

Running head: IMAGINATION AS A RESPONSE TO NATURALISM

1

Imagination as a Response to Naturalism:
C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* in Light of the Anscombe Affair

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Fall 2016

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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Abstract

In this paper I suggest *The Chronicles of Narnia* were occasioned by Elizabeth Anscombe's critique of chapter three of *Miracles*. Instead of a retreat from debate, *The Chronicles* show that the Supernatural is not something to be contemplated, but instead *experienced*. In the stories, the children's dominant naturalism and ignorance of Supernaturalism personally encounter the highest Supernatural being. When transitioning from *Miracles* to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis's writing altered from operating under the Argument from Reason to the experience of imagination in order for the reader to personally experience – not contemplate – Supernaturalism. Fairytale, romance, and archetypes create the perfect framework for the reader to *enjoy* the hidden divinity of Supernaturalism in *The Chronicles* without distracting him with contemplation.

Imagination as a Response to Naturalism:

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C.S. Lewis is to this day considered one of the foremost influential people in modern apologetics *and* children's literature. What is it that makes Lewis's works so poignant and successful to a vast variety of readers? Countless scholars and fans alike have considered how and why Lewis has received such extraordinary success. From a layman's accessibility to a professor's wisdom, Lewis's words have a sort of mystical familiarity that connects readers with ideas they have not yet been able to describe but nonetheless still consider true. This quality appears in both his fiction and non-fiction.

Miracles is one such non-fiction work that offers a layman's explanation and response to Naturalism. Published in May 1947, the book was the culmination of much anti-naturalist school of thought Lewis developed and expressed over the previous 10 years at least (Smilde 2). It was only one year after publication on February 2nd, 1948, that Lewis and Elizabeth Anscombe entered an infamous philosophical debate on the topic of miracles and critique of Naturalism. It is widely acknowledged that Anscombe dismantled the logic in chapter three of *Miracles* and Lewis thoroughly lost the debate (Smilde 2). While Lewis did move away from further philosophical works following Anscombe's comments, however, he did not shy away from additionally critiquing Naturalism and did so in another genre of writing with a drastically different approach.

Literature Review: A Closer Look into *Miracles*

By the time Lewis had turned to write about the topic of miracles, most theologians stopped believing in them the same way Athanasius of the eighth century or Aquinas of the thirteenth had; that is, they no longer believed God repeated miracles of

the past as needed or that miracles were due to God's gratuitous grace. Up until the scientific revolution, scholars and theologians alike believed that "man, led by his natural reason, was able to arrive at some knowledge of God through His natural effects," and so he was brought to a certain degree of supernatural knowledge by certain occurrences called miracles (Aquinas). The rise of scientific theories and processes were chiefly to blame for this unbelief in the miraculous, largely due to the fact that logic increasingly saw the world as a closed space incapable of anything outside the laws of nature (Hooper 343-344).

It was into this cultural setting that C. S. Lewis published *Miracles*. One hundred and sixty-two pages long and split into sixteen chapters, *Miracles* set out to prove philosophically the overall rationality of the Christian faith by providing careful arguments for why the Naturalistic perspective of reality is insufficient to describe reality as a whole. Instead of claiming the world was fully explainable in terms of the Laws of Nature, Lewis declares the universe open to inexplicable events outside of the accepted limits of naturalism (that is, miracles).

The Philosophy Behind *Miracles*

While the arguments in *Miracles* are intriguing, stimulating and often complete, Lewis does not answer every question a critic might ask; readers do not receive a set of arguments sufficiently polished to persuade those with technical training in philosophy or other disciplines. What *are* present in the work, however, are philosophical arguments presented in such a way that readers can not only understand the two positions of the debate but also visualize and personalize the implications on their individual lives (Reppert 12). The descriptions within *Miracles* are uncommonly practical and to-the-

point (unlike many other works of philosophy which sound as if they are solely published for fellow philosophers). Before one can understand the argument, however, first there must be a definition of terms of the two opposing issues.

Throughout *Miracles*, the words *Naturalism* and *Supernaturalism* are strictly used to illustrate the problem of miracles. Lewis describes these in chapter two:

Although they do not mean the same thing by the word Nature, the Naturalist believes that a great process of 'becoming' exists 'on its own' in space and time, and that nothing else exists... This single, total reality he calls nature. The Supernaturalist believes that one Thing exists on its own and has produced the framework of space and time and the procession of systematically connected events which fill them. This framework, and this filling, he calls Nature. It may, or may not, be the only reality in which the one Primary Thing has produced. There might be other systems in addition to the one we call Nature. (*Miracles* 309)

Here, Lewis references the open box/closed box illustration to demonstrate the meaning of Naturalism and Supernaturalism. The open box, referring to Supernaturalism, is an attitude that doesn't assume miracles have happened, but rather acknowledges there are things outside of nature that may or may not be able to "get in" to the universe and affect the objects inside. Supernaturalism does not guarantee the existence of miracles, but it *leaves open* the possibility for an individual outside the system of our universe to exist. Naturalism, on the other hand, is a closed box in the sense that "nothing can come into Nature from the outside because there is nothing outside to come in" (*Miracles* 310) and therefore *does* claim to know miracles are impossible. If nature is everything that exists,

there is nothing that can happen or exist outside of the Laws of Nature. There is absolutely nothing outside of the universe to affect life on the inside.

