

“ABOVE ALL SHADOWS RIDES THE SUN”: RESURRECTION AND  
REDEMPTION IN J.R.R TOLKIEN’S *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*  
AND C.S. LEWIS’S *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA*

by

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The peculiar quality of the "joy" in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth. It is not only a "consolation" for the sorrow of this world, but a satisfaction, and an answer to that question, "Is it true?" The answer to this question that I gave at first was (quite rightly): "If you have built your little world well, yes: it is true in that world." That is enough for the artist (or the artist part of the artist). But in the "eucatastrophe" we see in a brief vision that the answer may be greater—it may be a far-off gleam or echo of evangelium in the real world.

—J.R.R. Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories*

Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits and also the healing of that old ache.

—C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

At an otherwise ordinary faculty meeting at Oxford University in 1926, two men would begin a friendship that would change the relatively segregated realms of academia and fantasy forever. J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis have been celebrated the world over for inviting audiences into their perilous, enchanting worlds of Middle-earth and Narnia, but their love of fantasy extends far beyond the borders of the Shire or Cair Paravel. In many ways, these two men discovered a mutual attraction for Story itself through the Nordic myths that laid a hushed spell over the imagination, light and thick as snow, and ancient folk tales that wove an enchantment of magic and mystery over the heart as quick and steadily as a loom. These stories did more than entertain; they gave a spiritual experience of joy itself. Tolkien's and Lewis's common love for legend and myth spurred them into an academic crusade of sorts to redeem these stories from their general association with "lower" forms of art, meant more for children's enjoyment than professional, in-depth analysis. In "On Fairy-Stories," Tolkien argues, "the common opinion seems to be that there is a natural connection between the minds of children and fairy-stories, of the same order as the connection between children's bodies and milk. I think this is an error [...] Actually, the association of children and fairy-stories is an accident of our domestic history" (4). By bringing these stories into the mainstream of scholarship and the public reading sphere, fantasy would be properly removed from its marginalized shelf of "children's stories" and appreciated for its individual importance.

In radically different ways, Tolkien and Lewis created fantastic worlds, characters, and stories in order to represent "higher" truths that may not have been as

accessible or effective if presented in other genres or modes. As devout Christians, both men found that their devotional or religious messages were best delivered, as it were, obliquely, through the medium of fantasy. For these authors, mythic or fantastic narratives made possible a much richer or deeper understanding of the basic truths of their faith. In particular, Tolkien and Lewis each emphasized the themes of resurrection and redemption in their respective tales of Middle-earth and Narnia. In this thesis, I will examine the significance of the themes of resurrection and redemption in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and I argue that the fantastic mode or genre chosen by these authors enhances the resonance or effectiveness of the Christian concepts upon the reader.

Both Tolkien and Lewis wrote extensive essays over their interpretation of what makes a story powerful—the pulse that pumps life through a narrative that goes deeper than character development and social criticism—and it is in these essays that the fundamental purpose of their own stories are revealed. In 1939, Tolkien stood at a podium and delivered a presentation known as the Andrew Lang Lecture at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. This heavily edited, revised, and expanded lecture first appeared in print (with some adjustments) in a Festschrift volume entitled *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* edited by Lewis, compiled in memoriam for his friend and retitled “On Fairy Stories.” There, Tolkien explains the definition, origin, and necessity of fairy-stories, and their unique ability to unveil the desires of the human condition. Perhaps one of the strongest points of the essay explores the significance of fairy-stories for both adults and children (which he carefully distinguishes from that of “Fairy Tales”) and the specific ways these stories allow us to analyze and critique our own worlds from

the perspective of another. Tolkien defines fairy-stories as stories specifically about the “Perilous Realm” of Faërie and the men who adventure upon its “shadowy marches” rather than the “relatively rare, and not very interesting” stories of “fairies” themselves (4). Although he claims to be anything but a professional on the subject, “a wandering explorer (or trespasser) in the land, full of wonder but not [professional] information,” Tolkien stresses that defining the world of Faërie is a vain quest; just as one cannot catch the air, the qualities of the Faërie land are equally indescribable. This is not to say that these qualities are imperceptible, however; although he claims that separately analyzing the ingredients will not reveal the secret of the whole, “the air that blows in that country” carries a power none can deny or ignore. To seek the origin of such stories, according to Tolkien, is to seek the origin of “the language and the mind” (6).

By connecting fairy-stories to the overall genre of fantasy, Tolkien stresses the importance of these stories “not a lower, but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent” (48). By reading about the perils and adventures of men in the Faërie realm, the reader comes to see their own world in a clearer, more reflective light. According to Tolkien, “the magic of Faerie is not an end in itself, its virtue is in its operations: among these are the satisfaction of certain primordial human desires” (5). He dubs this idea “Recovery,” explaining that fairy-stories not only reveal the deepest longings of the human heart, but also provide a clear, unaltered view of the way things were meant to be. In his article “The Qualities of a Tolkenian Fairy-Story,” Clyde Northrup explains, “The recovery offered by the fairy-story removes this veil of familiarity by taking these ordinary things from our ‘locked hoard’ and placing them in an unfamiliar Secondary World, causing us to re-view them, recovering for us



that child-like sense of wonder that things used to have” (822). In this light, one’s own unchallenged assumptions might be altered or “recovered” by an outside perspective, infusing new beliefs or ideas into the psyche. In other words, Faërie will have woven its spell.

If dubbing the fantasy genre as “escapist” literature is meant to be an insult, Tolkien fervently argues the opposite. Rather than viewing escape from “real life” as something to be shamed, he argues that such an act can be practical and even heroic:

Evidently we are faced by a misuse of words, and also by a confusion of thought. Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it. In using escape in this way the critics have chosen the wrong word, and, what is more, they are confusing, not always by sincere error, the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter. (20)

Rather than “deserting” real life, fantasy elevates a person above the monotony or drudgery of every day, allowing them to experience a level of beauty and joy found only in the “magical” or, better yet, “supernatural” world generally unnoticed within the confines of limited reality. Because of their packaging, fairy-stories allow ideas such as life and death or good and evil to be understood and processed in fresh, non-threatening ways.

In his own life, Tolkien explained how adulthood ultimately sparked his love of fairy-stories: “[For me,] a real taste for fairy-stories was awakened by philology on the

threshold of manhood, and quickened to full life by war” (14). Our desire to escape from life, in whatever fashion, reveals a deeply rooted hunger for things that this world cannot satisfy. Northrup elaborates on this idea by arguing “the escape of the fairy-story is a simple movement from outer to inner, from the ordinary world into the wondrous or enchanted world. We can add further that to escape in these senses is directly related to the idea of recovery as a removing of the veil of familiarity that Tolkien describes” (832). The idea of “escape” as a movement from “outer” to “inner” could more accurately be expressed in Tolkien and Lewis’s writing as a shift from the “veiled” world to the “real.” Echoing the words of Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria*, Tolkien and Lewis’s works achieve what Coleridge claimed was his purpose in writing the *Lyrical Ballads*: “My endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith” (95). In other words, by “suspending” our disbelief, the audience is able to capture glimpses of truth that would otherwise be hidden by realism. If the artist “strive[s] for verisimilitude,” then fairy-stories have the ability to create in us “Secondary Belief” that goes far beyond the suspension of skepticism (Northrup, 832). Therefore, by compromising the two normally contrasting worlds of fantasy and reality, we will discover the underlying truth the author wishes for us to find in the text, and perhaps, everyday life.

In an attempt to redirect the cultural mindset that escapism in literature is superfluous and childish, Tolkien argues that fairy stories can (and will) provide consolation to the reader through the “oldest and deepest desire”: the Escape from Death.

He connects this idea to the “Consolation of the Happy Ending”, which he terms a “eucatastrophe.” As he explains, this concept “does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence) universal final defeat, and in so far as is evangelium, gives a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief” (69). Rather than a form of wish fulfillment, these stories actually relay a sense of truth and hope that speaks to a deep longing for the eternal. As Thomas Honegger explains, “the ‘Consolation of the Happy Ending,’ which Tolkien considered essential for all true fairy-stories, transforms the classical tragic myth of loss and despair into a fairy-story of recovery and hope” (“The Medieval Foundations of Tolkienian Fantasy,” 124). Even when everything in life seems to point to despair, Tolkien suggests that refusing to give up hope brings a deep, sacred kind of deliverance more powerful than grief (as seen throughout his *Lord of the Rings* narrative). In Fairy-stories, we see exactly how to find this kind of joy: as we follow the characters and engage in their journeys, we learn how to practice clinging to hope in our own lives as they learn to practice it in theirs.

At the end of his lecture, Tolkien includes an Epilogue that Honegger argues is a “very medieval” afterthought:

Much of medieval literature lays claim either to moral or to religious relevance, which can be extracted from almost any text by means of the allegorical and/or typological methods of interpretation. The allegorical interpretation of literature, in Christian Europe, has its roots in biblical exegesis. It is based on the assumption that words, or things, or entire

narratives are not restricted to their 'literal' meaning but that they convey additionally religious, moral, or eschatological truths. (125)

As a prolific scholar of medieval and renaissance literature, Tolkien seems to be re-fusing the two worlds of academe and religion (at least, in the modern sense) in a very approachable context. Although many modern readers may push against reading texts through the lens of religion, Tolkien argues that the two cannot be separated. Since we come from God, he suggests that the works of art we create reflect fragments of that truth, therefore making us "sub-creator[s]" ("On Fairy-Stories" 8). Although imperfect recreations, every story of mankind reflects the perfection meant for us before the "Fall." Tolkien expands on this idea in his poem "Mythopoeia": "The heart of man is not compound of lies/But draws some wisdom from the only Wise [...] man, sub-creator, the refracted light/through whom is splintered from a single White/to many hues, and endlessly combined/in living shapes that move from mind to mind" (in *Tree and Leaf*, 87). By placing the sub-creation of fairy-stories within a Christian framework, he interprets his argument for "joy" as the fullest expression of the "eucatastrophe," which reflects the true eucatastrophe of the incarnation of Jesus. In this way, Tolkenian fairy-stories "are the typological foreshadowing's (or reflections) of the evangelium" (Honegger, 124). In a letter to his son Christopher, Tolkien expands on his idea of the Gospels as fairy-stories: "Of course I do not mean that the Gospels tell what is *only* a fairy-story; but I do mean very strongly that they do tell a fairy-story: the greatest" (see *Letters*, 89). While there is indeed sadness and grief in the fantasy realm (since it pulls from real life), Tolkien's belief that the gospel of Jesus is the greatest eucatastrophe of all makes joy the final goal of any good story, and ultimately, of life itself. The importance

of fairy-stories lies not in their narrative as much as their expression of deeper truths: by being invited in another world entirely, we validate the craving in hearts for the beauty of a world beyond our own experience. In the Christian eucatastrophic framework, Tolkien argues that we will someday achieve just that.

Tolkien's "On Fairy-Stories" had a profound impact on Lewis, who argued that his particular take on the fairy-story highlights the longing for something we are consciously unaware of: "It stirs and troubles [...] with the dim sense of something beyond [our] reach, and far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth" ("Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories," 38). Echoing Tolkien's argument that the Gospel exemplifies the greatest example of a eucatastrophe, Lewis argued in his book *God on the Dock* (implying God "being on trial") that "by becoming fact it does not cease to be myth: that is the miracle" (5). In "Lewis on the Gospels as True Myth," Bruce W. Young argues how Lewis and Tolkien viewed God as the ultimate mythmaker:

The human mythmaking capacity is—along with reason and our moral sense—a divine endowment, there is always an element of truth in myth [...] As Tolkien may have explained it then—certainly as Lewis himself came to understand—this most assuredly did not mean the Gospel writers were deliberately writing in the mythic mode [...] What we have then in the Gospels is a human account—no doubt an inspired human account—of "myth" that has become "fact." (3)

As Lewis's explained in his own words: "The old myth of the Dying God, without ceasing to be myth, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth

of history” (“Myth Became Fact” 66-67). The Gospels, then, according to Young’s observations, “have the peculiar quality of being straightforwardly [...] factual accounts but at the same time (because of the events being recounted) accounts imbued with a mythic dimension” (3).

