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Playfulness in a Lake District namescape: the role of onomastics in the literary development of place and space in Ransome's *Swallows & Amazons* series

James O. Butler

Lancaster University

Ransome's *Swallows & Amazons* series tracks the childhood holiday adventures of three groups of siblings, principally from the perspectives of four members of the Walker family (the 'Swallows', a name adopted from their boat), who holiday in the Lake District. Five of the novels that comprise the series are set in the region, and follow three groups of siblings as they explore the local environment, adopting various adventuring roles as they play, and charting the landscape as it is encountered. The setting is a composite formation, with the central lake bearing a close descriptive likeness to Lake Windermere and the surrounding topography resembling that of Coniston Water, with a touch of Derwentwater identifiable to those familiar with the region. Ransome (1937) described his creative development of the setting in the following terms:

> There has to be a little pulling about of rivers and roads, but every single place in all those books exists somewhere and by now I know the geography of the country in the books so well that when I walk about in actual fact, it sometimes seems to me that some giant or earthquake has been doing a little scene-shifting overnight.

His fictional paracosm – a self-contained region – does not directly map to any one part of Lakeland, but is built through inference and stylistic similarities to key environmental aspects, eschewing exactness in favour of aesthetic verisimilitude.

This study will map the linguistic construction of Ransome's fictional region, examining how the multiple tiers of naming used throughout the series engage spatial depiction and interpretation. Building on Nicolaisen's

work on R. L. Stevenson regarding spatial integration and re-deployment in fiction (Nicolaisen 2001), three distinct types of name-place 'reality' – the real, the inspired and the fantastic – are identified in Ransome's writing. These forms exist alongside one another, each imparting its own significance to both setting and narrative.

Names provide a singularly powerful means for shaping literary settings, no matter how removed from reality they may be. Although concise linguistic elements, the author's choice of namescape elements provides the underlying framework around which a fictional world is built. The field of literary onomastics has recently seen a surge in academic interest: where once treated as little more than an aesthetic aside, the semantic detailing of name selection, creation and use is rapidly gaining critical recognition.[1] Even when limited to just a few sites, those named focal points deemed important enough to imbue with a character-refining name provide a way into the 'deep map' semantic essence of a place or setting with which an author can interact.

The popularity of the series, and the romanticized view of the Lake District presented within it, has been suggested as being a major factor in both defining the social perception of the region and promoting the area as a tourist destination; a claim discussed and partly critiqued by Walton (2013, 36) and Matthews (1992). Previous critical studies of the novels have focused on the role of mapping as a form of imperialistic ownership of the surrounding landscape, as a means for the children to claim the land and make it their own according to their imaginative interpretation (for example, Ranson 1996; Philips 1997; Spooner 2004, 215; Cooper and Priestnall 2011). Although these studies all engage with the cartography of the texts, very little attention has been paid to the actual names that appear, neglecting to examine how their aesthetic form and narratological function connect – an oversight which this paper seeks to correct.

Four of the earlier texts in the series are set within the region: *Swallows & Amazons* [hereafter S&A], *Swallowdale* [SD], *Winter Holiday* [WH] and

[1] Ashley (2003) provides a seminal work for the field examining the wide variety of artistic inferential strategies that names can impart, but the focus on personal names rather than those of places is an unfortunate shortcoming.

Pigeon Post [PP], alongside a fifth later novel, *The Picts and The Martyrs* [P&M]; these provide the data for this study. Charting the surrounding environment is an integral part of the narrative, given that characters are constantly at play, as pirates, shipwrecked castaways, arctic explorers, geological surveyors, and finally tribal natives; all roles that engage in discovering new lands – 'We'll make a chart of our own … and every year we'll put in the part we have explored until we know it all' (S&A 78). The internal landscape starts as a nearly blank map, reflecting the initial restriction on the children's ability to roam unsupervised, but each successive text focuses on a different part of the area which follows Jones's model of the landscape being 'very much experienced from within, at a deeply personal level' (1997, 159). Through naming in this manner, they render the environment truly their own, defining features from their unique perspective, interpretation and playful desires.