After defining these terms, *Miracles* moves on to begin the argument for Supernaturalism in chapter three, now called “The Cardinal Difficulty of Naturalism.” In this section, Lewis asserts that if Naturalism is true, every finite thing or event must be, in principle, explicable in terms of the total system. If one thing exists which cannot be given that kind of explanation, then Naturalism is in ruins: “If necessities of thought force us to allow to any one thing any degree of independence from the Total System – then we have abandoned Naturalism. For by Naturalism we mean the doctrine that only Nature – the whole interlocked system – exists” (*Miracles* 311-312).

For Naturalists, the entire cosmos depends on this process of rational explanation. The widespread thought of the day believed impersonal scientific laws and processes had created the modern world, and therefore reasoning itself was the sole basis on which an object, emotion, or event’s reality was contained. The argument presented in *Miracles*, however, is that this mental reasoning does *not* fit within the bounds of Naturalism, for no natural process can justify humanity’s rationality or moral understandings. Naturalism cannot offer a valid explanation for reasoning that *makes itself* valid. Naturalists would claim their viewpoint offers a full Deterministic account of humanity’s mental behavior, but upon inspection, Naturalism leaves no room for the acts of knowing or insight within rational thought. If something outside of our reality must be the source of its classification of *rational*, Lewis states, then Naturalism has no grounds to stand. As a result, the door of the universe must be opened to “unnatural” or miraculous occurrences.

This rational approach to human thinking is considered the apologetic Argument from Reason.

***Miracles'* overall argument for supernaturalism.**

Following chapter three, *Miracles* specifically discusses rational thinking and how it is classified if man's reason is not explicable by Naturalism. The book contends that something beyond nature operates whenever man uses reason, and what exists on its own must have existed from all eternity and must continue to exist incessantly. Ward, quoting *Miracles* page 330, describes reason as such:

Rational thought is supernatural because it is 'cosmic or super-cosmic. It must be something not shut up inside our heads but already 'out there' – in the universe or behind the universe... a rationality with which the universe has always been saturated.' But it is supernatural only in relation to us, not absolutely: 'human thought is not God's, but God-kindled.' (35)

The correspondence between reason and reality implies that reality is imbued with an order that stems from a creative Mind. Lewis' focus in *Miracles* is "not so much on the intelligibility of the world as on the mind's capacity for truth, which in his opinion cannot be explained by natural selection but only by an intelligent Creator" (Dulles 16). Human minds, then, are not the only Supernatural entities that exist. According to the Argument from Reason found in *Miracles*, human minds and therefore humanity itself is God-kindled and evidence of the Supernatural at work within the universe.

The Anscombe Affair

Only one year after the publication of *Miracles* on February 2, 1948, C. S. Lewis and Elizabeth Anscombe entered a prominent philosophical debate of its time on this

topic of miracles, specifically Lewis's critique of Naturalism. It is widely acknowledged in this debate that Anscombe thoroughly dismantled Lewis's logic in chapter three of *Miracles* (Smilde 2). After this time, Lewis's lack of any further philosophical works has been seen as admission to this defeat and acknowledgement of Anscombe's superiority.

It is worth mentioning throughout this discussion of Lewis and Anscombe that taking this issue strictly in the biographical sense seriously inhibits discussion of Lewis as an apologist. Biography focuses on Lewis himself rather than what the works convey themselves. For example, it is often suggested that Lewis was "profoundly upset by his exchange with Anscombe, and therefore he himself realized his apologetic arguments were inadequate" (Reppert 15). Critics often come to this conclusion without considering the actual issues of the debate. Thus a kind of "Anscombe legend" has hovered over Lewis's career, which in many perspectives seems to have outlived the actual arguments Lewis and Anscombe presented (Reppert 16). In order to objectively inspect what degree Lewis approached the criticism and eventually by what means he came to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, one must look strictly at Anscombe's arguments against the chapter and what Lewis did to remedy them, if at all.

Anscombe's Critiques

While Anscombe herself agreed that Naturalism was essentially untenable, she took issue with the reasoning and logic behind chapter three of *Miracles*, originally entitled "The Self-Contradiction of the Naturalist." Anscombe considered Lewis's Argument from Reason a faulty way to attack Naturalism founded on his use of the word *irrational*. *Miracles* suggested that all natural causes are irrational, but as Anscombe revealed, Lewis should have distinguished the large and extremely relevant category

of *non*-rational causes, which according to Anscombe are the kind of causes *really* at work in Naturalism's nature. Validity, too, was something else Anscombe critiqued. For Anscombe, the way *Miracles* applied the words *valid* and *validity* when questioning the validity of reasoning assumed that the reasoning itself was already valid. What about *invalid* reasoning? She argued, "If you [Lewis] say you believe in the validity of reasoning itself, what do you mean? Isn't this question about the validity of reasoning a question about the validity of *valid* reasoning?" (Anscombe 227). She contended that to let rational thought be produced by natural, non-rational causes, for "there is no need to doubt its *validity*" (Smilde 2). Humans are not always at their best, and men are open to mistakes. All reasoning, therefore, cannot be classified under the umbrella of "valid" without some stipulations (Smilde 2). These two critiques are worth mentioning because Lewis himself granted them veracity in a foreword he wrote for one of Anscombe's papers a year later.¹

"The Self-Contradiction of the Naturalist" was considered thoroughly dismantled after this debate. Many critics acknowledge that Lewis as a writer was never quite the same following this event and even give Anscombe's response as the reason he stepped away from any further philosophical work: "Lewis, partly as a result of the Anscombe incident, came to feel ill-equipped to deal with the philosophy of his day" (Reppert 19-20). This "loss" does not need to be looked on as a confession of general philosophical incompetence, however. An aspect of the job of a professional philosopher, Reppert

¹ "Lewis's 'Note' and the excerpt from the Socratic minute-book have also been published as appendices to his own paper 'Religion without Dogma?' (1946), reprinted in several collections. This 1946 paper, part of a long and intermittent discussion with the Oxford philosopher H. H. Price, includes a brief version of Lewis's 'argument from Reason' and was originally published in the same *Socratic Digest* as Anscombe's paper" (Smilde 3). For readers interested in finding this section, the source on Anscombe in the Bibliography (<http://www.lewisiana.nl/anscombe/appendices.pdf>) has more on this subject.

argues, is to be responsive to the major philosophical movements of one's time (18).