Keeping this perspective of myth in mind, Lewis was undoubtedly inspired by Tolkien’s lectures over the significance of Fairy Stories (and their ultimate connection to the Divine), and wrote a collection of essays (compiled into a book) entitled *On Other Worlds: Essays and Stories* that lay out his theories and philosophies on the significance of studying Fantasy and Science Fiction as a genre. In the preface, Walter Hooper explains that the theme of this collection “is the excellence of Story, particularly those kinds of stories specially dear to Lewis. In the essays printed here, the author discusses certain literary qualities which he felt critics overlooked [and] dismissed too automatically” (ix). Lewis, alongside Tolkien, encouraged other scholars and critics to appreciate the genre of fairy-stories as a necessary and integral part of academia rather than a retreat into a superfluous world that deals little with real life or real problems.

In his essay “On Stories,” Lewis carefully lays out his argument for the reason we feel so deeply connected and moved by powerful storytelling. He recalls a discussion he had with “an intelligent American pupil” on why tales of Native American tribes were so enthralling for them to read as young boys. For the pupil, it was the thrill of excitement and breathless suspense that left the greatest impression on him. Lewis, on the other hand, felt the pupil was “misrepresenting his experience, and indeed leaving out the real point” (4). Lewis argues that it wasn’t the “momentary suspense” that kept him interested, but rather, “the whole world to which it belonged” (5). Rather than the fleeting

emotion of drama, Lewis argues that a story must have something else that keeps you captivated, something distinctly separate from excitement: the transportation of the reader into another world entirely. He gives an example from H.G. Well's *First Men on the Moon*, where a character named Bedford finds himself isolated from his spaceship, drifting alone in space as all air and heat slowly escape him. Up until the moment Bedford is saved, Lewis argues against the idea that the reader is simply feeling the suspense of the story; rather, it is the overwhelming presence of the world he is surrounded by: "Over me, around me, closing in on me, embracing me ever nearer was the Eternal [...] the infinite and final Night of space.' That is the idea which has kept you enthralled" (9). He claims that as readers, we aren't merely concerned with the idea of whether or not Bedford will freeze to death—that is a reality and a danger just as present in Russia or Alaska as it is on the moon—but rather, "that the airless outer darkness is important not for what it can do to Bedford, but for what it does for us [...] That is one of the functions of art: to present what the narrow and desperately practical perspectives of real life excludes" (10). In other words, stories should be about more than fleeting moments of excitement, which can be found without much difficulty in real life; rather, by focusing on the "atmosphere" of the story, you allow the reader to enter into an entirely new world and experience sensations and emotions specific to that place. Therefore, the descriptions of Faërie itself (if we are to continue Tolkien's previous analogy) are just as important as the adventures that take place inside of it.

George Sayer explores this idea more fully in his biography of Lewis entitled *Jack* (a nickname given to Lewis from childhood), where he explains how Lewis sought after fleeting but overwhelming moments of beauty:

The most important experiences of his life were not literary. They were mystical experiences of the presence of God, rather like those described by Wordsworth, Traherne, and Ruskin [...] He chose the word *joy* to describe these experiences. It is the best possible word, the shortest and the fullest. Joy is the ever-present, central quality in all forms of religious experience. The first time it came to him from the memory of a small garden that his brother had made for him out of a biscuit tin filled with moss, twigs, and tiny flowers. It came again while he was reading a book by Beatrix Potter [...] and he valued these experiences of joy more than anything else he had known, and he desired, as all who have experienced them desire, to have them again and again.” (52)

By dubbing these emotions as powerful experiences with “Joy,” Lewis redefines the word to mean more than gladness, but rather, a momentary glimpse into the sacred and supernatural which nothing in this world can compare; a dip into the river of the spiritual that naught else but feeling it again can satisfy. It is in the beauty of art that Lewis truly experiences what the drudgery of “real life exclude[s],” and through that medium he sought to bring those experiences to his audience (“On Stories,” 10).

In line with Tolkien, Lewis argues that the true power of Fantasy—be it Fairy-Stories, legends, myths, or folk-tales—takes us to another dimension entirely. This can be on another planet or in your own backyard, but ultimately, it must introduce you to the marvelous or supernatural. Lewis argues that this idea, however true, is incredibly misunderstood, for “the logic of a fairy tale is as strict as that of a realistic novel, though different,” but he continues to argue for its importance: “the whole story, paradoxically



enough, strengthens our relish for real life. This excursion into the preposterous sends us back with renewed pleasure for the actual” (“On Stories,” 14). This deep connection of the real world to fantasy is clearly evident in both Tolkien and Lewis’s created worlds, evidenced in mythological creatures living in familial structures and using real weapons to fight in battle, fauns and hobbits decorating their homes with armchairs and making cups of tea, and wizards smoking pipe weed, to name a few. These familiar elements make Lewis and Tolkien’s narratives even more attractive because they glorify everyday life and make it magical. Therefore, it seems we must first be familiar with the world around us to appreciate good fantasy; the fantastical is only apparent in juxtaposition with the commonplace. However, the magic of Fantasy weaves a spell once entered, and even though returned to everyday life, the commonplace is heightened and forever changed. Lewis pondered in his essay if this idea is too lofty: “Shall I be thought whimsical if, in conclusion, I suggest that this internal tension in the heart of every story between the theme and the plot constitutes, after all, its chief resemblance to life?” (19). Perhaps the “internal tension” of stories Lewis speaks of can also be applied to his own life story.

In “The Intellectual World of C.S. Lewis,” Alister McGrath explains how Lewis aligned himself with the popular idea of western culture after the World War I: “Old ideas and values were dismissed as outmoded and discredited, retaining their cultural credibility only through an indefensible amalgam of cultural nostalgia and intellectual laziness” (42). In other words, as mankind becomes more educated and “enlightened” by scientific discovery and philosophical understanding, he will undoubtedly move away from the more “primitive” ways of thinking that defined his past. Superstition and myth will give way to reason and science, and myth will therefore be seen as the simplistic,

uneducated way to explain real things that couldn't have been previously understood (however lovely they may be). Later in his life, Lewis rejected this line of thinking, dubbing it "chronological snobbery," since "the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate of our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that count discredited" (*Surprised by Joy*, 41). Similar to Lewis, this rationalistic development "left many dissatisfied, partly on account of its 'thin' notion of rationality, and more significantly because of its obvious imaginative and aesthetic deficits" (McGrath, 12). Once Lewis embraced Christianity (in large part through Tolkien's influence) his view towards "old ideas" such as myth and religion changed dramatically. Rather than feeling conflicted between his "irrational" romantic heart and "rational" intellectual mind, Christianity allowed him to fully embrace both passions as equal parts of the whole truth. Realizing his experiences with joy through art and myth were in fact glimpses into the "real" spiritual world, Lewis's conversion experience "was more like when a man, after long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake" (*Surprised by Joy*, 223).

It's important to note that Lewis and Tolkien were survivors of the war themselves. While they had every right to embrace cynicism, their connection of religion and myth seemed to bring a sense of hope to both themselves (and later, others) that allowed them to view death, suffering, and evil within an entirely different framework. As Joseph Loconte argues, the Great War "deepened their spiritual quest" (xii). I would argue, however, that Lewis (and perhaps Tolkien) didn't view their experiences in the trenches as a way to "shape [their] Christian imagination," as Loconte suggests, until much later in life (xii). However, without the war, I agree with Loconte that "these epic

tales—involving the sorrows and triumphs of war—[might] never have been written had these [two men] not been flung into the crucible of combat” (xii.) The fact that they survived, however, does not mean that they succeeded in leaving the war behind them. There is a constant juxtaposition of light and dark in both works of fiction; Middle-earth is threatened by a darkness that Narnia is already suffering under, an eternal state of death and despair that promises to steal all hope from life. A small but mighty band of warriors boldly takes up their swords to fight, and it is seemingly the most insignificant creatures that end up playing the most important roles. Lewis and Tolkien do not shy away from evil and suffering in their works; rather, they use them as opportunities to offer redemption and hope, should one choose to accept it. As many in the post war period grew cynical of religion, Lewis and Tolkien insisted that war “could inspire noble sacrifice for humane purposes” and imbued their stories with themes of “guilt and grace, sorrow and consolation” (Loconte, xiv).

In the preface to “On Stories,” Hooper claims that the reader in this post-war time period was encouraged to find in literature “almost everything: life’s monotony, social injustice, sympathy with the downtrodden poor, drudgery, cynicism, and distaste—everything except enjoyment” (xiii). Therefore, to Lewis and Tolkien, the greatest way to provide enjoyment (and hope) to a world wrought with disillusionment was to demonstrate the eucatastrophe of the Christian religion through their narratives. Tolkien’s previous argument in his Epilogue to “On Fairy-Stories” that the eucatastrophe is the highest function of the fairy tale connects to Lewis’s argument that art should do what real life can only attempt: to taste fully the divine presence of Joy. As “sub-creators” of their own imaginary worlds, Lewis and Tolkien use the form of the eucatastrophe to

allow the reader to see “a brief vision that the answer may be greater—it may be a far off gleam or echo of evangelium in the real world” (23). In every story, especially in Fairy-stories, fulfillment of the spiritual (in relation to hope) can be seen either in the “Consolation of the Happy Ending” or the deliberate lack of it.

It is important to note that Lewis and Tolkien had very different opinions about how myth should be represented in their works. Tolkien was especially critical of Lewis’s *Chronicles*, perhaps because he felt Lewis rejected the traditional view of mythological creatures from classical texts. This is perhaps best evidenced in the faun Mr. Tumnus, a character Josh B. Long suggests Tolkien disliked because “he failed to maintain the mythological archetype of fauns as lustful” (32). Rather than a sex-crazed being, Mr. Tumnus is a tender-hearted, civilized faun who carries umbrellas and enjoys having tea parties. Although Tolkien felt that mythological recreations should stay true to their historical “integrity,” Lewis felt quite the opposite. As Long points out in Lewis’s *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, “he suggests that ‘mythical poetry ought not to attempt novelty in respect to its ingredients,’ but ‘[w]hat it does with the ingredients may be as novel as you please’ [...] Thus, Lewis felt completely justified in remaining true to the faun’s appearance, but refashioning its nature” (33, quoting Lewis, 54).

Although Tolkien undoubtedly spent much more time expanding and exploring Middle-earth than Lewis did Narnia—building his sub-creation from the ground up by creating languages, extensive histories and elaborate side-plots—both narratives reveal, to varying degrees, the authors shared theological beliefs about myth itself. Despite their decisions to work with myth in two very different ways (Tolkien staying very true to classical texts to relay his theological purposes, and Lewis redefining classic

mythological figures completely to relay his), Tolkien and Lewis expressed the idea that all myths relay some semblances and inherent references to ultimate truth found in the Biblical narrative. As Sayer explains, “the natural beauties of Narnia are set against the background of the supernatural and eternal,” since Lewis’s “most precious moments in life [...] were those when he did not know it, when he was aware of the spiritual quality of material things, of the infusion of the supernatural into the workaday world” (317). Echoing his earlier comments on “sub-creation”, Tolkien elaborates that myths can represent spiritual truths in his Preface to *The Silmarillion*: “After all, I believe legends and myths are largely made of ‘truth,’ and indeed present aspects of it that can only be received in this mode; and long ago certain truths and modes of this kind were discovered and must always appear” (xvii-xix).