The amalgamated nature of the landscape presents a unique opportunity to demonstrate the expressive and semantically attuned capacity of names for – like Hardy's Wessex – its semi-fictional form contains the environmental characteristics that may be deemed emblematic of the region. It may be seen as a vertical slice of the most representative attributes, containing examples of the most common and expected features associated with the area, whilst providing authorial freedom to add, modify, and personalise as required to fit narrative requirements. To this end, Thomas describes the setting of *Swallows & Amazons* as 'modified though barely disguised' (1987, 9), which allows for a degree of poetic license in the emphasis of regional place and space aesthetics.[2] Since exploration and (re-)interpretation of the immediate landscapes in terms of their relation to the current mode of play is a key feature throughout the series, the employment and design of names should also be examined against these properties. Nicolaisen (1986, 180–1) has discussed the importance of names as intertextual devices in arrangements such as Wessex, which allow boundaries to be bent and refashioned to suit narrative needs, yet still provide a base layer of semantic

[2] Other critics, such as Pettigrew (2009, 3) describe the authentic-fantasy basis of the setting as being 'a fantasy world, disguised under a wealth of realistic detail' (Trease, quoted in Hunt 1988, 147).

landscape-led implication. This study builds on that suggestion, by investigating the additional tier of fantastic names, conceptually distant from the immediate landscape context. The writing style of the series switches between the children, but is always from their perspective, providing, actively communicating, the underpinning naming rationales as each new site is discovered.

Mapping the literary landscape is such an integral part of the texts that each book contains a hand-drawn illustration depicting the primary travels in the narrative. Numerous internal references are made to the creation and development of this document throughout the series, adding an additional level of meta-textual interaction (which, as noted previously, has been the main subject of prior critical attention). Creating such documents of terrain has been described as presenting an ideal 'boundless treasure-house of opportunities for creative play' (Shoard 1980, 192–3), providing a variety of features for creative interpretation. Names in particular are deemed instrumental to the playful immersion of the characters, such that the local map they procure is thought to be 'probably be all wrong, and it won't have the right names. We'll make up our own names, of course' (S&A 33). That sentiment implies that names possess semantic content, and that they need to be suitable for the characters' purpose, and fit their schema.

Indeed, the act of naming is so important to the Swallows that the process becomes a direct competition against the Amazons, with whom they are about to enter a friendship. 'There's one thing we must do now … And that's make our chart. The Amazons will be here tomorrow, and they've got their own names for everywhere' (S&A 269). This connects with the wider critical debate regarding the use of literary maps and names as illustrative of political discourse (Harley 1988); even though the stakes are minimal (important only within the context of the characters' playful schema), claiming the landscape from their own vantage point is explicitly seen as a priority. The coming together of the two groups, and the shared nature of the resulting fantasy, requires a level of compromise for mutual intelligibility between the competing groups. This potentially reduces the scope for the Swallows linguistically to shape their landscape, particularly as the Amazons are full-time residents and are more familiar with the region. But given the similar thematic schema underpinning both groups' play (naval

explorers and pirates respectively) – in addition to the role of the singular author overseeing all internal creation – there is a strong semantic affinity between the fantastic naming of both sets of children.

Direct reference to actual hills that surround the area feature infrequently, but confirm the relative situation of the region within the heart of the Lake District: 'And there's **Scawfell** [Scarfell Pike], and **Skiddaw**, and that's **Helvellyn**, and the pointed one's **Ill Bell**, and there's **High Street** where the Ancient Britons had a road along the top of the mountains' (SD 335). Not only is the fictional interstice given a geographic anchor, but also a semantic one through the inclusion of these actual features, lending credence to the verisimilitude of the fictional names bearing similar naming roots, aesthetics and heritage.