After this debate, it *is* true that Lewis did not publish any more formal treatises on a philosophical subject directly. However, this does not mean Lewis had nothing to do with philosophy as a whole. At times the critical response is completely devastating to the arguments of the presenter, but more frequently "the commentator finds difficulties with the paper that force the presenter to revise and strengthen his arguments," and this seems to have been exactly what happened in the Lewis-Anscombe controversy (Reppert 18). When *Miracles* was reprinted ten years later, Lewis took the opportunity to rework the chapter, keeping the first paragraphs the same but altering and doubling the reasoning in the latter half of the narrative, renaming it "The Cardinal Difficulty of Naturalism". As a whole, Smilde describes the total alterations:

The original chapter as a whole had sixteen paragraphs; in the revised version the first six of these (1,184 words) were kept unchanged, but the remaining ten paragraphs (1,759 words) were replaced by a wholly new section of twenty-five paragraphs (3,698 words); the total number of words went up from 2,943 to 4,882. (3)

Even Anscombe herself does not recall their debate being a devastating encounter for Lewis. She attributes the adverse reaction of some of Lewis' friends in terms of the phenomenon of projection: Lewis' admirers felt distressed at his philosophical loss and assumed he felt the same way (Anscombe 10). Overall, the debate does not seem to have "crushed" Lewis as a philosopher as many assume, but rather caused him to reform the arrangement of his logic.

In the years following the Anscombe affair, Lewis wrote and published *The Chronicles of Narnia*. These stories, in agreement with works like *Meditation in a Toolshed* and *Surprised by Joy*, encompass a completely different assertion for Christianity. *The Chronicles'* use of myth and fairy tale, romance, and archetypes prove that *The Chronicles of Narnia* are a response to Anscombe's critique. Instead of submitting to a philosophical defeat, *The Chronicles* display a transition from the Argument from Reason to an appeal to readers' imagination and personal experience to further illustrate the presence of Supernaturalism.

First Mentions of Imagination in *Miracles*

The imagination invoked in *The Chronicles*, however, is drastically different from the imagination mentioned in *Miracles*. *Miracles* focuses on the Argument from Reason, meaning reason is considered a miracle and a step above anything illogical, i.e. imagination. Chapter Ten is the first mention of imagination independent from reasoning; the difference between reason and imagination is discussed in order to illustrate Christianity's miraculous, Supernatural core. Some of the biggest logical stumbling blocks for many atheists (including Lewis before his conversion) were the "absurd images" of Biblical narration. Images like the "son" of God being separate from the "Father," Christ descending and ascending to and from heaven, etc. are all accepted as true in the Christian community although the image of each notion sounds logically absurd.

The Christian majority would argue their mental image of Jesus floating like a ghost into the clouds is not *definitively* equal with the thing believed; one can trust Jesus entered the heavenly realm without being literally raised into the air. Therefore, the

statement that “Jesus ascended” is still completely true despite the irrational image. If absurd images meant absurd thought, then “we should all be thinking nonsense all the time” (Lewis, *Miracles* 365). While there is a difference between thinking and imagination, they cannot be entirely separated from one another.

This mention of imagination in *Miracles* seems to construe imagination as unwelcome. For rationalists, this truly *is* an undesirable process. Imagination does not portray a completely accurate picture of immaterial concepts the human mind attempts to comprehend, and considering *Miracles*’ entire argument rests on the existence of rational thought being a supernatural process, it is no wonder imagination is subjugated to rationality. In this book, man’s reason is the sole indication for the existence of miracles, and affirming imagination would complicate and dismantle the argument.

The Chronicles of Narnia do *not* suppress imagination with rationalism, however. Rather, as mentioned before, the literary modes of myth and fairy tale, romance, and archetype encourage imagination over reason to create the right atmosphere for readers to enjoy and imaginatively experience the Gospel. By using these techniques, those reading the series gain admission to a more profound understanding of the Chronicle’s themes than they would receive by reasoning through apologetic arguments.

Looking Along vs. Looking At: Imagination and Reason in Lewis’s Other Works

The general ideas of *imagination* and *reason* go by many names throughout Lewis’s work and the corresponding criticism, but what is meant by imagination besides what is found in *Miracles* is in no way self-evident. As Holyer describes, imagination is a particularly complex concept, and those who think that it can be clearly distinguished from reason create a great deal of needless confusion. In fact, Lewis himself was not

completely clear on what he meant by it; in a philosophical discussion with his friend Owen Barfield, Lewis connected imagination with “aesthetic experience,” and often even more so the specific sort of experience he later referred to as Joy in his autobiography (Holyer 215). But even in this, Lewis realized that imagination encompasses a good deal more – a good deal that is often called reason. In fact, the purpose of much of what Lewis had to say about imagination is that truth is often associated with reason and it serves the interests of truth (Holyer 215). Unfortunately, following this, Lewis never returned to the task of an extended, philosophical treatment of the imagination. The closest he came was a “few essays scattered over his career that we must somehow integrate” (Holyer 218-19). To locate an accurate definition of imagination between *Miracles* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, other writings of Lewis must be taken into account.

