Moving Castle*. The main focus of my thesis was on the layering of the realistic (our-world) elements and building these fantastical settings on those base grounds, specifically how it deepens the narrative immersion and thus, opens the space for the exploration of our-world's societal and cultural issues. That I intended to do through comparative analysis with which it was shown how both novels successfully created believable and immersive worlds by layering various aspects of reality (such as historical contexts, societal frameworks), but also structured magic systems and well thought intimate vast, or cramped, spaces that immerse rather than distance the readers. This combination of seamless blending of the familiar with the imaginative not only enhances the reader's immersion but also enables reflection on real-world dynamics.

The key objective of my thesis was to examine how world-building techniques contribute to making Jones's fantasy realms so immersive and her how subliminal themes in the stories are applicable to our contemporary world. Both *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Charmed Life* follow the essential principles of effective world-building by maintaining internal logic, structure, and consistency within their established fantasy settings. Establishing clear rules and boundaries (whether for magic, society, or technology) adds to the believability of these worlds, its own logic encouraging readers to deeply engage with both the story and the characters. This internal consistency, combined with the inclusion of recognizable societal structures and power dynamics, well planned space layout, and constricted magical systems, creates a rich, multi-layered tapestry where the fantastical is rooted in reality. By doing so, Jones' work transcends simple escapism, instead it offers immersive worlds that mirror and critique real-world social structures and challenges.

Because magic is central to both novels, I searched for differences and similarities between the two systems and how they affected the shaping of the newly-created worlds. In both, magic is depicted not as an unlimited force but as one governed by regulations, mirroring technological and political limitations found in our own world. This is very easily noticed in *Charmed Life* in which the hierarchical social order, with powerful magic users at the top, echoes real-world divisions based on wealth and power. On the other hand, magic in *Howl's Moving Castle* is more personal and whimsical, reflecting the internal struggles of characters

like Howl and Sophie. This fluidity of magic doesn't detract from the worlds' realism; rather, it enhances it by anchoring magical elements in recognizable social frameworks. This grounding allows Jones to use fantasy as a tool to explore deeper themes of power, responsibility, and identity.

The important aspect that I laid out in my analysis is the incorporation of familiar elements into these fantastical settings and how they play a vital role in making them immersive. In both novels, societal structures closely resemble those of traditional European societies, with hierarchies based on wealth, power, alongside the deviation that is magical abilities, which takes a part in constructing a hierarchy in these novels as well. These recognizable frameworks make the worlds more accessible to readers, even as they encounter fantastical creatures, shapeshifting, and enchanted objects. The magic in *Charmed Life* is woven into the social fabric, affecting political power and societal status in much the same way that wealth and birth privilege operate in the real world. This reflection of societal hierarchies within a fantasy context opens the space for deeper engagement with themes such as inequality or power dynamics. Power and social hierarchy, which are explicitly linked to the magic system, allowed Jones to deal with the issues of social inequality and the abuse of power. The novel's treatment of magic, as both a gift and a commodity, parallels real-world concerns about privilege, social mobility, and the consequences of abusing power. On the contrary, *Howl's Moving Castle* presents a society that, while still hierarchical, is more fluid and reflective of traditional European fairy tale settings. Its less rigid social structure lends the world a fairy tale feels, yet it remains grounded enough by having familiar interactions between commoners, merchants, royalty, and wizards. This interplay between the magical and the familiar in both novels enhances immersion by drawing readers into a world that is simultaneously distant and relatable.

A portion of this thesis I intentionally dedicated to the analysis of Hayao Miyazaki's animated adaptation of *Howl's Moving Castle*, which brings many of the novel's immersive elements to life through a new medium. Miyazaki's film continues to build on the novel's themes, particularly its critique of war and industrialization, while remaining faithful to its core messages of identity and transformation. Through steampunk aesthetics, visually striking nature scenes, and symbolic architecture, Miyazaki enhances the already high-quality immersive narrative of the world he took upon to recreate by merging fantasy with his own reflection on reality, and thus creating a visually rich narrative. In the adaptation, he reflects on the reality through the themes of war and industrialization, which take centre stage, while also

focusing heavily on environmentalism and technology. He contrasts nature and industrial machinery, a symbolic battle between preservation and destruction that echoes contemporary concerns about human interference with nature. This shift in emphasis does not detract from the film's immersive quality but rather adds depth to this shortened storyline with a focus only on the main plot-diving points, leaving space for exploring and critiquing real-world concerns in the fantastical narrative. Just like Jones, Miyazaki uses the fantasy setting to critique power abuse, wars and war wasteland, illustrating how fantasy can be a powerful tool for addressing social and cultural issues. Both of them have the ability to use fantasy lenses for wowing in and simultaneously commenting our world and its problems. In *Howl's Moving Castle*, themes of identity and transformation are reflected in the physical changes of both Howl and Sophie. Their transformations resonate with real-life struggles with identity and societal expectations, adding layers of meaning to the fantastical narrative.