Stepping inside the paracosm, it is only the residences and farms frequently visited by the children that retain their 'actual' names consistently throughout the different adventures (**Holly Howe**, **Beckfoot**, **Low End**, **Watersmeet** [Farm], **Nook Farm**, **Dixon's Farm**, **Swainson's**, **Tyson's** and **Atkinson's**), as well as a small number of sites referred to by necessity: (**Udal Bridge**, **Longfell Woods**, **Heald Wood**, **Crag Gill** (a house), and **Strickland Junction**).[3] These may be retained because they are the sites of contact with adults, where the children's imaginative view of the area is broken into – these are the points of 'realspace' shared with non-players in their games, and so are not re-imagined. A ruined rough stone hut – a likely place to hide out – is also named **the Dog's Home**, a derogatory name which is perceived as a probable joke (P&M 41), with reference to the idea of 'being in the doghouse' This sits outside the conventional naming of local houses and farms, and is later revealed to be the work of Jacky, a local farm boy who uses the ruin as a hidden den, unbeknownst to the Amazons: the

[3] The elements that comprise these names succinctly demonstrate the artistry of Ransome's onymic formation, with the analagous (Udale, potentially a variant spelling of Yewdale attested in historical records), the actual (Heald is OE *helde*, 'hill-slope', extant near Ambleside), and fictional (Long and Fell are both common in the region, particularly the latter which is described by Whaley as being one of the 'most characterstic Lakeland elements' (2006, 397)).

name is retained without alteration because it is not solely their own place.[4] This divide follows the suggestion of Jones (1997, 171) regarding the need for separation between the adults' (real) and the children's world, which, as is shown here, can also be observed at the onymic level.

Other specific minor features, such as old mining shafts (**Old Level**, **Grey Cap**, **Slate Crop**, **Brown's Dog**, **Jimson's**, **Giftie** and **Grey Screes**), are referred to only a single time by an adult, and have no bearing on the adventures other than to build the verisimilitude of the narrative outer world. Of particular interest is **Pike Rock**, against which The Swallow crashes and is badly damaged. *Pike* can denote a species of fish common in Lake Coniston (one of the inspirational amalgamated lakes for Ransome's Lake District); it is an aggressive and predatory species which can present a minor danger to those in the water. The element *pike* is also commonly used for pointed mountains across the Lake District. In the name of the rock, an association with threat is clearly present: it is described as 'awfully jagged' with a history of sinking boats, just as the fish is named after the weapon.[5] Two other notable rocks lie just outside the bay of Rio: **The Hen** and **The Chicken**; named as a pair because of their close proximity and relative sizes. Fauna, topography expected of the area, elements of folk etymology, relational and surname-derived elements all feature, providing a combination that appears natural to the region.

Other areas of significance which require discussing with adults also retain their 'real' names, which are highly generic. These range from specific points of the highground such as **Ling Scar** (likely named from a long strand of visible mineral deposits, either naturally outcropping or revealed by mining) and **High Topps**, to a section of the waterfront named **Greenbank** (described as having 'steep slopes'), all with common Lake District

[4] The actual dwelling was used by Ransome (before it was ruined) during the writing of P&M: <allthingsransome.net/locations/dogshome/index.html>. It is unknown whether this name was borne by the property prior to publication (potentially serving as the true source of the jocular naming discussed), but it provides one of the few distinctly identifiable points across the texts.

[5] For the various ultimately related senses see OED 3rd edn entries for *pike* nouns 1–5 at <oed.com>.

elements. Two nearby settlements, **Bigland** (situated at the foot of the lake) and **Dundale**, are referred to – the latter sharing its name with a connecting road that runs near Beckfoot (home of the Amazons), but neither is visited during the texts.[6] Each of these names is stylistically characteristic of the Lakeland region, but not in these exact compounds.

All other names are supplanted by the children's creative vision of the landscape, which are used consistently across the texts, with all reference to proper names being 'corrected'. Two examples of this process are 'Nancy Blackett showed him the river Amazon. It had another name on the map' (S&A 130) and '[their mother] said the name of the big hill with the peak. But the able-seaman, who had heard her, was quick in putting her right' (SD 174). Within the confines of the texts, written from the perspective of the children, there exists only their constructed reality – that is all that is mapped out for the reader, and all that they are able to experience besides the generalised characteristics of the regional environment. This style of narrative conveniently allows the reasons and motivations for naming to be explained to the reader as the landscape is encountered and the playful world gradually constructed.