Another name Lewis used to discuss imagination is *enjoyment* in *Meditation in a Toolshed*, where enjoyment is distinguished from contemplation, or reason. These phrases were derived from a work that had a large effect on Lewis growing up: Samuel Alexander’s *Space, Time and Deity*. In his own essay on the subject of enjoyment and contemplation *Meditation in a Toolshed*, Lewis writes:

I was standing today in the dark toolshed. The sun was shining outside and through the crack at the top of the door there came a sunbeam. From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place. Everything else was almost pitch-black. I was seeing the beam, not seeing things by it.

Then I moved, so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw,

framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90 odd million miles away, the sun.

Looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences.

(Meditation in a Toolshed, 230)

“Looking along the beam” is what Alexander called enjoyment (participant, inhabited, personal, committed knowledge) and “looking at the beam” is what he called contemplation (abstract, external, impersonal, uninvolved knowledge). This distinction was so essential that Lewis was prepared to divide conscious knowledge accordingly: “Instead of the twofold division in Unconsciousness and Conscious, we need a three-fold division: the Unconscious, the Enjoyed, and the Contemplated” (*Surprised by Joy* 175). In other words, “a person is three concentric circles: at the center was the will; surrounding the will was the reason; and outside the reason was the circle of imagination” (Lewis, *The Discarded Image* 103-104). Although it seems impossible to separate imagination from reason, the distinguishing factor is that thinking is incurably abstract and experiencing is always concrete. Whatever philosophical description is finally decided upon, the point remains the same: this “less-than-conscious grasp of things is correctly called imagination” (Hoyler 223).

Miracles acclaims reason above all else, but the human dilemma is that “as thinkers we are cut off from what we think about; [as experiencers] we do not clearly understand [what we are experiencing]. The more lucidly we think, the more we are cut off: the more deeply we enter into reality, the less we can think. You cannot *study* pleasure in the moment of the nuptial embrace, nor repentance while repenting” (Lewis, “Myth Became Fact” 65). In this way, *Miracles* neglects to provide its readers with a

chance to experience the truth, in this case Supernaturalism. *Miracles* demonstrates humanity is oblivious to the possibility of a Supernatural universe. The only way to open a mind to the prospect of Supernaturalism is to take it along a similar imaginative path. One can philosophically debate arguments time and again, but until a person experiences Supernaturalism, he will never truly understand it. One cannot “look at” Supernaturalism; he must “look along” it. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, various literary modes are used in a way that speaks in a subconscious fashion to readers’ imaginations in order to foster experiences of the Supernatural.

Elements of *The Chronicles* That Create the Imaginative Experience

Myth and Fairy Tale

In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, myth is the central organization of the entire series. In classical Greek, “mythos” referred to any story or plot, whether true or invented. In its central modern connotation, however, a myth is one story in a mythology, which is a “system of hereditary stories of ancient origin... that served to explain... why the world is as it is and things happen as they do and to provide a rationale for social customs and observances” (Abrams 170). Within the broad category of myth rests a smaller, more specific form of the fairy tale. Although the majority of critics classify fairy tales as being tailored specifically for children, fairy tales have an audience in those readers who want to hear them. Lewis was a firm supporter that a children’s story that is enjoyed only by children is a bad children’s story. The good ones last. (*On Stories* 24). *The Chronicles of Narnia* are notably written as children’s fairy tales (or fairy stories to the British), whose main characters are children themselves. Myth and fairy tale are grouped together

because overall they contain many of the same traits and achieve the same thing within *The Chronicles*.

Lewis himself explains in *An Experiment in Criticism* that a myth is a story that has the following characteristics: it is extra-literary; it minimizes the amount of sympathy within the work; it does not use typical narrative devices such as suspense or surprise; it points to a central truth of universal significance; and most importantly it allows readers to experience adventures they have never had before (*An Experiment in Criticism* 43-44). All of these elements of myth constitute the ideal environment in which readers can encounter the Supernatural without being required to consider it rationally.

The Chronicles are extra-literary, meaning that the value of the story lies outside of literary experience; that is, *The Chronicles* do not fully depend on the particular words in which the story is told. If that were the case, many young teens and adults would not read the series because it is written on a considerably lower reading level. Instead, *The Chronicles* depend on their overall shape of the plot – upon what happens to whom and for what reasons – for their effect (Schakel 4). This way, *The Chronicles* do not distract from experiencing the Supernatural with lofty diction or grandiose description but *The Chronicles* leave the reader free to witness the divine purely by experiencing the story as it unfolds.

Myth's extra-literary classification even goes so far as to minimize its amount of human sympathy in its form. As one can see in *The Chronicles*, characters are presented as shapes moving in another world, and readers do not project themselves into them. Edmund makes a drastic mistake trusting the White Witch, and one might feel sorry for the mistake but not for Edmund. In a similar sense, when Shasta discovers his father is

not actually his father in the beginning of *The Horse and His Boy*, there is a simple candor about his feelings:

You must not imagine that Shasta felt at all as you and I would feel if we had just overheard our parents talking about selling us for slaves... He had often been uneasy because try as he might, he had never been able to love the fisherman, and he knew that a boy ought to love his father. And now, apparently, he was no relation to Arsheesh at all. That took a great weight off his mind. ‘Why, I might be anyone!’ he thought. (Lewis, *The Horse* 10)

Because the novel is written as a fairy tale, the emphasis is not on how Shasta is feeling but instead explaining his motivation for embarking on the rest of the adventure.