While exploring the different ways these men used the mode of myth in Middle-earth and Narnia, (rather than directly comparing the two), I wish to explore the distinctly separate intentions Lewis and Tolkien had for their sub-created worlds, and the way their shared theology manifested itself accordingly. It would be unfair to both authors to minimize their individual achievements by contrasting one world to the other; rather, I hope to unveil different aspects of their Christian worldview (and expressions of those ideologies) through the shared lens of resurrection and redemption. While Lewis redefined and blended myths in Narnia to explicitly relay the divinity and redemption narrative of Christ (in other words, solely as a place to reveal his true character), Tolkien created an entirely separate world to “infuse” into his text the inherent truths he found in Scripture without directly allegorizing it. While Lewis uses the life and character of Christ like bold, unavoidable paint strokes to color Narnia, Tolkien works it into his

narrative like a golden thread woven through Middle-earth like a tapestry. Although very different works of art, they reveal similar theological truths of resurrection, hope, and eucatastrophic redemption in equally impactful ways.

In order to fully comprehend the heart of these stories, the marriage of mysticism and reason in Middle-earth and Narnia is an important aspect to consider. The ever-present themes of resurrection and redemption in the realms of Middle-earth and Narnia, from the smallest example to the most overt, adds another step in the ladder to the overall redemption of the final climax. In many ways, they serve as borders between past and present—what once was, and what could be—and the ever-present struggle of what should be. They stitch together the fabric of the eucatastrophic theme for both Middle-earth and Narnia, and allow each narrative to achieve the level of power and beauty that few other stories have accomplished (and continue to accomplish today). As Lewis stated in “On Stories,” in order to understand the borders of this continual dichotomy both in life and in ourselves, “we must draw on the only real ‘other world’ we know, that of the spirit” (12). The manifestation of this ‘other world’ will be explored more thoroughly in the next chapter, where the physical resurrection of the “divine” figure in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* sparks a figurative resurrection in other characters to propel each story’s final eucatastrophic redemption. Chapter Two will explore how the literal and figurative resurrection narratives are not always manifested in a positive light, and the way Tolkien and Lewis chose to represent the conundrum of evil to further their separate theological intentions. Chapter Three will examine the distinct differences between the portrayal of the figurative resurrection of men in Middle-earth and Narnia, and the way specific characters either enact or accept redemption. The presence of literal

and figurative resurrection narratives in both *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* demonstrate most effectively the fullest expression of Tolkien's eucatastrophic idea and Lewis's concept of "Joy." Although I will explore literal resurrection in the first chapter, the words "redemption" and "transformation" will be used more frequently to explore to "figurative" resurrections of evil beings and mankind in Chapters Two and Three. As good conquers over evil (with characters either brought back to life or defeated in victory), each individual redemption adds more life to the uncontainable, internal river of hope that eventually overflows into the final, complete redemption of both Narnia and Middle-earth; and if we allow it to, into our own world as well.

## II. THE RESURRECTION OF THE DIVINE

On September 19, 1931, Lewis took an evening stroll with Tolkien and Hugo Dyson around Addison's Walk in Oxford, England to discuss the power of myth. Although Lewis expressed his love for the art form, he couldn't see it having any semblance to veracity. In his mind, reason trampled any notion that myth revealed a deeper truth to life; emotional responses to art were simply fantastical delusions. Tolkien, on the other hand, had a drastically different opinion. According to Sayer, Tolkien explained that all myths "originate in God, [and] that they preserve something of God's truth, although often in a distorted form" (225). Although Lewis had explored the main doctrines of Christian belief at this point (the historical accuracy of the Gospels, the reality of God and the probable truth of Jesus as the Son of God), he couldn't see the relevance of "concepts similar to those found in pagan mythology—for instance, the ideas of sacrifice, propitiation, the shedding of blood, and redemption" (Sayer, 225). Tolkien relayed that the Christian story, although still a "myth," was created by God; in other words, it was a myth that came *true*, in which all other myths were an attempt to understand. If Lewis was to find the truth of the story in his own life, Tolkien argued, he must "appreciate the myth in the same spirit of imaginative understanding that he would bring to, say, a Wagnerian opera" (Sayer, 226). In a letter to his childhood friend Arthur Greeves, Lewis explained that he had fully embraced the Christian faith, and that his "long night talk with Dyson and Tolkien had a great deal to do with it" (Hooper, 425).

Through Tolkien's influence, Lewis came to understand the reason he so deeply connected to myth was because it allowed him to *feel* the truth of the gospel of Jesus,



rather than just knowing about it. To both men, the idea of redemption became as indubitable as the existence of oxygen, and the evidence of such was a real was breathing. In their understanding, to be “redeemed” was made true in the life of Jesus, who ransomed the people of God back to himself by purchasing their sin in full with his sacrificial crucifixion. This idea carries with it a sense of freedom—a breaking of chains—for by accepting the sacrifice of the dying God, one is rescued from the bondage of sin and symbolically resurrected with Christ to become, as it were, a new creation.

In light of this, the most literal examples of redemption in both Narnia and Middle-earth begin with the physical resurrections of “divine” characters. Gandalf’s rise from most certain death while battling the Balrog in the Mines of Moria allows him to transform from Gandalf the Grey to the esteemed Gandalf the White and provide invaluable advice and assistance in the battle for Middle-earth; similarly, Aslan’s resurrection by “Deeper Magic” in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* allows him defeat his enemy and redeem his people without any restraint. Both characters literal resurrection is essential to the progression of their narratives’ respective plots, and symbolizes the final redemptive theme of both stories. Gandalf and Aslan’s very physical resurrection experiences ignites a spark for metaphoric themes of redemption in several other characters, and symbolizes the final redemption (or the “eucatastrophe”) of both worlds; in many ways, these overt examples of resurrection in Narnia and Middle-earth are ultimately responsible for the final, complete resurrection of the happy endings to occur. Without their actual rise from death (albeit, deaths that are intentionally mysterious and unexplainable), both Middle-earth and Narnia would have been doomed to fall with them.

However, although Lewis and Tolkien similarly explore the notion redemption through their sub-created worlds, their representations vary significantly. Tolkien, on one hand, wished to stay clear of allegory. Although his narrative was undoubtedly influenced by his Christian beliefs, several characters represent different aspects of Jesus, and therefore no one character can be labeled as the sole representative of the Savior figure. While Gandalf may be the most literal example of resurrection (and the closest thing to a benevolent divine being), numerous others assist him in bringing about the redemption theme of the overall plot. Lewis, on the other hand, used Narnia as a literal personification of coming to faith in Christ. Aslan, therefore, is the only provider of redemption in the sub-created world. Rather than exploring the notion of redemption through several different narratives, Lewis focuses the entire plot on the divinity of Aslan, so that like the Pevensie children, the sole reason for entering into Narnia is to know the character of Jesus more in the real world. As Aslan explains at the end of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*: “by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there” (541). These differences are significant in the way we interpret the “divine” figures of each narrative, and in turn, the way their resurrections affect the lives of those around them.

### **Gandalf: “the mover of all that has been accomplished”**

Throughout Tolkien’s entire *Lord of the Rings* (which were split into three separate books against his original wishes [see *Letters* 221]), the themes of resurrection and redemption are audible and essential to the overall narrative. Running like a golden thread throughout

the story, several characters are reborn—mostly symbolically—in order to reveal that hope is still able to spark in the midst of terrible darkness. As the most literal (and critical) example of resurrection, Gandalf’s re-entrance into Middle-earth as Gandalf the White heralds a new sense of hope. Even the variety of his given names signals a process of transition from one identity to the next: the people of Gondor, Elrond, and Galadriel refer to him by his Elvish name Mithrandir (“Grey Traveler”); those in the south know him as Incánus (“North-spy”); in Rohan he is known as Greyhame (“Greycloak”), and to the dwarves, he is known as Tharkûn (“Staff-man”). He has also been called the White Rider, Stormcrow, and Láthspell (“Ill News”), which suggests either hope or dread at the mention of his name.

According to Tolkien’s *Silmarillion*, a collection of his mythopoeic works that present an extensive narrative history of the universe Eä or Arda, which includes the realms of Valinor, Númenor, and the rest of Middle-earth, Gandalf was originally a Maia, or a kind of celestial, angelic spirit, who took the form of an aged old man partly to demonstrate his humility as he walked among mortals. His original name was Olórin, a name suggestive of “dream” or “vision of mind” in Tolkien’s carefully constructed language. The wisest of his kind, he was sent by the Valar (the Norse godlike “Powers” of the earth) in particular Manwe the Wind-King and Varda the Star-Queen, to help guide and council those in Middle-earth who opposed the Dark Lord Sauron, himself a Maiar who had joined with the “evil” primordial power, Melkor or Morgoth, the original Satan-like figure in Tolkien’s mythology.

Thus, Gandalf already went through a kind of rebirth when entering Middle-earth—receiving a new name, a new home, and a new identity. But his most defining

“redemption” is revealed in his transformation from Gandalf the Grey to Gandalf the White, which occurs after what seemed to be his tragic death. In the Mines of Moria, Gandalf battled with a Balrog (which according to Tolkien is another Maia, an ancient evil spirit allied with Morgoth before the creation of the world) in order to hold the creature off long enough for his friends to attempt an escape. As the fellowship flees across the Bridge of Khazad-Dûm, a narrow span across a massive abyss, Gandalf turns to face the dreadful creature of shadow and flame that has caused the downfall of Moria. Although it seems to drain all of his strength, Gandalf is able to hold back the demon while collapsing the bridge, hurling the creature into the depths. Just as he turns away in triumph, the Balrog’s flaming whip wraps around Gandalf’s leg and pulls him down with it. At the time, he appeared to fall to his death while grappling with the demon, and the company was forced to continue on without their guide. It is later revealed that Gandalf was ultimately able to defeat the creature, but he had to travel to the depths of the Earth and sacrifice his life in the process.

Although the blow of losing Gandalf was immense, the remaining members of the Fellowship have no choice but to keep going forward. After stopping to rest and heal in the timeless, beautiful realm of Lothlórien, an elven forest kingdom hidden from the rest of the world, the fellowship agrees they must venture forward but are divided as to what direction to follow. Eventually, Frodo and Sam decide to venture off on their own away from the group after Boromir, the steward-prince of Gondor, falls into momentary temptation and tries to take the Ring by force. After Frodo and Sam escape, the remaining members of the fellowship are attacked by a band of orcs, and Merry and Pippin are kidnapped in the midst of the confusion. After fighting valiantly, Boromir dies

from battle wounds with “many Orcs [laid] slain, piled all about him and at his feet” (404), leaving Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli to pursue the orcs that kidnapped their friends in an unplanned search and rescue mission.

Following the orc-tracks all the way to the outskirts of Fangorn Forest, they camp on the edge of the trees and are seemingly haunted by a hooded old man who scares off their horses and then vanishes. Pursuing the tracks into the forest itself, they find the hill on which Merry and Pippin were rescued (unbeknownst to them) by Treebeard, a massive walking and talking oak tree who calls himself an Ent, or a shepherd of the forest. Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli encounter another dark hooded figure and are afraid it might be Saruman in disguise. They attempt to attack him, but he effortlessly foils their attempts. Suddenly, the figure throws off his cloak to reveal himself as Gandalf, although significantly different than he was before. Standing in glorious, blinding white attire, his appearance symbolizes his inner transformation: “his hair was white as snow in the sunshine; and gleaming white was his robe; his eyes under his deep brows were bright, piercing as the rays of the sun; power was in his hand. Between wonder, joy, and fear they stood and found no words to say” (484). The members of the fellowship all immediately respond to this new version of Gandalf as if he is a god; the old, familiar version removed to reveal the true, divine nature within. This instance echoes the transfiguration of Jesus in Matthew 17, where Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up to the top of a mountain to be transfigured before their eyes. As the three disciples are honored with this rare vision, they notice how “his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light” (Matthew 17:1-2). Just as these three disciples are privileged to catch a momentary glimpse of Jesus’s true, divine nature, so too the three

members of the fellowship are able to see the “trailing clouds of glory,” to use Wordsworth’s words, of Gandalf’s true celestial being (65). In his “Ode: Intimations of Immortality,” Wordsworth explores the idea of pre-existence and suggests that since children are more recently from the spiritual realm of God (being closer to the age of birth), they symbolically reveal (and recognize) traces of the divine. Since Gandalf recently just returned from this same realm, he similarly carries semblances of the spiritual world that the rest of the Fellowship are overwhelmed by. As Gandalf wraps his grey cloak about him again, “it seemed as if the sun had been shining, but now was hid in cloud again” (484). When Gimli ponders why Gandalf is dressed in all white, the wizard proclaims: “Yes, I am white now. [...] Indeed I *am* Saruman, one might almost say, Saruman as he should have been” (484). This new Gandalf, therefore, is the fulfillment of the past; in many ways, he represents complete redemption of the Valar’s original intentions of sending the Istari (or wizards) to Middle-earth. The idea that someone could become what another “should have been” further echoes biblical parallels, where Jesus is described as a “last” or “second” Adam: “The first man was from the Earth, a man of dust; the second man is from Heaven” (1 Cor. 15:47). Stephen Wellum elaborates: “Jesus is the new or last Adam, shaping ‘a new humanity’ from failed Israel and the fallen Gentiles made after his image” (2, quoting from Eph. 2:15). In a similar fashion, Gandalf’s (re)entrance into Middle-earth establishes him as the new, fulfilled counselor of mankind that Saruman should have been.