The fantastic names which are issued by the children as they explore the region – starting with the unnamed lake, before branching out – fit into five distinct categories: topographic features, flora and fauna, commemorative, utilitarian, poetic/referential. This division corresponds to typical onymic forms, despite being (a) literary and (b) entirely personal in origin: while they are coined with creative freedom, they follow traditional patterns of naming. Each of the groups will be examined in turn.

The topographic names are fewer than might be expected for a series focused on exploration; two of these are formed from the physical appearance of the site (**Long Island** and **Horseshoe Cove**), and two are derived from their relational placement (**Western Shore** and **First Cataract**). Not much can be said of these names other than their providing

[6] In addition, a settlement lying at the head of the lake which is visited in P&M (specifically because the children wished to avoid the busy pier of Rio) is left unnamed in the text. This may be Dundale, as the accompanying map suggests that it would have to be passed through when travelling between Rio and Beckfoot.

relational points for navigating the literary map, but the use of the generic *cataract* (referring to waterfalls of high volume 'falling headlong over a precipice' (OED sense 2a) is now unusual, but was previously a widely used term for such features in the region.[7] Although it is only ever the children who refer to the site as such, in which case a degree of interpretative exaggeration might be expected, no description of the spot is provided by Ransome to allow this claim to be made with absolute certainty – but this pattern would be consistent with the rest of their naming strategies, as two of the children walk up the waterway with little difficulty. An emblematic place-name element for the region is adapted within the personalised namescape. The **Valley of the Amazon** also fits this category, providing a bridging point between the two narrative tiers – referring both to what is and to an exotic could-be; the quintessential component of imaginative play.

Names based on flora and fauna are likewise few in number, perhaps surprisingly given the early texts' fondness for featuring exotic animals (including a green macaw, later gifted to the Swallows, and the promise of the procurement of a monkey), but there are two examples of associational exaggeration that are manifested through the names. **Shark Bay**, originally referred to as **Dixon's Bay** due to its proximity to Dixon's Farm, is a rich fishing spot, which provides the opportunity for semantic exaggeration to match the overarching thematic premise of their initial adventure. Likewise with **Octopus Lagoon**, bearing a generic that meets the exotic and thematic nature of their initial adventure, and a creature similarly wondrous and out of place – but imaginatively grafted onto the effects of a tarn filled with lily pads that tangle the oars of the Swallow when first encountered in the dusk. The two further entries in this category are **Cormorant Island**, a narrow spit of land occupied by a large number of the birds, and **Trout Tarn**, a common regional generic derived from the area's Old Norse linguistic heritage, coupled with a fish characteristic of such pools. The latter two are less exotic, but entirely descriptive of their being from the perspective of the children, as it pertains to their play.

[7] See The Lakeland Geo-Text Explorer component of the 'Corpus of Lake District Writing, 1622–1900' for use of *cataract* as a primary generic within the region <lancaster.ac.uk/ fass/ projects/spatialhum/geotext/>.

The most important location throughout the texts is the island which so excites the Swallows and sets their exploration of the countryside off in earnest: 'It was not just an island. It was *the* island, waiting for them. It was their island' (S&A 20), but so much is made of what could be on the island during the wait for permission to set sail and camp unsupervised that they struggle to set a name that captures the creative allure, with the three possibilities mentioned all proving uninspired:

> As for their own island, they could not agree on a name for it. They thought of Swallow Island, Walker Island, Big Tree Island … Perhaps the island had a splendid name already. That did not matter for places like Darien or Rio, but for the island they felt that it did (S&A 89–90).

This spit of land has also previously been claimed by the Amazons, which sets in motion a unification of the two groups' fantasies whereby they compare the names each has for the landscape and choose the best. It is here that the island's name is learned along with the reason: **Wild Cat Island** – named after the two sisters, free-spirited and rambunctious tomboys. That this playful name perfectly fits the creative re-imagining of the lake as the Spanish Main (if the poetic interpretation is tweaked slightly so as to pretend reference to fauna) is serendipitous, and leads to an agreed thematically aligned definition of the nearby settlement: 'if you'll agree to let the island go on being called Wild Cat Island, we'll agree to Rio. It's a good name' (S&A 119). The village is thereafter referred to as such, and never by its proper name, marking it with a sense of the exotic, tying it into their fantasy of sailing to distant shores instead of just across the lake. The semantic overlay matches the functional role of the town (as the tourist-centre and primary harbour for the lake), but transposes it referentially to suit the exotic demands of their imaginative play.