Thoughts and feelings, while mentioned in the narrative, are not used to connect the reader with the characters. Shasta is going to make decisions based on these feelings that will drive the plot forward, but the working of his mind is only described in order to make sense of the narrative.

In a similar way, according to its extra-literary qualities, myth does not utilize usual narrative attractions like suspense or surprise. *The Chronicles* have many instances that are filled with intensity or wonder, but it is the scene’s placement in the plot that gives the reader these feelings and not the wording or writing itself. Even in the midst of great drama, *The Chronicles* remain simple in form and diction:

The rising of the sun had made everything look so different – all colors and shadows were changed – that for a moment they didn’t see the important thing. Then they did. The Stone Table was broken into two pieces by a great crack that ran down it from end to end; and there was no Aslan. ...

‘Who’s done it?’ cried Susan. ‘What does it mean? Is it more magic?’

‘Yes!’ said a great voice behind their backs. ‘It is more magic.’ They looked round. There, shining in the sunrise, larger than they had seen him before, shaking his mane... stood Aslan himself. (Lewis, *The Lion* 162).

From the tone of this passage, it would seem as if Aslan’s reappearance was no more than an intriguing event. Placed in the context of the whole structure of the narrative, this scene is just after the climax of the story where Aslan is sacrificed to the ever-present evil White Witch. The narrative explores *why* this scene is important as the later resolution unfolds, but *how* Aslan’s death can be so meaningful is not found in the description of it, but in the placement of this scene in the plot of the story.

Instead of utilizing classic narrative attractions like suspense or surprise, *The Chronicles* stretch beyond the written word to illustrate a concept beyond just the story itself. The logic of a fairytale is as strict as that of a realistic novel, though different. A fairy tale must be a series of events. It must be understood, however, that this series – or the plot in a literary sense – is only really a *net* that allows readers to catch something else instead of merely just an imaginative world of the author’s creation. As Lewis describes, fairy tales have a *point*; that is, a central moral causing the characters’ actions exists beyond the plot. A fairy tale may not be “like real life; in the superficial sense: but it sets before us an image of what reality may well be like at some more central region” (Lewis, *On Stories* 15). At the heart of myth must be a truth of universal significance or applicability (Schakel 4).

Myth is the perfect environment for serious truths to be considered because it is always ‘fantastic’: it deals with “impossibles and preternaturals” (preter- referring to the

Latin word for “beyond”; therefore, “beyond natural”). Myths – and specifically fairy tales – are always suspended between the mundane and the miraculous. At all ages, if it is well used by the author and meets the right reader, the mythical mode has the same power “to generalize while remaining concrete, to present in palpable form not concepts or even experiences but whole classes of experience, and to throw off irrelevancies” (Lewis, *Sometimes Fairy Stories* 38). *The Chronicles* are evident of this suspension between mundane and miraculous. Narnia itself is a world of impossible talking animals and magical beings, yet the social interactions emulate a typical English society. One instance of this is when Lucy first meets Mr. Tumnas and they have a conversation as any human being would:

‘Good evening,’ said Lucy. But the Faun was so busy picking up its parcels that at first it did not reply. When it had finished it made her a little bow.

‘Good evening, good evening,’ said the Faun. ‘Excuse me – I don’t want to be inquisitive – but should I be right in thinking that you are a Daughter of Eve?’

‘My name’s Lucy,’ said she, not quite understanding him.

‘But you are – forgive me – you are what they call a girl?’ asked the Faun.

(Lewis, *The Lion* 11)

Even though the Faun refers to unfamiliar concepts (referring to a girl as a Daughter of Eve), the conversation between them would be no different if two children were to meet. While there are miraculous creatures in *The Chronicles*, they are essentially as mundane as other human beings would be.

At their best, however, fairy tales can do *more* than be both mundane and miraculous; fairy tales can give readers experiences they have never had. Good stories of this sort are actual additions to life: “By juxtaposing the enchanted with the familiar, the magical with the mundane, fantasy provides us vivid contrasts that help us see the world with fresh eyes” (Bassham 247-248). They give, like certain rare dreams, sensations readers never had before, and enlarge their conception of the range of possible experience (Lewis, *On Science Fiction* 70). The fairy way of writing builds a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious mind (Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* 210) and in a way, fairy tales can “baptize our imaginations” (Bassham 254). It does this, according to Bassham, by stirring and troubling us “with longing for we know not what, a dim sense of something beyond our reach...” In other words, instead of ‘commenting on life’, fairy tales can *add to it* and make readers feel and experience the beauty of the Supernatural. The story does what no theorem can quite do in that it appeals to our imagination, our ability to enjoy the moral instead of merely contemplate it. Every aspect of myth discussed thus far culminates in this ability to add to the reader’s life: this use of myth is the optimal mode for *The Chronicles of Narnia*, for it furnishes the chance for readers to experience something beyond Naturalism. As *Miracles* suggests, modern culture is unequivocally oblivious to Supernaturalism because of its penchant for Naturalism. As readers witness a world doused in Supernaturalism, they are able to experience Supernaturalism first hand.