By agreeing to “put on human flesh” when entering Middle-earth and more or less abandoning his previous spiritual form, which is itself another reference to Christ, (“the Word” who “became flesh and dwelt among us” [John 1:14, ESV]), Gandalf opened

himself up to the potential of death. Tolkien intentionally doesn't explain how Gandalf rises from death, or by whom, but we can infer that his ethereal, original form allowed him access to his former realm, where he was potentially "sent back" to Middle-earth again by Manwe and Varda (or some other commanding Valar) to complete his original mission. As a wizard, Gandalf had initially been sent to this world to counsel and direct, but never to seek to obtain power for his own or match Sauron in his strength. However, because of his sacrifice, he has been given power and gained new depths of knowledge beyond his previous form. When describing his experience to members of the fellowship, he explains, "I have passed through fire and deep water, since we parted. I have forgotten much that I thought I knew, and learned again much that I had forgotten [...] The darkness took me, and I strayed out of thought and time, and I wandered far on roads that I will not tell. Naked I was sent back—for a brief time, until my task is done [...] there I lay staring upward, while the stars wheeled over, and each day was as long as a life-age on earth" (484, 491). Eventually he was rescued by Gwaihir the Windlord, a giant eagle sent by the Lady Galadriel to find him and bear him to Lothlórien, where he was healed and clothed in all white. As an angelic being who has taken the form of a wizened old man for the second time, Gandalf's resurrection has made him even more glorious than he was before. Gwaihir even comments that Gandalf feels "as light as a swan's feather in my claw. The Sun shines through you. Indeed I do not think you need me anymore: were I to let you fall, you would float upon the wind" (491). His newly resurrected body seems to blend his previous, celestial nature with his physical, earthly form.

This blending, however, comes with some adjustment. Initially, Gandalf seems to take a while to remember who he even is. When Aragorn speaks his name, he is said to

repeat the name to himself, “as if recalling from old memory a long disused word [...] ‘Yes, you may still call me Gandalf,’ he said, and the voice was the voice of their old friend and guide” (484). It seems that Gandalf has become *more* than himself—his experiences have stretched his knowledge of the cosmos and life itself so much that to ground himself in one specific time frame seems to take a while to get used to. Once they recognize that it is really Gandalf, Aragorn exclaims, “Beyond all hope you return to us in our time of need!” (484), and as Carolyn Scott points out, “that return from beyond hope characterizes Gandalf’s actions throughout the book” (135). He encourages his old friends to “be merry,” for they have met again “at the turn of the tide”; even though a great storm is brewing on the horizon, Gandalf assures them “that the tide has turned” (484). Gandalf’s very physical resurrection has not only restored the hope of his friends, but of Middle-earth itself.

After appearing to the remaining members of the fellowship, Gandalf heads directly into action. Although Aragon, Gimli and Legolas were valiantly searching for their lost hobbit friends, Gandalf reveals that they are safe with Treebeard and no longer an immediate concern. As Sauron’s power grows ever stronger, he reminds them that there are more pressing matters to attend to and persuades them to travel to Rohan to prepare for the impending war. Understanding the significance of bringing Rohan into the fight, Gandalf sets out to recruit his friend Théoden, the king of Rohan, to their cause. Once he arrives at the king’s hall, Gandalf realizes just how dire the situation is. Having been king for nearly forty years, Théoden has grown old and tired. He is so bent with age “that he seemed almost a dwarf,” and his hair had grown so white it looked “like snow upon his knees” (501). The imagery of his hair being as white as snow provides an



interesting juxtaposition to the previous description of Gandalf's appearance as he revealed himself to the Fellowship in Fangorn Forest, whose hair was also said to be "as white as snow in the sunshine" (484). The imagery of snow seems to take double meaning in light of this comparison: Gandalf's striking appearance highlights the beauty and wonder of his transformation, like the sudden appearance of newly fallen snow. It is both striking and marvelous, captivating to see and yet almost too bright to look at in full light of the sun. Théoden, on the other hand, is said to have grown so old in appearance that his hair lays white and lifeless on his lap like a blanket of snow. While snow can be a beautiful thing to witness, it can also be destructive—both a harbinger of death and evidence of barrenness. Rather than a romanticized, poetic image of glory, snow represents the harsh and bitterly frozen state of mind and body that Théoden has fallen into.

Although certainly not a young man anymore, Théoden's accelerated age and decrepit appearance are signs to Gandalf that something is greatly amiss. Upon hearing that Gríma Wormtongue was in service of the king and had commanded no one to enter the great hall, Gandalf replies sharply to the guard, "Wormtongue? Say no more! My errand is not to Wormtongue, but to the Lord of the Mark himself" (498). Although initially a faithful servant, we discover that Gríma eventually fell in league with Saruman and was secretly employed by him to weaken Théoden's mind through deceit, lies, and persuasion. Gandalf repeatedly refers to Gríma as a snake, claiming that he was "whispering in [Théoden's] ears, poisoning [his] thought, chilling [his] heart, weakening [his] limbs, while others watched and could do nothing" (510). By convincing Théoden that he was much older and weaker than he truly was, Gríma locked away the king's

mind as effectively as he had locked away his sword, which was found, among “many things which men had missed” in a hidden trunk (507). In the last years before the War of the Ring, Théoden had let his kingdom and his sanity slip out of his hands and placed them in the grip of Saruman’s avaricious servant. When Gandalf and his companions reach Théoden, they are initially mocked and rejected by the withered king. Rather than welcoming Gandalf, he proclaims: “You have ever been a herald of woe. Troubles follow you like crows, and ever the oftener the worse [...] Here you come again! And with you come evils worse than before. Why should I welcome you, Gandalf Stormcrow?” (501). As Gandalf approaches Théoden on his throne, he first chastises Wormtongue for assisting to poison the king’s mind: “A witless worm you have become, Gríma Wormtongue. Therefore be silent, and keep your forked tongue behind your teeth. I have not passed through fire and death to bandy crooked words with a serving man till the lightning falls” (503). Reinforcing his god-like presence, Gandalf’s chastisement of Wormtongue is consistent with Biblical references: in the traditional Christian view, the connection between the serpent and Satan has been well documented throughout scripture, starting in Genesis 3, where God curses the serpent and proclaims “enmity between man [the creature] and woman’s seed” (Genesis 3:14-15). Psalm 91 prophesies that Jesus will “tread upon the [...] adder” and “the serpent you will trample underfoot,” fulfilling the prophesy in Genesis 3 that Jesus as the Son of God will (immediately) defeat Satan in his resurrection from death, and (ultimately) defeat him in the final battle of Earth, described in Revelation 12 (Psalm 91:13). By repeatedly referring to Gríma as a snake-like creature, Gandalf symbolizes triumph and power. This is also demonstrated in Gandalf’s eventual decision to set him free, to “give him a horse and let him go at once,

wherever he chooses”; much like the Christ-figure, Gandalf is fully in control of Wormtongue’s fate and even has the right to take his life, yet he allows him to choose his course, for “by his choice” alone he will be judged (509).

More importantly than Gríma, Gandalf sets another person free in the golden hall of the king. As he approaches Théoden, he sings a song that praises the “light/that lies [in Lothlorien] ever, long and bright” and Galadriel, the Lady of the Wood: “white is the star in your white hand/unmarred, unstained is leaf and land/More fair than thoughts of Mortal Men” (502-3). By singing these words, Gandalf is said to have “suddenly changed” as he “casts his tattered cloak aside” and leans no longer on his bent staff (503). Further strengthening the religious symbolism, Gandalf sings to himself what could very likely be called a hymn, allowing him to gain courage and strength from praising the land and figure of someone more powerful than himself. Although Gandalf’s previous Maiar form was much more powerful than even the high-elves, as Galadriel is, his current Istar form forces him to weaken over the millennia, veiling his celestial grandeur. Similar to Christ, not only has Gandalf humbled himself by taking on the body of a human, he readily seeks help and guidance without pride or hesitation.

As he raises his staff, there was a mighty roll of thunder and the sunlight “was blotted from the eastern windows; the whole hall become suddenly dark as night [...] Only Gandalf could be seen, standing white and tall before the blackened hearth” (503). Like a beacon of light, Gandalf represents the sole hope of Rohan and provides an almost synesthetic experience: the brightness of his entire being is so overwhelming that all of Théoden’s senses to be enveloped by the sight. Gandalf slowly approaches Théoden, imploring him to “come out before your doors and look abroad. Too long have you sat in

the shadows and trusted to twisted tales and crooked promptings” (503). Gandalf brings his friend out of the darkness by reminding him who he really is: “age [does not] lie so heavily on your shoulders as some would have you think. Cast aside your prop!” At these words, “the black staff fell clattering on the stones” and Théoden draws himself up slowly, “as a man that is stiff from long bending over some dull toil”; he then appears before all in his court standing “tall and straight [...] and his eyes were blue as he looked into the opening sky” (504). It is significant that Gandalf redeems Théoden more through words than any kind of supernatural act. Although Gandalf’s redeemed self is revealed as he tosses his old cloak aside and lifts his staff towards a high window (at which point “the darkness seemed to clear” and “through the opening could be seen, high and far, a patch of shining light” (502)), these acts seem more symbolic of spiritual and intellectual enlightenment than any kind of magic. Although Gandalf has certainly gained abilities he never had before through his resurrection, the power of his figurative resurrection of Théoden is enacted by speaking truth over him as he removes the veil of lies. In this light, reminding someone of their true identity and purpose is just as effective as magic ever could be.

As Théoden slowly walks forward, “a faint light grew in the hall again”; the doors of his hall are swung open as “a keen air came whistling in” and Gandalf implores him to look upon his land and “breathe the free air” (503-4). As Théoden looks upon his kingdom as a newly restored man, “the sky above and to the west was still dark with thunder, and lightening far away flickered [...] but the wind had shifted to the north, and already the storm [...] was receding” and suddenly, “a shaft of sun stabbed down” through a break in the clouds behind them (504). Théoden’s resurrection is described in

very physical, earthly terms, and is reflected in the very land he rules over. The mental storm that he had been living under breaks as swiftly and clearly as the storm pouring over Rohan; Théoden's redemption then brings newly restored hope to both his kingdom and his people, represented in the ray of sunlight breaking through the clouds almost in agreement with his newly regained mind. As he comes to accept the truth about himself, it is almost like a man awoken from death and walking outside his tomb, feeling the air upon his skin and the brightness of the sun in a way he never had before. This strikes very similar chords to the story of Lazarus in the New Testament, where Jesus weeps over his friend's death before declaring him back to life and calling him out of the tomb (see John 11:1-44 [ESV]). The personal connection that Gandalf has to Théoden, combined with his innate knowledge of Théoden's true calling, allows him to reach deeper into his friend's heart than did the poison of Saruman's rhetoric and ultimately set him free. Théoden's physical transformation is reinforced by the physical acts of nature, which demonstrates to everyone around him his complete metamorphosis.