The other names which may be designated as commemorative reflect notable events that occurred on the sites. **Landing Place** marks the point of first contact with Wild Cat Island, **Titty's Island** and **Titty's Well** both recognise the efforts of a younger sibling in advancing their adventures, the latter through her previously unknown dowsing ability, enabling them to camp away from 'civilisation' (the orchard of Taylor's Farm, within easy reach of adults – precisely what their adventures are escaping from). **Tea Bay** provides a nice pun that connects the local, the distant and the

immediate narrative under a single name. Not only is Tebay a village in the Lake District, but it is also a major Alaskan river (suited to the pioneer mode of play adopted), in addition to serving as the spot where they had a 'second breakfast … a real one with tea' (SA 120), as they begin exploring the other side of the lake from which they were staying. **Camp Might Have Been** is named literally, for what would be an ideal site lacking only a source of water due to drought – this is transformed into **Camp Can Be**, after water is eventually found (through Titty's Well). The names devised by the children are not subtle or nuanced and are tailored to their specific requirements at the time. Which leads into **Swallowdale**, namesake of the second text in the series, and discovered in the course of scouting for an acceptable mainland camp when the Swallows are unable to reach Wild Cat Island. Seemingly an idyllic haven, the argument is made that: 'places get called after kings and princes and all kinds of people. It's much more fun to call a place after a ship' (SD 158), and the site is accordingly made their own through this designation. The text notes the temporal nature of such activity, and upon their departure, laments that: 'Now, once more it was a wild rocky valley as it had been when they first came there … and their own Swallowdale … would be no more than a memory' (SD 273); but the spirit of all that the site represented (especially through the generic *dale*, another element common within the Lake District region) is preserved and expressed though the name.

The majority of names devised during their travels emphasise the functional purpose of a site. **Houseboat Bay** is the permanent mooring for Uncle Jim's residence; **Landing Island** is so-named from a sign proclaiming it private and forbidding landing (against which the children anchor one night, without fear of reprisals because they did not technically land); **Cache Island** served as an intermediary point on their winter trek, where a record of their travels beyond it was stored in a discarded bottle.

The name of **Picthaven** befits both the whimsical play and practical utility behind the creation of a harbouring place cleared in the reeds to hide a new boat from the sight of Beckfoot. Upon Wild Cat Island, the generic **Harbour**, **Camp**, **Lookout Point**, and **Lighthouse Tree** are all distinguished though their practical utility, a scheme which extends to their camps on the mainland, with **Watch Tower Rock** (deemed important due to the threat of the Amazons sneaking up on their camp to take them by surprise),

and **Half-Way Camp** named as they hike up a nearby mountain. Finally, **Golden Gulch**, serves as the marker of their site where they mistakenly believe they have struck gold. There is no need to adorn these sites with romanticized, poetic or semantic-laden names. It is interesting to note that the latter site is named **The Gulch** on the accompanying map, representing perhaps a meta-textual onymic inference of a post-narrative revision (given the metal proves not to be gold), or a device to hide the valuable connection from those who have not witnessed the narrative events (and essentially joined the children in the course of their play). This alteration highlights the extent to which literary maps do not fully reflect site-interaction and interpretation within texts, nor the true extent of narrative involvement or development.