It is important to note that myth must communicate *imaginatively* and not intellectually in order to have an effect on readers (Schakel 4). Story as a whole is more than mere narration: “In life and art both, as it seems to me, we are always trying to catch

in our net of successive moments something that is not successive” (Lewis, *On Stories* 105). In other words, story is an attempt to convey something other than the story itself (Hoyler 222). Since this “something other” has to be enjoyed or imagined rather than contemplated, it is not noticeable initially. The inner meaning of any story is carefully hidden in narrative, in plot points, in characters, or it would cease to carry the same meaning.

As we see in *The Chronicles*, myth or story is the bridge between the two ways of knowing reality: thinking and experiencing. The thinking and the experiencing come together in only one place: a good story. A good story gives a concrete experience of a universal. As a work of the imagination, it helps people both to *contemplate* and to *enjoy* either an aspect of reality they already know or something that they don’t know and that the author of the story thinks would be good for them to know (Ford 12-13).

Nowhere is the chief concern of *The Chronicles* more clearly stated than in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. In the last scene of the last chapter – which was meant to be the end of the stories, at least at *that* stage of Lewis’s creativity – Edmund and Lucy are disconsolate at Aslan’s revelation that they will never come back to Narnia:

‘You are too old, children,’ said Aslan, ‘and you must begin to come close to your own world now.’

‘It isn’t Narnia, you know,’ sobbed Lucy. ‘It’s *you*. We shan’t meet *you* there. And how can we leave, never meeting you?’

‘But you shall meet me, dear one,’ said Aslan.

‘Are – are you there too, Sir?’ said Edmund.

‘I am,’ said Aslan. ‘But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there.’ (*The Voyage* 247)

Aslan clearly represents more than just another character in a fictional world of Narnia. With these words, Aslan crosses into reality by referring to himself in the “real world.” This is one instance that presents the mythical mode as a perfect opportunity to appeal to a truth outside of the natural realm because it is not simply a literary form. This mode allows *The Chronicles* to develop symbols of the Christian faith in such a way that does not keep them in the literary mode. Instead, symbolic truths such as Aslan’s sacrifice and the creation of Narnia can be more than just events in the world of Narnia. Because it is told as a myth, these events can suggest greater truths in the world of the reader.

The Chronicles, as a fairytale response to our “reason doomed culture,” noticeably invoke ways in which to “look along” themes of Christianity. But besides similarities to myth, how else can one describe fairytales? J.R.R. Tolkien anticipated this problem of definition in “On Fairy Stories”: Fairy stories cannot be defined in a “net of words” but “Faerie itself may perhaps most nearly be translated by Magic” (10). For Matheson, magic’s oldest definition is *transformation* (16).

In this case, since in enchantment or magic the alteration of the subject is objective and real, “inner” experiences in *The Chronicles* manifest themselves physically in the events of the Narnia series (Matheson 16). As Aslan sings Narnia into being, (*Magician’s Nephew* 99), Narnia becomes a manifestation of the Lion’s inner reality, Aslan turned inside out. As a result, the Lion is always present, implicit in the landscape.

As an enchanter, he creates a world of which he is apart, because that world, in essence, is himself.

This experience of an inner reality manifesting itself in *The Chronicles* also occurs in the children. When Lucy finds Edmund after the battle, he is not only healed of his wounds but is also “looking better”; “he had become his real, old self again and could look you in the face” (Lewis, *The Lion* 163). Eustace’s experience as a dragon is the demonstration of an inner reality: “he had turned into a dragon while he was asleep. Sleeping on a dragon’s hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart, he had become a dragon itself” (Lewis, *The Voyage* 81). As one reads *The Chronicles of Narnia*, one experiences these different instances of transformation first hand. To read the series “is to become involved in the process of self-transformation which the Lion presents” (Matheson 17) because it causes readers to do more than just contemplate the truth of the great Lion of our world (i.e. Jesus Christ) but also *enjoy* and experience living in the truth of the great Lion.

Inner transformation is evidenced in Digory’s return from Narnia. After experiencing the magical world of Narnia, he cannot help but notice the commonplace character of his daily reality: “for the rest of that day, whenever he looked at the things about him and saw how ordinary and unmagical they were, he hardly dared to hope” for his mother’s recovery. “When he remembered the face of Aslan,” however, “he did hope” (*Magician’s Nephew* 181). According to Riga, this last quotation reveals one of the functions of his fairy tale:

Habit and familiarity have dulled our ordinary experience of everyday life, and in a real, imaginative way, the reading of fairytales makes our world more fully

magical. ... In Digory's experience, the return from Narnia to the 'ordinary and unmagical world' is emptied of all hope until he remembers Aslan's face; then, his despondency is mitigated by the marvelous recollected in the ordinary. In *The Chronicles*, Lewis shapes his ideal experiment in such a way as to add a luster and richness to the world of ordinary experience. (27)

This added luster and richness implies that something wonderful is inherent in everyday reality, something the Naturalistic modern age ignores or is even completely blind to. By writing *The Chronicles* as fairy tales, Lewis illuminates magic in the ordinary, making the miraculous essence of Supernaturalism easier to detect in everyday life.

Romance

Within the form of fairy tales, *The Chronicles* employ the narrative pattern of romance. Romance is characterized by a standard plot of various qualities: a quest or adventure, often undertaken by a single knight; a courtly and chivalric age; characters displaying courage, honor, mercifulness, romantic love, and delight in wonders and marvels; and an emphasis on the mysterious effect of magic, spells, and enchantments (Abrams 25). These elements of romance create a kind of qualitative richness that allude to the real world itself as being "cryptic, significant, full of voices and 'the mystery of life'" which is essential to Supernaturalism (Lewis, "The Anthropological Approach" 310).