In the hope to effectively carry out his original mission, Gandalf seeks out his old companion Saruman (himself a fellow Maiar sent to Middle-earth to council its citizens) with Théoden and the rest of the fellowship in tow. Aware that Saruman would be an incredibly valuable ally, Gandalf goes to try convince him to join his cause. Mistrustful and stubborn, Saruman refuses to help, and Gandalf breaks his staff to expels him from the White Counsel and the Order of the Wizards, assuming his place in the process. Rather than seeking power or glory for himself, Gandalf uses his newly obtained position to further the cause of redeeming Middle-earth.

By defeating Saruman, Gandalf proves that the process of his resurrection has

made him greater than ever before, and arguably, even more than the most powerful of Istari. His physical redemption sparks a figurative, but very powerful, spark into the battle against the evil forces gaining control of Middle-earth, and his figurative resurrection of Théoden becomes essential to the overall victory, as Théoden ends up playing an enormous role in the eucatastrophic narrative, leading his own men in the Battle of Helm's Deep and then fighting valiantly in the Battle of the Pelennor Fields in Gondor. Carolyn F. Scott points out that the battle of Helm's Deep "provides a pattern for the operation of hope throughout the whole book" as she explains Gandalf's and Théoden's role in bringing aid and hope to the warriors:

The overwhelming numbers of Saruman's forces threatens to overcome the courage of Théoden's men, but Aragorn asserts, 'Yet dawn is ever the hope of men.' As the battle turns against Théoden and it seems that all is lost, Gandalf returns 'in the hour of need, unlooked for,' as Eomer puts it. Despair followed by hope, help unlooked for, the return of good *beyond* hope occur again and again throughout the book, and Gandalf is the catalyst for this pattern, in particular in moving beyond hope" (136).

Gandalf's own redemption has set into motion a series of events that has turned the tide of battle against evil in Middle-earth; by transforming Théoden and encouraging the decision to directly confront Saruman, he has "enabled the Rohirrim to express their hope through action" (Scott, 136). His return from the abyss has given him new power and an even greater urgency to fight the evil plaguing Middle-earth. He uses his wisdom and guidance to unite the Ents, the Rohirrim, the armies of Gondor and the West to overtake Isengard, provide essential aid at the battle at Minas Tirith, and achieve final victory at

the Black Gate (Scott, 145). Riding on the king of horses like a beacon of light, Gandalf is a tour de force. At the end of the *Return of the King*, Aragorn requests that Gandalf place the crown upon his head, for he is “the mover of all that has been accomplished, and this is his victory” (946). In every way, the resurrection of Gandalf the White plays an imperative role in the eventual redemption of all of Middle-earth.

While the desire to label Gandalf as an allegorical figure may be tempting, Tolkien fervently argued against it. In the forward to the Ballantine edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, he stated, “As for any inner meaning or ‘message,’ it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical”; he continued by claiming “many confuse ‘applicability’ with ‘allegory,’ but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed dominations of the author” (xvii). In his article “Tolkien, Creation, and Creativity,” Trevor Hart explains Tolkien’s argument: “Myths, legends, and fairy stories, he insists, are not allegories, and should not be treated as such. They are precisely *stories*, and while they certainly resonate with ‘realities’ and ‘truths’ of various sorts existing beyond their own borders—and in ways to which the critic must attend—more fundamentally what they are about is not something else, but entirely themselves” (41). Tolkien continually stressed that Middle Earth should be independent of allegorical analysis—while themes of his Catholic beliefs are undeniably present, the story is ambiguous enough to interpret the characters as individuals who contain “universal” truths within them (Carpenter, 206). In a letter to a friend, he explained that *The Lord of the Rings* “is of course, a fundamentally Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision [...] the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism” (*Letters*, 172). Gandalf, therefore, is more a *representation* of the Savior

figure, and shares similar qualities with several other characters in the story. For example, one could argue, as Scott does, that Aragorn and Frodo combine with Gandalf to be the true saviors of Middle Earth. In this light, the importance of Gandalf's resurrection is seen more in the way it furthers the plot than in highlighting the majesty of his character, although he is clearly glorified. His resurrection gives hope in a time of hopelessness (to quote Scott, Gandalf is "the locus of hope" in the narrative) and his presence, guidance, along with his continual call to maintain hope, prove integral to Middle-earth's final victory over evil (135).

### **Aslan: The Breaker of Stone**

Rather than a *representation* of a savior-figure, as Gandalf proved to be, there is no question that Aslan is the sole Savior of Narnia from the first mention of his character in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Aslan is first introduced into the narrative during the hundredth year of the tyrannical rule of Jadis (or White Witch), the self-proclaimed Queen of Narnia, a powerful sorceress that has condemned the land to endless winter. She has turned hundreds of Aslan's followers to stone already and is actively destroying any resistance to her cause. When the Pevensie children accidentally stumble into Narnia, they encounter two unexpectedly hospitable Beavers who take them in, feed them, and provide necessary context for their situation. When Mr. Beaver explains that there is hope in the fight against the White Witch, he proclaims, "Aslan is on the move"; immediately upon hearing his name, each child is significantly impacted:

Perhaps it has sometimes happened to you in a dream that someone says



something which you don't understand but in the dream it feels as if it has some enormous meaning—either a terrifying one which turns the whole dream into a nightmare or else a lovely meaning too lovely to put into words, which makes the dream so beautiful that you remember it all your life and are always wishing you could get into that dream again. It was like that now. At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in its inside. (141)

Neither we as the reader or any of the children have met Aslan yet, but his name alone is enough to evoke powerful emotional responses. This immediately creates a mythical aura around the great lion and proves that without any kind of introduction or description, his power and influence in this world are overwhelming and undeniable. Mr. Beaver explains that Aslan is the true king of Narnia, and reveals an ancient “Golden Age” prophecy that he believes the children are destined to fulfill:

*When Adam's flesh and Adam's bone*

*Sits at Cair Paravel in thone,*

*The evil time will be over and done.*

He elaborates further, explaining that at the great Narnian castle, Cair Paravel, there are four empty thrones destined to be claimed by “two Sons of Adam and two daughters of Eve”; if fulfilled, “it will be the end not only of the White Witch's reign, but of her life” (147-8). As the narrative unfolds, it is evident that Aslan is not only the king of Narnia, but its god. He constantly keeps watch over the land and allows events to unfold to according to his purposes, although generally not in the way people would imagine, as he “is not a tame lion” (194). He possesses a certain kind of omnipresence, and he can

influence, transport, heal, maneuver and manifest himself in several different ways. As with the Pevensie children, he periodically brings humans from Earth to both help Narnia and transform them in the process. As the son of the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea, Aslan comes from the world or realm known simply as “Aslan’s Country.” As the god of Narnia, he is equally dangerous and loving, unconquerable as an enemy and invaluable as an ally, unwaveringly good to those who know and follow him, and always watching over his creation. Although some have questioned or doubt him, such as a dwarf named Nikabrik, who mentions that “he was in Narnia only once that I ever heard of, and he didn’t stay long” (393), Aslan is in full control of his world. The only limitations on his power or autonomy reside in “Deeper Magic from the Dawn of Time,” yet his breath can heal those who have been petrified in stone, boost the morale of the faithless, put others to sleep or bring them to life.

Hence, without question, Aslan represents the supernatural, equally benevolent and disciplining deity most congruent with Christian doctrine, and anyone who studies the works of Lewis is acutely aware of his intentions to connect the figure of Aslan with that of Jesus Christ. However, while almost all analytical works on Narnia suggest that this is a direct allegory, Lewis (similar to Tolkien) was quick to redefine this kind of label for his character. Instead, Lewis wanted his audience to interpret Aslan as a *supposal* of Jesus. In a letter to a young girl named Sophia Starr, Lewis explained the difference: “I don’t say, ‘Let us represent Christ as Aslan.’ I say, ‘Supposing there was a world like Narnia, and supposing, like ours, it needed redemption, let us imagine what sort of incarnation and Passion and Resurrection Christ would have there’” (quoted in Hooper, 425). As Louis Markos states, *The Chronicles of Narnia* are “allegorical without being

allegorical [...] the Narnia books are not, technically speaking, Christian allegories. That is to say, they do not follow the aesthetic/linguistic pattern of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (or Lewis' own *The Pilgrim's Regress*) in which each character and place in the work stands in for one (and only one) meaning" (235). Lewis and Tolkien argued for a very formal view of allegory, yet their works could be read as subtle, "informal" allegories full of symbolism and moralistic meaning taken directly from Scripture (Pearce, 119). Despite his desire to explore the life of Christ through a fictional, fantastical lens, Lewis reveals another reason for writing the *Chronicles*, detailed in his essay "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said" from *On Stories*:

I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could." (47)

Russell Dalton comments, "at the height of his popularity as a lay theologian, there is some indication that Lewis was growing frustrated with the difficulties he faced in making his points through rational discourse" (131). These difficulties caused him to reevaluate his approach to Christian apologetics. His new approach, therefore, was to "steal past the watchful dragons" inherent in his audience: the pre-conceived notions of

Christianity that guarded the thoughts of his readers provided Lewis with the challenge of how to appeal to their hearts without triggering the defenses in their mind. As a staunch atheist in his twenties, Lewis himself fell victim to this mode of persuasion. In his memoir *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis explained how his heart was softened to a religious, spiritual reality through the mode of storytelling. In the myths he loved most dearly, although he believed that they were “lies breathed through silver,” he still felt deep emotional experiences when reading them that he couldn’t rationalize; he tried to convince himself that these emotions were “romantic delusions,” but after rereading a play by Euripides, he found himself once again “overwhelmed [...] off once more into the land of longing, [his] heart at once broken and exalted” (quoted in Young, 3).

For Lewis, allowing someone to come up with an idea on their own was much easier than planting the idea in them himself. Rather than telling someone how they should react to Aslan and the battle over good and evil, Lewis wanted his audience to *feel* their own emotions and come up with the connections for themselves, much as he had discovered through his discussion with Tolkien on the importance of myth and religion. In this way, first time readers were able to associate their emotions of Aslan’s sacrifice to that of the passion of Christ, and in that framework, retain and understand the story in an entirely new way. By understanding the character of Aslan in the story, audiences could relate these same characteristics to the God Lewis wanted him to represent. On the other hand, even if audiences didn’t accept his interpretation (or the religion he followed), they could at least appreciate it in a new light. Either way, a dragon would be evaded.

Following Christian doctrine, Aslan must experience a very literal resurrection in order to fulfill Narnia’s need for redemption. Upon entering Narnia at the beginning of

the *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Edmund is enchanted by the White Witch and willfully attempts to betray his siblings. Due to this transgression, Edmund was rightfully her slave. According to ancient Narnian law written on the Stone Table, any traitor belonging to the White Witch was subject to death, and “his blood is [her] property” (175). The Stone Table—a great slab of rock located in the central Narnia mainland which Aslan’s father established before the beginning of the world—details the unbreakable rules of Narnian conduct, and acts as a kind of pseudo-Ten Commandments for the world’s laws. Since the price of betrayal is death, death must be paid. In order to save Edmund’s life, Aslan struck a bargain with the White Witch to take his life instead. Echoing the Biblical law of shedding blood as a sacrificial atonement for sin (as referenced in Leviticus 17:11, where God tells Moses that “life is in the blood [...] for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life), Aslan presents his life (and therefore, sacred blood) as a peace offering.