Poetic interpretations and intertextual references provide another major source of onymically led allusion throughout the series: from the **Amazon River** that feeds into the lake (leading to the home of the namesake sisters), through the rocky outcrop overlooking the lake from which the Swallows first espy the island which inspires their first adventure, named the **Peak of Darien** directly from Keats (the poem forgotten, but the name remembered solely due to its exploratory association). **Peter Duck's Cave** is named after a metafictional character created by the children during the winter evenings in the text *Peter Duck*, and brought into their own story (and made a little more real) through this connective naming. One of the roads encountered during their scouting missions becomes **the road of the Aztecs** due to the noise of the traffic: this name for a 'real' feature – a road which they need frequently to cross – thematically justifies its inclusion in their fantastic mental map, without requiring them to break out of their playful world. This presents a solid example of semantic exaggeration and thematic adherence that appears to encapsulate the naming practices seen during play within the series. Reference is also made to **Execution Dock**, which is not applied to a specific site, but to somewhere that should exist somewhere in their immediate vicinity and be put to use to punish their Uncle Jim for his ill behaviour; it is inspired by the location featured in Stevenson's *Treasure Island*.

There is one additional name in this category that explores the internal naming process in greater detail. The younger female Walker, Titty, is often

the character who takes the imaginative place-naming a step further than the literal, and is responsible for all of the intertextual allusions (such as the Peak of Darien and Peter Duck's Cave). It is her fantasy of the mysterious and alluring island that opens the first text: 'thinking of the island itself, of coral, treasure and footprints in the sand' (S&A 21) – the actual development and inclusion of **Treasure Island** demonstrates the thought processes behind the coining of names. Not only are literary connections made with Stevenson's style of writing, inspiring both the external genre and internal narrative desires (to explore a region of that kind), but so desperate is Titty to experience this sort of place that the group offers to assign one randomly: 'we'll make one of the other islands a Treasure Island if you like. The biggest one off Rio hasn't got a name' (S&A 272). The use of 'a' in the suggestion marks the sop as an inversion of the standard naming process: it rather marks the suggestion as a playful recreation. A major plot-point of the story features the theft of a safebox left partially buried for later retrieval, providing an exact counterpoint that fulfils this fantasy and is an event worthy of memorialisation. But the island reverts to its originally assigned name once these events have transpired, as 'treasure is only there sometimes, but cormorants are there always' (S&A 342), again demonstrating the disinclination for any onymic change, as this could threaten the entire existing schema.

A subset of this category comprises those names which are taken from wider afield and transposed onto the local environment in order to convey a sense of wonderment, grandeur and distance, whilst commonly maintaining an element of directional representation – a familiar onymic pattern in English field-names. The initial charting of the lake presents it as an explorers' microcosm, with the central parts serving as the equivalent of the Gulf of Mexico, where **Rio Grande** (village) and **Rio Bay** are found, bordered at either end by **the Arctic** and **Antarctic**. What starts as a metaphorical reference to their placement (and lack of attention) is quickly adopted, and appropriated into a later 'polar trek': 'the wide sheet of the northern end of it where they had never been, the Arctic of their maps' (SD 283). Similarly, the mountain which provides the focus of their second adventure they name **Kanchenjunga**, which lies to the east and is the highest

peak they can see.[8] Likewise, running along High Topps near Camp Can Be runs **The Great Wall**. As it is the most significant example of such a feature in the children's imaginative world, it is granted an exotic name representative of this status. Semiotic exaggeration is conducted entirely through the use of these names, which serve as exemplars of their topographic sets, and correspondingly transfer the wishful perception of the extreme qualities of the referenced entity to the renamed feature.

Winter Holiday presents an entirely distinct re-imagining of the environment. What in the summertime served as a representation of the Caribbean is transformed into a polar region, and even the name central to the series is temporarily altered when required. Wild Cat Island is transformed into **Spitzbergen** (the northernmost Norwegian archipelago), onymically setting the scene for their next adventure, reflecting the mutable nature of referential significance for such names. This alteration to the scale and form of the setting results in a focused re-assessment of the region previously referred to in whole as the Arctic, for a more detailed level of referential distinction is required. The area is thus divided into: the **North Pole** (a personal viewing gallery for the lake where a flagpole stands), **Greenland** ('I know what she means. It's the country up on the fells above the tarn. It's as wild as wild' (WH 133), also named **High Greenland** in P&M), and **Alaska**. Likewise, upon first viewing the hilltop region dotted with old mining sites, the children were instead 'looking at a **Klondyke**, an **Alaska** [from an alternative thematic perspective], better than anything she had dreamed when they were talking of the goldfields' (PP 91). All of these names are significantly removed geographically, but connected through shared adventurous association. They are taken from the works of Fridtjof Nansen (Hunt 1988, 74) describing his polar treks: these are often referred to in the narrative, and are noted as childhood favourites in Ransome's *Autobiography*. Although frequently associated with the politics of colonial culturalism (Erisman 1989 provides a prominent discussion of this), these