By combining the narrative pattern of romance with the structural form of the fairy tale, Lewis was able to adapt the latter to his specific needs in *The Chronicles*. The fairy tale form, he wrote in "Sometimes Fairy Stories..." allowed him to eliminate the traditional love interest of the romance and to avoid its tendency toward elevated

language, something that would not appeal to children or to many adults, for that matter (Lewis, "Of Other Worlds" 36-37). Combining fairy tale with romance also joins primitive perspectives of the former with positive, idealistic outlook of the latter to create an appeal for both children and adults alike.

Each Chronicle of Narnia contains romance. *Prince Caspian* provides two embodiments of Arthurian chivalry in its name-giving hero and his loyal subject Reepicheep; *The Horse and His Boy* includes a vaguely Arthurian plotline in which Cor has been raised by adoptive parents ignorant of his royal parentage; and *The Magician's Nephew* centers on the Deplorable Word that resembles a famous romantic work Dolorous Stroke in its creation of a wasteland (Tolhurst 157-158).

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader overall provides the perfect example of romance operating in *The Chronicles* because, like the Narnia series as a whole, it evokes the Arthurian legend subtly but consistently. Caspian's traits and description liken him to Odysseus (Tolhurst 158). *The Voyage* contains very similar exalted moods, plot elements, and characters to the medieval Grail Quest story. *The Voyage* focuses on key themes such as temptation, the danger of falling into despair, and the individual's struggle to achieve unity with the divine that are often found in medieval works of literature (Tolhurst 160). By using romantic elements such as these, Lewis's fictional world alludes to a genre of writing that assumed the Supernatural in everything it did.

Supernaturalism is the characteristic philosophy of a monarchical age and Naturalism of a democratic, so accordingly it is only appropriate that *The Chronicles* contain this many elements of the medieval period. Even in *Miracles*, Lewis maintains: "Supernaturalism, even if false, would have been believed by the great mass of

unthinking people four hundred years ago, just as Naturalism, even if false, will be believed by the great mass of unthinking people today” (Lewis, *Miracles* 307).

Throughout the series, readers are able to imaginatively explore Supernaturalism because of the various romantic elements present.

Archetype

Within the mode of romance, *The Chronicles of Narnia* utilize different classical archetypes in the series to reference the Supernatural medieval period. An archetype is a model or example of a type or group, but more specifically, it is a symbol, character type, or plot motif that is recurrent throughout literature (Schakel 6). For example, gardens, calm, and festivity are often depicted as desirable states in various type of literature while desserts, storms, and droughts are seen as corresponding symbols of undesirable conditions. Such recurrent items are thought to be the result of “elemental and universal forms or patterns in the human psyche, whose effective embodiment in a literary work evokes a profound response from the attentive reader, because he or she shares the archetypes expressed by the author” (Abrams 12). For this reason archetypes are the elements of stories that call the most profoundly on readers’ imaginations. Specific meanings are so often assumed for archetypal images that the reader never has to actively reason through what is presented.

It is important to clarify that archetypes are not allegories. Similar to symbols, archetypes point outside themselves to the meaning that completes them rather than embody *within* themselves the tradition they represent and the significance they have accumulated over the years. They are not to be approached with the “acumen of the head but with the sensitivity and receptivity of the heart” (Schakel 10).

An allegory can be defined as a one-to-one correspondence between philosophical or religious concepts and the characters or events or objects in a story (Ford 3). If one unwittingly assumes the entire *Chronicles of Narnia* represent a deeper meaning not explicitly stated within the work, it can be relatively effortless to affirm every minute detail as a reference to this greater truth. Lewis was *adamant* that he was not writing allegory when he wrote *The Chronicles*. He was unwavering about this to the point that he was “very careful not to decode them for the young children who were writing to him about their meaning” (Ford 3). If one refers to *The Chronicles* as ‘allegory’ in that the stories have more than one level of meaning or a religious significance beyond their plots, he would be correct; the tales do have an intended purpose. If readers used ‘allegory’ to mean, in other words, that the reader is always to be asking what this or that ‘symbolizes,’ *this* is what Lewis was afraid of. Viewing *The Chronicles* as such “misses Lewis’s main intent and runs the danger of distorting their artistry and detracting from their universal meanings as fairy tales” (Schakel xii).

One of the most common characters mistaken for allegory in the series is Aslan. Lewis was not trying to take the abstract idea of Christ and personify him as a Lion (that is, to allegorize him); Lewis was instead writing “supposals,” as he called them. In a letter to Mrs. Hook (29 December 1958) he explains the difference:

If Aslan represented the immaterial Deity in the same way in which [in Bunyan’s *The Pilgrims Progress*] the Giant Despair represents Despair, he would be an allegorical figure. In reality, he is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, ‘What might Christ become like, if there really were a world like Narnia and He chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in *that* world as He actually

has done in ours?’ This is not an allegory at all... Allegory and such supposals differ because they mix the real and the unreal in different ways... The Incarnation of Christ in another world is mere supposal; but *granted* the supposition, He would really have been a physical object in that world as He was in Palestine and His death on Calvary. (*Collected Letters* Vol III 475-476)

Lewis’s “supposals” are equated roughly with “sacramentalism”; in a literary sense, the best replacement for it is “symbolism.” In a work of allegory, “the allegorist takes something immaterial (love, for instance) and provides for it a material representation (as in the form of a god called Amor disporting himself in a beautiful garden). In symbolism, the symbolist works the other way around” (Ward 30).