Using her Stone Knife, Jadis executes Aslan on the Stone Table after shaving, gagging, and publically humiliating him. Unwilling to leave his side, Lucy and Susan stay all night weeping over Aslan’s dead body, until “the rising of the sun had made everything look 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 in two pieces by a great crack that ran down it from end to end; and there was no Aslan” (184). Suddenly, they hear a mighty voice behind them and turn to see “shining in the sunrise, larger than they had seen him before, shaking his mane (for it had apparently grown again) stood Aslan himself” (184). Again, the very nature of Narnia itself responds to Aslan’s arrival. As the sun rises over the horizon, so too the Son is resurrected before the

eyes of the stunned girls. Susan questions if he is a ghost, to which Aslan responds by licking her forehead, and “the warmth of his breath and a rich sort of smell that seemed to hang about his hair came all over her” (185). Similar to Gandalf’s revelation to the fellowship, Aslan is very alive, fully restored, and even more glorious than he was before. To answer the girls confusion, he explains that although the White Witch knew Deep Magic, “there is a magic deeper still which she did not know. Her knowledge goes back only to the dawn of time. But if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before Time dawned, she would have read a different incantation” (185). This “different incantation,” also known as “Deeper Magic from Before the Dawn of Time,” explains what when a willing victim that commits no treachery is killed in the traitor’s place, “the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards” (185). It is debatable if the White Witch even *could* look further back to this truth, since Aslan explains that her knowledge is limited. This kind of wisdom is only available to the Son of the Emperor, the true King of Narnia, and even in death he is in control of Narnia’s future.

In many ways, the grey Stone Table that ushers in Aslan’s resurrection could be compared to the grey cloak Gandalf leaves behind in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. As physical symbols of sacrifice, both objects had to be discarded in order to reveal gloriously resurrected bodies. Before either divine being could gain a new form, they had to willingly accept the objects that represented their humility. By shedding the cloak and breaking the stone, the rejection of these physical manifestations of a past life heralds in a new age of hope and redemption for the worlds they are resurrected back into.

Immediately after their rise from death, both characters use their new power to

propel the battle against the dark forces that had tried to defeat them. Without even pausing to explain what had just happened to the stunned Lucy and Susan, Aslan speeds into battle to defeat the White Witch, simultaneously freeing Narnia from tyranny and reestablishing justice. Aslan's willing sacrifice and miraculous resurrection provide the one and only hope of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* narrative. Had Aslan stayed dead, Edmund would have been vindicated, but Narnia would have fallen to the Witch's rule indefinitely. His resurrection is the key turning point, literally and figuratively allowing Narnia and its inhabitants to be redeemed.

As the creator of Narnia, every aspect of Aslan's existence is enough to bring about some kind of significant outward or inward change. In *The Magician's Nephew* (chronologically the first of the series but the sixth Lewis published), Aslan sings the world of Narnia into existence: "The eastern sky changed from white to pink and from pink to gold. The Voice rose and rose, till all the air was shaking with it. And just as it swelled to the mightiest and most glorious sound it had yet produced, the sun arose [...]. The earth was of many colours: they were fresh, hot and vivid. They made you feel excited; until you saw the Singer himself, and then you forgot everything else" (62). All of the characters present immediately feel awe for Aslan, except the White Witch (accidentally brought to this world by two humans), who "ever since the song began [had] felt that this whole world was filled with a Magic different from hers and stronger. She hated it [and] would have smashed that whole world, or all worlds, to pieces, if it would only stop the singing" (62). Before fleeing, she assaults Aslan with an iron bar she tore from a lamp-post in London, but the Lion remains undisturbed; the power of his song is so great that the iron bar, which had dropped on the ground, grows into a functional

lamp post (the very same lamp post that the Pevensie children marked for their own when first entering Narnia). Aslan's words are enough to turn even the strongest attempts of evil into something good and pleasant. Brought from another world, the lamp post Aslan re-creates serves as a superior, more perfect version of its former self: much like every human character transported from Earth, Aslan brings things into Narnia and figuratively resurrects them to become greater than they were before.

The process of incorporating others into Narnia isn't limited to people or objects, however, as Lewis uses Aslan as a clear link between several different traditions of myth. Besides the White Witch (who more or less represents baleful paganism), the classical Greco-Roman religious figures of Bacchus, dryads, river gods and centaurs make frequent appearances, and the ability of the animals to speak and have cognitive thought references ancient African and Native American legends. Rather than seeing these characters as "pre-Christian" beings, Lewis uses them to infuse his narrative with deeper mythological undertones. The fact that all of these beings are still subject to Aslan (indeed, either created or "brought" to Narnia under his control), reinforces Lewis' belief that all previous myths were in fact just an attempt to understand "the gleams of celestial strength and beauty" present in God's creation, fully demonstrated in the person of Jesus (quoted from Lewis's *Perelandra*, 104). Following Lewis's argument, Carpenter claims that the "pre-Christian" myths were in fact not "pre-Christian" at all, but rather people seeing a glimpse of the truth rather than the full picture, as God Himself "was the poet [...] an the images He used were real men and actual history" (44).

Rather than "shielding" his audience from these pagan figures, Lewis incorporates them into his narrative so his readers could "assent to the historical fact and also receive



the myth (fact though it has become) with the same imaginative embrace which we accord to all myths. One is hardly less necessary than the other” (*Myth Became Fact*, 67). Expanding the imagination, therefore, is necessary in understanding the Biblical parallels in Narnia, and Aslan acts as a direct link between the “old” religions and the “new.” For instance, in the final battle of *Prince Caspian*, Aslan summons the gods Bacchus and Silenus, and with their help brings the woods back to life. Bacchus calls Aslan “Lord” and must have his permission before acting (407). At the end of the story, to celebrate their victory, “Bacchus and Silenus and the Maenads began to dance, far wilder than the dance of the trees; not merely a dance for fun and beauty (though it was that too) but a magic dance of plenty, and where their hands touched and their feet fell, the feast came into existence” (414). Although they are creating and supernaturally conjuring up food and wine for the party, the description ends with the phrase, “Thus Aslan *feasted* the Narnians till long after the sunset died away” (414). Even in the midst of the gods divine providence, Aslan is the one in control of their actions.

Although Aslan’s words and actions have proven to be the lifeblood of Narnia, his presence alone is enough to bring significant transformation. When he first appears in Narnia in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the very land itself begins to respond to its creator. In one instance, once Edmund had been taken prisoner by the White Witch and is en route home to her castle, he begins to notice that it is becoming harder and harder for the sledge to move. After it gets stuck in a ditch, Edmund, the Witch, and her dwarf servant are forced to walk on foot. The Witch becomes increasingly more aggravated as she notices how the snow is beginning to thaw. Soon Edmund notices various signs of life, like flowers and warm air, until the Witch’s servant is forced to

admit that Aslan is causing the season to officially change to spring. Echoing the words of Mr. Beaver at the start of the narrative—“Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight/At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,/When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death/And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again”—Edmund begins to realize that he is getting closer to Aslan (93). Edmund’s heart “gave a great leap (though he hardly knew why) when he realized that the frost was over” (164). The melting of the snow and ice in Narnia acts as a symbolic resurrection of Edmund’s heart: although he is unconscious of it, the closer he gets to Aslan, the closer he is to redemption.

Aslan does allow humans and other beings to play some roles in the events of Narnia, however, which Dalton suggests is a reflection of the Christian idea of “Secondary Providence” (133). A clear example of this idea is seen when Aslan lets Peter fight a massive wolf preventing their rescue of Edmund from the White Witch. Rather than taking out the wolf on his own, Aslan explains to Peter how “[he] is the firstborn and will be High King over all the rest,” and then calls all the other creatures back for the Prince to “win his spurs” (170). While there are many things only Aslan can accomplish, it is evident that he wants his subjects to participate in the narrative of their own world as much as he does.

Despite the importance of their physical transformations, the most significant aspect of both Aslan and Gandalf’s resurrection narratives centers on the way it transforms those around them. Gandalf’s very physical rise from death ignites a metaphoric rebirth into the spirited resistance against Sauron and his forces, but Aslan’s resurrection represents the defeat of evil itself. As the god of Narnia, Aslan contains more

power than Gandalf or any other Maiar in *The Lord of the Rings*. Although both Gandalf and Aslan enter their respective worlds in a physical body to guide and instruct, Aslan is himself a “child” of the Deity, and therefore he obtains congruent characteristics and powers that the god possesses. Gandalf represents characteristics of the Jesus-like Savior, but Aslan alone symbolizes him. The literal act of rising from death allows both Gandalf and Aslan to attack darkness and the presence of evil in their respective worlds in ways that no other character is capable of, but Aslan alone can change the very fabric of that world itself. Since Aslan is a figure that *rules* rather than *servicing*, as Gandalf does, Lewis and Tolkien seem to be focusing on the separate (yet theologically congruent) natures of Christ: Gandalf represents the divine being that took on flesh to serve and council mankind, to guide them towards redemption and remind them of truth. Aslan, on the other hand, embodies the divinity of Christ, the great “I Am” and the “Word” of God through whom the world was created (John 8:58, 1:14), yet sacrificed himself to bring redemption to his people. Although Tolkien and Lewis focused on these different aspects of Christ in their narratives, both divine characters’ physical resurrections reveal the same essential truth: even when all seems lost, hope will never die.

### III. THE RISE OF THE ANTAGONIST

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the physical resurrection of the divine figures in both Middle-earth and Narnia are imperative to the overall final eucatastrophic redemption found in both narratives. However, this reality is not limited to the protagonists; several characters are presented to the audience as immediately or progressively evil, and therefore their literal and figurative resurrections appear as destructive, oppressive acts of antagonism. As both Tolkien and Lewis wrote through a Christian perspective—although they equally debated the label of allegory, as mentioned previously—the struggle between good and evil cannot be read outside the lines of a generic ethical framework. To refer to the Biblical background, the war between “good” and “evil” in both Middle-earth and Narnia plays out as dramatically and significantly as the primordial spiritual war in Heaven (as documented, for example, in Revelation 12:4-13, Isaiah 14:12-20, and Luke 10:18). Explored both literally and figuratively, Tolkien and Lewis’s created manifestations of evil or fallen characters in their sub-creations represents their personal intentions for the audience to interpret the notion of evil as a whole.

Although I echo Ralph Wood’s sentiments that “enough books and essays have been written on *The Lord of the Rings* as a battle between good and evil to exhaust any need for further study along those lines” (85), an exploration of the origins and deliberate manifestations of evil in Middle-earth and Narnia are unavoidable in order to fully explore the notion of resurrection in those realms. While Tolkien and Lewis fundamentally held similar ideas of theology, the way they explore the notion of evil

reveals very different intentions for how they desired their created myths to be interpreted. Although the manifestation of “fallen” characters in Middle-earth and Narnia share some similarities, there are undoubtedly very distinct differences in their narratives.

Before getting into their fundamental differences, we must first explore how the antagonists of both worlds are similar. Firstly, Lawrence Watt-Evans suggests that the perversion of good in Narnia stems from selfishness, from “the inability to put anyone else’s needs or wants above one’s own” (30), which can also be directly applied to the manifestation of evil in Middle-earth. He cites another example from Lewis’s short fantasy *The Great Divorce* where damned souls are allowed the chance to visit Heaven and stay if they so desire, on the one condition that they think of someone besides themselves. Most of them are unable to accomplish this seemingly simple act, which Watt-Evans explains as a “selfish [and] even very petty evil” which has the potential to be “seductive, addictive, something that traps the soul and separates it from divine grace—though not necessarily forever” (30). Lewis succinctly sums up this argument later in the book by quoting Milton’s Satan: “The choice of every lost soul can be expressed in the words, ‘Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven’” (55). In other words, Lewis suggests that the base problem of fallen man is the belief-put-into-action that serving or following one’s own desires (even in the context of doing good) is better than having to follow the rules of another. Even the original purveyors of sin, Adam and Eve, wanted good things after all—wisdom and delicious food to eat—but their fault was in the way they sought to obtain those things. P.H. Brazier elaborates on this idea further: “If God’s judgment is to say to the human upon death: ‘Thy will be done’ [...] this constitutes a banishment, exiled from the joy and ecstasy of Heaven (as Lucifer, the

fallen angel, experienced). The willfulness of the human has befitted it for nothing more than Hell, its own self-generated Hell [...] fit for nothing more than the invention of your own willfulness” (127). If we are to take “Hell” as a general representation of evil, and “Heaven” therefore, as a general representation of good, then this argument is an effective lens to view the evil that plagues both Middle-earth and Narnia. As discussed earlier, both Sauron and Saruman became evil because they chose their own will over following the will of another, as the Witches similarly exemplify. The wickedness that the fallen Middle-earth and Narnian characters experience, although manifested separately, results from inventions of their own willfulness; the difference, however, is where the motivation for this “self-generation” comes from.