[8] Although Kanchenjunga is only the third highest peak in the world, failed attempts to climb the mountain were frequent – and widely reported – during the period Ransome wrote *Swallowdale.* See Bauer (1955) for more details on the attempts between 1929 and 1931.

disparate areas are brought together by inspirational – and very much contemporary – media, thematically united through the creative play of the children. The importance of their inspirational sources is discussed by Hunt (2001, 117), who emphasises that in play, 'everything is possible … [allowing] them a single-minded and serious view of a make-believe world rooted in literature', the sources that have shaped their understanding of the wider world. What may seem like a hodgepodge of randomly assigned names in the playful map of the region has a rational, and relationally appropriate, basis.

It is unfortunate that no research has yet been conducted in this area (using a modern model of a play environment constructed through names and spatial association) against which a formative comparison may be made, but the contemporary interest in global exploration may be proposed as being a major influence in the appropriation of these names. One of the primary themes explored by Maine and Waller was 'visualising the imaginary world', the discussion of which (2011, 361–2) broaches such a comparison, as several adult readers relate personal accounts of the playful re-imagining of locales directly inspired by the texts. Psychological analysis on the process of play (for example, Garvey and Berndt 1975) have typically focused on younger children, but the general findings as to the role of creating, clarifying, maintaining and negotiating the social pretence schema is succinctly (and believably) replicated by Ransome's characters. The introduction of the third group of siblings, the Callums (nicknamed 'the D's' as a result of their shared first initial), allows for an additional introspective review of the naming process; providing a means of re-introducing, and reinforcing through explanation, the playful schema and its purpose.

In some cases layers of name-change provide creative examples of adaptive naming practices during play. Two sites are said to have earlier imaginative names given by the now adult family of the Amazon sisters. Their name for Kanchenjunga was **the Matterhorn**, while Peter Duck's Cave was once claimed to be **Benn Gunn's** [Cave] by Uncle Jim. The latter provides an additional connection to *Treasure Island* and ties in with Uncle Jim's alternate name, Captain Flint, given by the children during the first escapades. Upon the discovery of these earlier versions of playful renaming, their own experience with them is completed, and so cemented in their own

vision of the landscape: 'Well, it's Kanchenjunga now. It's no good changing it now we've climbed it' (SD 339). The consistent use of their own imaginative names maintains their claim to the landscape. The hesitation to adopt other names once a spot has been realised and fixed in their collective creation reinforces the idea that the children have settled on their own concept of what the environment represents. Any change in this status could result in the playful schema of their interpreted version of reality being entirely compromised and reverting to the mundane, which helps explain why so many of their adopted sites are kept secret and hidden out of sight.

The names that shape the fictional world hold neither linguistic nor semantic ambiguity; the referential premise of each is superficially apparent – but this quality should not be mistaken for a simplicity that is of little value. All of the names reflect highly personal journeys that are intelligible only to those who have been made privy to the references, which ties into the playful component of the narrative, in keeping their adventures secret from 'the natives' (adults and children outside of their group). Philips argues that 'the authority of maps lies in their ability to circumscribe geography, by enclosing, defining, coding, orienting, structuring, and controlling space … [and also] negate alternative geographical imaginations' (1997, 14–15), but the exact same attributes may be afforded to names and the naming process – especially when a landscape is actively encountered and named as narrative events occur, as it is in Ransome's series.