If our passions, being immaterial, can be copied by material inventions, then it is possible that our material world in its turn is a copy of an invisible world. As the god Amor and his figurative garden are to the actual passions of men, so perhaps we ourselves and our ‘real’ world are to something else. The attempt to read that something else through its sensible imitations, to see the archetype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism or Sacramentalism. (Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* 26)

Lewis believes symbolism is not just the more accurate way to express a greater truth, but the actual act of symbolizing an obscure idea has a similar effect as becoming aware of the Supernatural. Lewis explains:

Burns tells us that a woman is like a red, red rose, and Wordsworth that another woman is like a violet by a mossy stone half- hidden from the eye. Now of course the one woman resembles a rose and the other a half-hidden violet, not in size, weight, shape, color, anatomy, or intelligence, but by arousing emotions in some

way analogous to those which the flowers arouse. ("Christianity and Literature," 132)

In other words, the writer uses what is within the reader's affective experience to lead him beyond it (Holyer 221). *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a whole symbolizes the truth of Supernaturalism; it shows readers, not tells them of, their unawareness. As one strives toward an accurate analysis of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, he must not assume elements are allegorical and descriptive.

Common archetypes found within literature are the hero, benevolent king, and wise, old guide that are protagonists while the villain, the tyrant, and the witch appear again and again as the corresponding evil figure. In *The Chronicles*, the White Witch – or Jadis as she appears in *The Magician's Nephew* – is a classic representative of an archetypal villain. She is cold, power-hungry, and beautiful, but only in a certain light. The closer one gets, the more clearly she becomes ugly and malicious. Additionally, Aslan is the Sage or the wise, holy guide that possesses insight of the Deep Magic greater than that of all the other characters. Although he represents more than just a mere guide, Aslan contains many archetypal characteristics that form to create a fully satisfying symbol. He councils the Pevensie heroes in both practical help defeating the White Witch and gives moral guidance and encouragement when they require it, like when Peter was required to protect his sisters from a wolf:

For a moment Peter did not understand. Then, when he saw all the other creatures start forward and heard Aslan say with a wave of his paw, 'Back! Let the Prince win his spurs,' he did understand, and set off running as hard as he could to the

pavilion... Peter did not feel very brave; indeed, he felt he was going to be sick.

But that made no difference to what he had to do. (Lewis, *The Lion* 130-131)

In this way, *The Chronicles* present classic archetypal descriptions of Aslan to further develop his character in a way that sounds attractive to readers' imaginations.

Another widely used and remarkably important archetype in medieval literature is the seasonal cycle of spring, summer, autumn, and winter (Schakel, *Reading with the Heart* 7). The seasons often depicted change and the life cycle within works of literature. This archetype is most noticeable in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* as the depiction of a winter in Narnia is not just for the sake of description, but a representation of the state of the world. As Narnia resides in Always Winter, the evil White Witch reigns and the life cycle is literally frozen. Her evil extends across the land of Narnia and kills any new growth that attempts to break through the frost and snow. As Aslan the true king of Narnia comes, however, so does spring and new life. A passage in *The Lion* that heightens the drama of snow melting is when Edmund (who has been captured by the White Witch) realizes that her powers are declining:

Now they were steadily racing on again. And soon Edmund noticed that the snow which splashed against them as they rushed through it was much wetter than it had been last night... All around them, though out of sight, there were streams chattering, bubbling, splashing and even (in the distance) roaring. And his heart gave a great leap (though he hardly knew why) when he realized that the frost was over. (Lewis, *The Lion* 117-118)

After a few moments, Edmund realizes that the White Witch's spell has been broken and that Aslan is accountable. Though the Witch fights it every step, Edmund can see more

clearly than she. Evil is no longer hindering growth in Narnia physically or spiritually, and Aslan's coming is the cause.

Conclusion

According to Dulles, the apologist's task is to "gather and present evidence capable of persuading reasonable persons that the Christian religion ought to be accepted" (18). As an apologist, Lewis writes with a predisposition towards rationality when regarding the Christian faith, for he maintains that no one comes to believe Christianity without thinking there are good grounds for holding it is true. At the same time, Lewis also considers the assent that flows from apologetical arguments to fall short of Christian faith. Apologetics provides a road map to salvation, but as Dulles describes, this map is "no substitute for the journey" (19).

It is obvious from the publication of *Miracles* and events that occurred in the following year that something additional to rational discussion is required in order to have a lasting spiritual impact on the reader. The book logically and reasonably displays society's ignorance of the Supernatural, but the discussion that followed continued in the same rational language. Anscombe meant well in pursuing genuine truth in her debate as truth seemed to be misrepresented in *Miracles*, but in responding philosophically she made no indelible impact on readers' and listeners' lives. In the case of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, however, countless numbers of children and adults alike commend the series for forever changing their spiritual journeys and often leading them to a complete conversion or rededication to Christianity. The difference between the responses to *Miracles* and *The Chronicles* is drastic because *The Chronicles* employs the literary modes of myth and fairy tale, romance, and archetype to appeal to readers' imagination in order to fully

experience the Supernatural reality of the universe in a personal and spiritual way. As readers encounter the Supernatural alongside the characters of *The Chronicles*, they too are able to live in a Supernatural world and experience God as they connect with fairy tales, romance, and archetypes. Although Anscombe promotes the intellect as a way to discover truth, Lewis illustrates in *The Chronicles of Narnia* that imagination – while different – is just as compelling and trustworthy of a route to access truth.

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