With this thesis I contend that the fantasy genre is suited to offer critical reflections on real-world issues. That is achieved by creating immersive worlds that blend the fantastical with the real, Jones and Miyazaki address complex social, cultural, and political themes in a way that is engaging and meaningful. These imaginative settings provide a space for readers and viewers to confront challenging topics like war, identity, and power in a context removed from the pressures of reality. This distance allows for greater freedom in exploring and critiquing these issues, while the right amount of familiarity of the worlds ensures that the critique remains accessible and relevant. To conclude, the immersive quality of the worlds created by Jones in *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Charmed Life*, as well as Miyazaki's film adaptation, is achieved through the careful integration of realistic elements into fantastical settings. This blend of the familiar and the imaginary not only enhances the narrative's immersive nature but also allows for a deeper exploration of societal and cultural themes. By embedding real-world concerns within their fantastical worlds, Jones and Miyazaki show that fantasy is not merely a tool for escapism but a powerful medium for reflecting on the complexities of human experience. Ultimately, fantasy became a tool for critical reflection of our society, encouraging readers/viewers to engage with real-world issues represented in a space that hosts both introspection and imagination.

7. Abstract

This thesis explores the construction of immersive worlds in Diana Wynne Jones's *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Charmed Life*, focusing on how the integration of realistic elements within fantastical settings enhances narrative immersion and facilitates critical reflection on societal and cultural issues. Through comparative analysis, the study demonstrates how both novels utilize multiple layers of reality (such as historical context, societal structures, and regulated magic systems) to create believable worlds that resonate with readers. Furthermore, the thesis argues that the seamless blending of familiar real-world elements with imaginative settings allows for the exploration of deeper themes, including power dynamics, war, and identity, which are integral to fantasy literature's capacity for social critique. Additionally, the work examines the visual adaptation of *Howl's Moving Castle* by Hayao Miyazaki, highlighting how the film's visual and thematic layers enhance the narrative's immersive quality, while reflecting cultural influences and emphasizing anti-war messages. Ultimately, the thesis argues that both Jones and Miyazaki succeed in building immersive fantasy worlds that mirror our own, demonstrating how fantasy as a genre can serve as a profound medium for engaging with complex social and cultural relations.

Key words: world-building, fantasy, magic systems, intimate immensity, immersion, social critique, *Howl's Moving Castle*, *Charmed Life*, Miyazaki's adaptation

8. Sažetak

Ovaj rad istražuje izgradnju imerzivnih svjetova u djelima *Howl's Moving Castle* i *Charmed Life* Diane Wynne Jones, s posebnim naglaskom na to kako integracija realističnih elemenata unutar fantastičnih okruženja pojačava imerziju u narativ i olakšava kritičko promišljanje o društvenim i kulturnim pitanjima. Usporednom analizu, rad pokazuje kako oba romana koriste višeslojne stvarnosti (poput povijesnog konteksta, društvenih struktura i reguliranih magijskih sustava) kako bi stvorili uvjerljive svjetove s kojima se čitatelji mogu povezati. Nadalje, rad tvrdi kako besprijekorno spajanje poznatih elemenata stvarnog svijeta s maštovitim okruženjima omogućava istraživanje dubljih tema, kao što su dinamika moći, rat i identitet; koje su ključne za mogućnost kritičkog promišljanja o društvenim problemima unutar fantastične književnosti. Uz to, rad proučava vizualnu adaptaciju *Howl's Moving Castle* u režiji Hayaoa Miyazakija, ističući kako vizualna i tematska slojevitost filma poboljšava imerzivnu kvalitetu narativa, istovremeno odražavajući kulturne utjecaje i naglašavajući antiratne poruke. Naposlijetku, rad tvrdi kako su Jones i Miyazaki uspješni pri stvaranju imerzivnih fantastičnih svjetova koji zrcale onaj naš, pokazujući kako fantazija kao žanr može poslužiti kao snažan medij pri bavljenju složenim društvenim i kulturnim odnosima.