Given their integral role within the texts, the names serve as direct links to the children's adventures, documenting and displaying the processes of discovery, geographic definition, thematic redefinition, and the underlying need for functional identifiable names with a unique level of concision. A space in this narrative is not a place until the children personally identify it as such – '"has it got a name already?" / "We've never given it one"' (WH 194) – for within the context of their play, external proper names count for naught as they bear no relation to what the sites mean to them personally. This exchange is particularly valuable in demonstrating the degree of ownership that is applied to places through the giving of a personal name noted in the previous paragraph. The Walker children are willing only to compromise on their interpretation of the landscape with immediate and equally imaginative peers; as their playful creativity is consistent, the system

of fanciful reference is not threatened, allowing the fantastic onymic framework to be maintained.

Critical examination of literature that attempts to portray narratives from the perspective of children should, as Philo (2003) rightly points out, be wary of the accuracy (and authenticity) of such formations as resulting from genuine creative play. All of the names encountered come from a single mature author (rather than eight children from three different families), and all are carefully considered creations rather than the spontaneous coinages often suggested by the narrative. Although this paper will not engage with the argument of whether fiction that claims to speak from the perspective of children is useful in its representation of play (Bavidge 2006, provides an introduction to this topic), it is an aspect that should considered in any full analysis.

It is the keen semantic association of these artistic names, of imagining (and broadcasting) what could be, that is key to the playful naming seen throughout the series. The process directly corresponds with Wasson-Ellam's analysis of the importance of environmental engagements and depiction in children's literature (2011, 62). The names actively chosen by the children in their fantastic tier, which have been shown to bear valid relational and associational qualities in their use within this series, encapsulate the essence of play in remaking immediate surroundings to facilitate imaginative immersion. Their playful interpretation of the region, befitting their situation as visitors discovering the lie of the land, has been shown to be rendered predominantly through onymic reference, inference, and exaggeration – all semantic qualities that make names such powerful literary devices. The comment, 'There's one thing we must do now … And that's make our chart. The Amazons will be here tomorrow, and they've got their own names for everywhere' (S&A 269), explicitly denotes the process of naming (and claiming) a landscape on their own terms as a competition: it is important to mark their own perspective before it can be interrupted by external influence. Once a friendship is formed, the landscape is re-examined and reconfigured to meet the new parameters of the play, and create a unified and shared interpretation that is fantastic to all (even those for whom it is home). Although the tertiary tier of fantastic extrapolation might be considered the most important of the three ontological states

examined in terms of artistic discussion, this article has demonstrated that all place-names, even those that appear only in the background, are instrumental in artistic world creation.

The unique form of Ransome's region has encouraged a high level of investigation and amateur interest in physically tracing the points most likely to have directly inspired the features encountered throughout the texts.[9] This is a prominent example of the narrative power held by literary maps and detailed environmental integration, as discussed by Caquard and Cartwright (2014) resulting in a form of literary tourism. The existence of such discourse confirms the believability of the fictional locality created specifically to serve as a slice of the region, without being restricted by the actual terrain of any one specific area.

Every name that appears within the fictional paracosm holds a role in guiding the semantic construction of the local landscape; from building environmental expectation to establishing narrative purpose. Lovelock notes that the reader is constantly 'reminded of the children's sense of scale: for them, lakes become oceans, hills become mountains, pike become sharks, and the wash from a passing steamer makes them think they are at seas' (2016, 39); the region in which they are granted freedom from parental supervision transforms into a whole new world. Playful names do not need to be zany or entirely fantastic in their nature, but as they are so flexible in what they are able to convey the intent of their application is just as important as their form. Nicolaisen comments on the primary qualities of literary naming as being: 'poetic illusion, perhaps; a linguistic distortion, possibly; a perpetuation of myth, probably; an aesthetic pleasure, certainly … a delight for the onomastic iconographers' (1974, 80); all of these qualities are evident within Ransome's work. The amalgamation of very different referential roles within a single environment demonstrates the versatility of artistic names and naming strategies, for they establish interpretative parameters across each of the ontologicial tiers examined in this article. The playful references reinterpret the landscape, rendering an artfully crafted emblematic vista into an even grander representation of the

[9] For an example of a personal blog along these lines from an author who has published on Ransome see Sparks, <ransomeslakedistrict.com>.

world and its experience; Ransome's series providing an encompassing exemplar of the aesthetic utility underpinning literary naming practices.

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