The second similarity is how the evil characters in Narnia and Middle-earth must resort to “deception and guile” to achieve their desires since they are “unable to persuade others by means of either example or argument” (Wood, 90). This idea is clearly fleshed out in both realms: Sauron, Saruman, and even Gollum must deceive and trick in order to gain power in the *Lord of the Rings*, and the both the White Witch and The Lady of the Green Kirtle in *The Chronicles of Narnia* rule solely through the use of fear and manipulation. By rebelling against or attempting to twist the “good” in some form, the antagonistic characters in both Middle-earth and Narnia are unable to escape the very thing they seek to destroy. Wood argues this point further:

Tom Shippey rightly discerns Tolkien’s debt to St. Augustine’s revolutionary insight (repeated by Boethius) that evil is *privation boni*, the privation or absence of true being, the pervasion or deformation of the good. It follows that no completely evil thing can have true life. Neither

Morgoth nor Sauron was evil in the beginning. The things that they have spawned do not have true life; they are dreadful twistings and distortions of the good creation. Trolls are parodies of ents, the urk-hai are mockeries of men, and the orcs are apes of elves. Yet even in its wretched malformation of the good, evil cannot escape acknowledging what it denies. (86)

Wood's argument brings up a significant point: although evil is a result of distortion, of taking the good and twisting it for an alternative purpose, the *representations* of evil (created or not) seem to have no room for redemption. Cathy McSporran explores this concept in connection to the Witches in Lewis's *Chronicles*, explaining that their attempt to imitate the appearance of humanity (through the form of being "a daughter of Eve") is precisely what makes them so deceptive. Motivated by their lack of innate humanity, they put on the very guise of the figure they seek to seduce: "although the Witch claims to be human, there is not 'a drop of real human blood' in her. She has been disqualified from the human race, thanks to her wicked ancestor Lilith" (192). McSporran argues a similar point to Wood: since the Witch's lack a basic sense of humanity, there seems to be no redemption possible for them.

At first glance, the choice to represent the notion of evil through animate beings seems like a significant problem. Robert Tally explores this idea in his article "Let Us Now Praise Famous Orcs: Simple Humanity in Tolkien's Inhuman Creatures," arguing that Tolkien struggled with how to categorize the orcs:

Tolkien toyed with several different ideas to explain the Orcs existence, ranging from corrupted Men (rather than corrupted Elves) to low-level

Maia (and hence, fallen “angels” like Sauron himself) and even to automata without reason who were essentially puppets controlled by Morgoth or Sauron (an admittedly unlikely scenario). There is even the vague suggestion that Orcs *were* a kind of man [...] The crucial philosophical point in the various arguments concerning Orc origins is that their *very existence* shows that they have value and are worthy of being.

(18)

Tally continues to argue that Tolkien struggled with making the Orcs human-like by having families and communities (even the ability to reproduce), but at the end of the day, “even with the surmise that Orcs are in fact a twisted or corrupted form of men, Orcs in Tolkien’s world are not viewed as a subordinate or inferior race of humans, but as entirely inhuman” (21). Much like the Witches, Orcs are creatures of evil *because* of their innate lack of humanity. Whatever they may have been in the past, they are not human now. From a moral standpoint, this seems problematic. However, I would argue that perhaps Lewis and Tolkien are using the same tactic here: by personifying evil itself, the narrative is allowed to reach its eucatastrophic conclusion more effectively. By bringing evil to life, both authors are able to symbolize its defeat in more effective ways. Rather than good metaphorically overcoming bad, Tolkien and Lewis have characters physically and literally destroy evil, such as Aslan tackling the Witch or Wormtongue slitting Saruman’s throat. Since both authors undoubtedly believe in the chance for redemption (since the basis of their shared faith is defined by it), it seems logical that they are employing a more symbolic tactic in their works.

However, although Tolkien and Lewis similarly personify evil in specific



characters in Narnia and Middle-earth, the main difference in how they explore redemption in relation to their “fallen” characters is seen in their provided backstories. Tolkien’s *Silmarillion* (although published by his son posthumously), gives an extensive backstory of Middle-earth, from its creation to the end of the War of the Ring in the Third Age. Tolkien explains in detail how evil entered into Middle-earth through Melkor, an Ainu, one of the first “Holy Ones.” As the God of Middle-earth (Eru, or Ilúvatar) assigned the Ainur their own part to sing of the “Great Music,” Melkor decided to “interweave matters of his own imagining that were not in accord with the theme of Ilúvatar; for he sought therein to increase the power and glory of the part assigned to himself” (4). Therefore, evil entered Middle-earth through pride and the desire to generate individual will over that of the God figure. Although Lewis similarly explains how the entrance of evil into Narnia is the result of pride and selfishness (as exemplified in the White Witch trying to overtake Narnia), he doesn’t explain exactly where she originated. Rather than exploring the origins of evil, Lewis chooses to focus his narrative on its transgressive effects. As Watt-Evans argues, Lewis doesn’t elaborate on where evil comes from because, simply, “it is not part of the story he tells us” (29). In this light, while Tolkien’s and Lewis’s manifestations of evil similarly explore the allure of sinfulness, they present much different arguments: while Lewis focuses on the destructiveness of evil, Tolkien chooses to explore its complexity.

### **Tolkien and the Complication of Evil: Sauron**

In his commentary on Tom Shippey’s book *Author of the Century*, Wood argues

against Shippey's view of evil in Tolkien's work:

According to Shippey, Tolkien espouses not only a negative and Augustinian reading of the world's maleficence, but also a positive and Manichean doctrine of evil [...] in granting absolute and autonomous power to the Ring, Tolkien creates a conflict 'between the powers of Good and Evil, equal and opposite.' Not only is there 'no real difference' between these 'supposedly opposing powers,' Shippey argues, 'it is also a matter of chance which side to choose' [...] I maintain that Tolkien is a radical anti-dualist whose Augustinian understanding of evil reveals it to be far more terrifying and dangerous than anything Manichaeism can imagine. Precisely because it has no proper basis, no true and logical existence, no explicable source, evil is horribly irrational—hence the Christian refusal to accord evil proper existence and even, in the strict sense, to 'believe' in it (87).

I fully agree with the argument that Tolkien aligns himself more with an Augustinian line of thinking than Manichaeism, but I would take this a step further to suggest that Tolkien's exploration of evil in *The Lord of the Rings* is Miltonian above anything else. Just as John Milton represented Satan in his epic *Paradise Lost* as a character immediately attractive and empathetic, the characters that succumb to evil forces in Tolkien's fantasy are given a kind of backstory or explanation of their descent into sin that is meant to evoke levels of pity or empathy. Although some characters lack basic humanity and are therefore "unredeemable" (like the Orcs mentioned previously, who act more as convenient caricatures), "fallen" figures in Middle-earth are not innately corrupt

in and of themselves, but rather, through their own choices and actions, characters *become* evil.

This is most clearly exemplified by Sauron (the closest example of a Satan figure, excluding Morgoth) whose nefarious dominance has become so consuming that he adopts the symbol of an eye to represent his overwhelming foresight and metaphysical presence, and was used as a type of emblem by his armies. More a force than a physical character, evil manifests itself in several different ways in *The Lord of the Rings*, demonstrating that it is complicated and multifaceted. Characters are manipulated and twisted by evil, but they are not *innately* evil from the start. Several toy with evil thoughts or ideas, only to repent of them later. Tolkien explores the notion of evil as something incredibly deceptive and desirable. In this light, the road to evil is much more slippery, paved with good intentions rather than inherent, unavoidable corruption.

In his work *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, William Blake famously took an aggressively subversive stance to John Milton's portrayal of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, claiming the celebrated poet "was in the Devil's party without even knowing it" (149-50). While this argument concisely represents the way most late-eighteenth or nineteenth-century English critics viewed Milton's take on evil, I argue that Milton's exploration of the notion of maleficence was in fact incredibly realistic. By painting the character of Satan as someone immediately empathetic and appealing, Milton demonstrated the essential nature of evil as a strong, seductive force that manipulates as effectively as it persuades. Satan gradually becomes less and less sympathetic, so that by the end of the narrative, his true nefarious nature is revealed and the audience realizes the way they, like so many of the demons beside him, have been deceived. On an even deeper level, the

reader is invited into the psyche of Satan himself to better understand his descent into deprivation and the mindset that led him there.

In a very similar fashion, Tolkien chose to explore the notion of evil as something as misleading as it is destructive. Rather than drawing clear black and white lines of the good-versus-evil battle, Tolkien sets his narrative in the morally obscure grey area. As Tally states, “the representatives of so-called ‘evil’ in Tolkien’s world are far more complex and ambiguous than generally supposed [...] Indeed, so many of the “evil ones”—such as Sauron, Saruman, and even the great original Satan-figure, Melkor or Morgoth—are really the Fallen, figures of pity rather than pure hatred” (“Places,” 51). These fallen characters ultimately “go bad” because of their innate sense of pride and desire for control, but they become “figures of pity” due to the fact that their original intentions, for the most part, stem from the desire to genuinely do good, or at least, to do good for others.

In this light, the negative resurrection narratives we see in *Lord of the Rings* represent tragically warped characters. The most obviously evil force in Tolkien’s epic is undoubtedly that of Sauron (excluding Morgoth, who is not involved directly with the narrative). According to Tolkien’s *Silmarillion*, Sauron was originally known as Mairon, “the admirable” (which reflects Satan’s original name Lucifer, who was described as “the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” [Ezekiel 28:12]) and was one of the most powerful Maia, even more so than Olórin (as Gandalf was originally known). Mairon’s highest virtue was his love for order and perfection. This very virtue, however, grew to be the source of his downfall. According to *The Silmarillion*, Sauron was one of many Maiar who “were drawn to [Melkor’s] splendor in the days of his greatness, and

remained in that allegiance down into his darkness” (23). Sauron, therefore, was seduced by the glory of Melkor (renamed Morgoth by the Elves), and slowly realized that he could achieve greater order and perfection in aligning himself with the darkness than he would be able to in his current state. His allegiance eventually grew so strong that even after Morgoth was defeated and banned from the world, Sauron encouraged and deceived a group of Men to worship Morgoth as the one and true god. Rather than destroy Middle-earth, Sauron wanted to dominate the minds and wills of its inhabitants. After allying himself with Morgoth, he became a spy for the Dark Lord and fed him information about the Valar while keeping up the appearance that he was faithful to them. Only once Morgoth had established his presence in Middle-earth did Sauron abandon the Blessed Realms and openly declare his allegiance to him, forever branding himself as an enemy of the Valar and the people of Middle-earth. Renamed by his foes Sauron (“the abhorred” or “the abominable”) as a mockery of his original name, Sauron waged war against the inhabitants of Middle-earth and was known as the “greatest of [Morgoth’s] servants that have names” (23). Soon, he was feared all over the realm as “a sorcerer of dreadful power [and] master of shadows and of phantoms;” he was “foul in wisdom, cruel in strength, misshaping what he touched, twisting what he ruled, lord of werewolves; his dominion was torment” (*Silmarillion*, 182).

In the Second Age, Sauron began revealing himself in Middle-earth and established a kingdom in the land of Mordor, raising massive armies and corrupting the hearts of men with delusions of prosperity, wealth, and glorious power. As Tolkien explains, many Elves bought into Sauron’s lies, as he “was still fair in that early time, and his motives and those of the Elves seemed to go partly together: the healing of the

desolate lands. Sauron found their weak point in suggesting that, in helping one another, they could make Western Middle-earth as beautiful as Valinor. It was really a veiled attack on the gods, an incitement to try and make a separate independent paradise”; with the aid of Sauron’s knowledge of lore, they created the Rings of Power that not only prevented aging, but enhanced the natural powers of the possessor and revealed the invisible spiritual world while making the wearer invisible to the naked eye (*The Silmarillion*, xxiv-xxv).