Ključne riječi: svjetotvorstvo, fantazija, magijski sustavi, intimna neizmjernost, imerzija, društvena kritika, *Howl's Moving Castle*, *Charmed Life*, Miyazakijeva adaptacija

Bibliography:

Bachelard, G. (1994). *The Poetics of Space* (M. Jolas, Trans.). Beacon Press. (Original work published 1958)

Cavallaro, D. (2006). *The anime art of Howl's Moving Castle*. McFarland.

Corbett, C. (2021). Everything you can imagine is real: Worldbuilding, the donnée, and the magic of writing in creative writing practice. *Creative Writing Practice*, 67-78.

Grenby, M. O. (2008). *Children's literature*. Edinburgh University Press Ltd.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Blackwell.

Mendlesohn, F. (2002). Toward a taxonomy of fantasy. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 13(2), 169-183.

Miyazaki, H. (2008). *Turning point: 1997–2008*. Japan, Studio Ghibli – Nibariki.

Miyazaki, H. (2004). *Howl's Moving Castle* [Film]. Sudio Ghibli.

Nikolajeva, M. (1988). *The magic code: The use of magical patterns in fantasy for children*. Graphic Systems Goteborg.

Shintoism. (n.d.). In *Britannica*. Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shinto

Taoism. (n.d.). In *BBC - Religion*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/taoism/

Wilson, C., & Wilson, G. T. (2015). Taoism, Shintoism, and the ethics of technology: An ecocritical review of Howl's Moving Castle. *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities*, 2(3), 189-194. University of Nebraska Press.

Wynne Jones, D. (2000). *Howl's Moving Castle.* London: HarperCollins Children's Books.

Wynne Jones, D. (2001). *Charmed Life.* PerfectBound e-book.

Obrazac A.Č.

SVEUČILIŠTE U SPLITU
FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET

IZJAVA O AKADEMSKOJ ČESTITOSTI

kojom ja Lucija Delić, kao pristupnik/pristupnica za stjecanje zvanja sveučilišnog/e prvostupnika/ce Hrvatskog i engleskog jezika i književnosti, izjavljujem da je ovaj završni rad rezultat isključivo mojega vlastitoga rada, da se temelji na mojim istraživanjima i oslanja na objavljenu literaturu kao što to pokazuju korištene bilješke i bibliografija. Izjavljujem da niti jedan dio završnog rada nije napisan na nedopušten način, odnosno da nije prepisan iz necitiranoga rada, pa tako ne krši ničija autorska prava. Također izjavljujem da nijedan dio ovoga završnog rada nije iskorišten za koji drugi rad pri bilo kojoj drugoj visokoškolskoj, znanstvenoj ili radnoj ustanovi.

Split, 25. 9. 2024.

Potpis 

Izjava o pohrani i objavi ocjenskog rada
(završnog/diplomskog/specijalističkog/doktorskog rada - podcrtajte odgovarajuće)

Student/ica: Lucija Delić

Naslov rada: Navigating Fantasy Realms: Comparative Analysis of World-Building in Howl's Moving Castle and Charmed Life

Znanstveno područje i polje: Filologija

Vrsta rada: Završni rad

Mentor/ica rada (ime i prezime, akad. stupanj i zvanje):
izv. prof. dr. sc. Simon John Ryle

Komentor/ica rada (ime i prezime, akad. stupanj i zvanje):

/

Članovi povjerenstva (ime i prezime, akad. stupanj i zvanje):

izv. prof. dr. sc. Simon John Ryle
izv. prof. dr. sc. Gordan Matas
asistentica Victoria Vestić

Ovom izjavom potvrđujem da sam autor/autorica predanog ocjenskog rada (završnog/diplomskog/specijalističkog/doktorskog rada - zaokružite odgovarajuće) i da sadržaj njegove elektroničke inačice u potpunosti odgovara sadržaju obranjenog i nakon obrane uređenog rada.

Kao autor izjavljujem da se slažem da se moj ocjenski rad, bez naknade, trajno javno objavi u otvorenom pristupu u Digitalnom repozitoriju Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Splitu i repozitoriju Nacionalne i sveučilišne knjižnice u Zagrebu (u skladu s odredbama *Zakona o visokom obrazovanju i znanstvenoj djelatnosti* (NN br. 119/22).

Split, 25. 9. 2024.

Potpis studenta/studentice: Lucija Delić

Napomena:

U slučaju potrebe ograničavanja pristupa ocjenskom radu sukladno odredbama Zakona o autorskom pravu i srodnim pravima (111/21), podnosi se obrazloženi zahtjev dekanici Filozofskog fakulteta u Splitu.