Sauron’s first figurative death occurred as he officially turned over to the “dark side,” receiving a new name and a new identity. Tolkien states that he was initially “only less evil than his master in that for long he served another and not himself,” but after years he “rose like a shadow of Morgoth and a ghost of his malice, and walked behind him on the same ruinous path down into the Void” (*Silmarillion*, 24). Initially, Sauron was only slightly less evil because he still served another besides himself, Morgoth. However, this “Void” can be interpreted not only as a literal descent into evil, but also as figurative state of self-focus and pride. In a letter to his son Christopher, Tolkien elaborates on Sauron’s fall from grace:

In my story Sauron represents as near an approach to the wholly evil will as is possible. He had gone the way of all tyrants: beginning well, at least on the level that while desiring to order all things according to his own wisdom he still at first considered the (economic) well-being of other inhabitants of the Earth. But he went further than human tyrants in pride and the lust for domination, being in origin an immortal (angelic) spirit. (*Letters*, 184)

Sauron, therefore, fell due to his desire for complete control; through his own willfulness, he created his own evil. Although he “considered the well-being” of Middle-earth’s inhabitants, Sauron’s greatest weakness was giving into pride. Since, as an immortal spirit greater than any human being, his emotions are expounded: the deeper his desire for control, the more destructive his eventual fall. Just as Satan’s ultimate sin was his desire to be equal with God, Sauron “desired to be a God-King, and was held to be this by his servants; if he had been victorious he would have demanded divine honor from all rational creatures and absolute temporal power over the whole world” (*Letters*, 184). Ironically, Sauron’s transformation from a pure, virtuous Maia into a power-hungry pseudo God-King arose initially from good intentions. Because of his admiration of his strength, Sauron became seduced by Morgoth’s power and fell with him into the depths of evil, becoming his chief lieutenant. When he discovered how greatly his knowledge was admired by others (and how easily he could gain influence over them), “his pride became boundless” (*Letters*, 184). Sauron’s desire for knowledge, strength, and appreciation were not evil in and of themselves; however, because he chose his own will over channeling those desires into better service, he willfully led himself down a path of destruction.

Along with his figurative transformation into an evil being, Sauron experienced a rather physical transformation as well. As he continued to gain power, this change becomes complete: “By the end of the Second Age he assumed the position of Morgoth’s representative. By the end of the Third Age (though actually much weaker than before) he claimed to be Morgoth returned” (*Letters*, 184). After Morgoth is defeated in battle, Sauron repents out of fear, and the gods allow him the chance of redemption if he appears

before them in judgment. Rejecting the idea of serving another being again rather than himself, Sauron fails to go before the gods as commanded. Lingering in Middle-earth, “very slowly, beginning with fair motives: the reorganizing and rehabilitation of the ruin of Middle-earth, 'neglected by the gods', he becomes a reincarnation of Evil, and a thing lusting for Complete Power – and so consumed ever more fiercely with hate” (*Letters* 131). Tolkien suggests in this same letter that Sauron “should be thought of as very terrible,” as the form that he took “was that of a man of more than human stature, but not gigantic” (131). Sauron *takes on* a new form, one more terrible and imposing than his previous one, which solidifies his resurrection into a fully evil being. Rejecting his old “fair” appearance to deceive others, Sauron now chooses to be terrible to look upon, hiding nothing of his true purposes.

By using Sauron as an over-arching force of evil, Tolkien presents an interesting hierarchy of how his influence effects various creatures based on their “original” form. When explaining to Frodo the existence of the Ringwraiths, Gandalf explains that they were once men who were given special rings of power by Sauron, and slowly became ensnared: “Long ago they fell under the dominion of the one [Ring], and they became Ringwraiths, shadows under his great Shadow, his most terrible servants” (84). Shippey argues that the Ringwraiths “work for the most part not physically but psychologically, paralyzing the will, disarming all resistance. This may have something to do with process of becoming a wraith yourself” (125). He continues, “more usually the suspicion is that people *make themselves into wraiths*. They accept the gifts of Sauron, quite likely with the intention of using them for some purpose which they identify as good. But then they start to cut corners, to eliminate opponents, to believe in some ‘cause,’ or the habits they



have acquired while working for the ‘cause,’ destroys any moral sense and even remaining humanity” (125). As reflections or “shadows” of the Great Shadow, Sauron, the Ringwraiths demonstrate the eventual reality of what happens to men when they give themselves over completely to the power of the Ring. They become like “mist or smoke, both physical, even dangerous and choking, but at the same time effectively intangible” (124).

I argue, however, that this same explanation could be used as a lens to view *all* creatures who have come under the power of the Ring. If the Ringwraiths represent how Men will eventually become should they give into the temptations of the Ring fully, how does this power manifest itself to divine creatures and “lowly” creatures, like Hobbits? We see clear examples of this through the characters of Saruman and Gollum, respectively; by their transformations, various manifestations of evil are enacted through desire for power and glory, represented through the physical object of the Ring. In many ways, Sauron succeeds in resurrecting (I use the term here to suggest that they are physically and metaphorically created into new beings by a greater, outside force) new figures of evil to carry out his will and further his campaign against the good.

### **The Effects of Evil: Saruman and Gollum**

Rather than aligning with the “dark side,” Saruman’s downfall came in his attempt to usurp Sauron and claim the Ring as his own. Saruman’s actions, although consistent with his original commission from the Council of the Valar to thwart Sauron, revealed his own desire for power and control, which eventually consumed him.

Saruman's downfall mirrors Sauron's own descent into evil in many ways: originally a Maia of Aulë the Smith (as Sauron had once been), Saruman's original name was Curumo, meaning "skillful one." After Sauron's defeat by the Last Alliance of Elves and Men, the leader of the Valar, Manwë, called a council to discuss how to deal with the growing shadow of Sauron that was beginning to fall on Middle-earth for a second time. Five emissaries were sent to Middle-earth (of which Gandalf was one) to be "mighty, peers of Sauron, yet forgo might, and clothe themselves in flesh" and were known as Istari, or Wizards (*Unfinished Tales*, 393). By taking the form of men, the Istari were sent to unite the Elves and Men against Sauron and his forces, but were forbidden to attempt to match the Dark Lord in power or domination. Curumo was appointed the leader of the group, and was therefore seen as the most powerful. As the five wizards landed in Middle-earth, Cirdan the Shipwright gave Narya, the Red Ring, to Gandalf rather than Saruman, whom he had divined "the greatest spirit and the wisest" (*Unfinished Tales*, 389). A seed of jealousy was planted in Saruman from that moment forward, perhaps out of fear that Gandalf would eventually supplant him as the chief of wizards.

When the White Council was formed in the Third Age to counter Sauron, Saruman was appointed its leader. Galadriel, however, wanted Gandalf in the position, but Gandalf declined as Saruman "begrudged them, for his pride and desire of mastery was grown great" (*Silmarillion*, 361). Perhaps this innate fear of perceived inadequacy drove Saruman to envy Sauron and his power, and begin to study ringlore. Throughout *The Hobbit*, Tolkien documents Sauron's growing paranoia. During the meetings of the council, Saruman first began to notice Gandalf's interests in the Hobbits and the Shire. As his suspicions of Gandalf's plans for self-enhancement grew, Saruman began to keep

a greater watch on Gandalf and “set spies to watch all his movements”; concerned about Gandalf’s connections to the Shire, he “soon begins to keep agents in Bree and Southfarthing” (*Lord the Rings, Appendix B*, 1064). Saruman eventually settled in Isengard to establish himself as an integral figure in the informal alliance defending the west of Middle-earth; it is also in Isengard’s tower, Orthanc, that he discovered one of the remaining Palantiri, or seeing-stones. When Gandalf suggested that the White Council attack Dol Guldur, which he had confirmed was possessed by Sauron, Saruman convinced them to refrain (*Lord of the Rings, Appendix B*, 1063). Gandalf begins to grow suspicious of Saruman, explaining to Frodo that “his knowledge is deep, but his pride has grown with it [...] I might perhaps have consulted Saruman the White [about the Ring], but something always held me back (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, 47). In “The Rings of Power and the Third Age,” Tolkien states that “the Wise were troubled, but none as yet perceived that [Saruman] had turned to dark thoughts and was already a traitor in heart: for he so desired that he and no other should find the Great Ring, so that he might wield it himself and order all the world to his will” (*Silmarillion*, 362).

When Gandalf revealed to Saruman the location of the One Ring, Saruman, overcome with desire, discloses his secret alliance with Sauron and his desire to obtain it. Gandalf realizes the depth of his treachery as Saruman reveals how he has shed the title of Saruman the White, now calling himself “Saruman of Many-Colours” and wearing a ring, no longer holding any allegiance to the White Council. After failing to recruit Gandalf to his side, Saruman held him captive at Isengard; Gandalf only escaped with the help of Gwaihir the Windlord, and then made haste to make Saruman’s treachery known to the rest of the White Council. Attempting at last to take the Ring for himself, Saruman

threw all of his power into several different (failed) attempts, such as sending out raiding parties of Orcs to attack the Fellowship on their path from Rohan to Gondor, and kidnapping Merry and Pippin with the hopes that they had the Ring. Eventually, his reign of power was ended when Treebeard and the Ents attacked and destroyed Isengard. Having returned from death, Gandalf rode to Orthanc to confront his old comrade and try one last time to recruit him back to the White Council. When Saruman refused out of pride and anger, Gandalf confirmed his worst fears and usurped him as the head of Wizards; breaking his staff, Gandalf assumed the role of righteous leader that Saruman should have always been.

Saruman's final defeat, however, came at the hands of none other than his servant, revealing just how far Saruman had truly fallen. After convincing the Ents to let him out of Isengard, he traveled to the Shire and spent his final days as a despot in Hobbiton, known to the locals simply as Sharkey (from the Orkish *sharkû*, meaning "old man"). After having his position usurped by Gandalf, Saruman goes to the very place he knows is closest to Gandalf's heart and seeks to destroy it. Saruman's initial jealousy and distrust of Gandalf drove him into paranoia, activating his search for the Ring and the desire to be all-powerful. When Frodo approaches Saruman in the Shire at the end of *The Return of the King*, Saruman claims, "I has already done much that you will find it hard to mend or undo in your lives. And it will be pleasant to think of that and set it against my injuries" (995). Even though he has destroyed others' lives, Saruman can only think of himself and the way wreaking havoc will bring him comfort. Although he has enacted terrible evil, Frodo approaches Saruman with sympathy: "Well, if that is what you find pleasure in [...] I pity you. It will be a pleasure of memory only, I fear. Go at once and

never return!” (995). When the rest of the Hobbits demand that Saruman be killed, Frodo argues that it is “useless to meet revenge with revenge: it will heal nothing [...] I do not wish for him to be slain in this evil mode. He was great once, of a noble kind that we should not dare raise our hands against. He is fallen, and his cure is beyond us; but I would still spare him, in the hope that he may find it” (996).

Frodo reveals Tolkien’s main argument against evil in this monologue: although Saruman has slipped into darkness, he wasn’t always the way he is now. Whatever road has led him to the depths of this evil, there is still some hope for his redemption, however small. Frodo recognizes the initial greatness in Saruman, which suggests that somewhere in him, there is still the potential for that greatness to be exhumed. Unfortunately, despite Frodo’s forgiveness, Saruman is slayed by Wormtongue, who in turn is pierced with arrows, and marking the last stroke in the War of the Ring.

The idea that someone can (in some form) be redeemed from corruption is perhaps best exemplified through the character of Gollum. Shippey argues that Gollum could best be read through the lens of a character with an addiction: “Gandalf’s whole argument could be summed up as saying that use of the Ring is addictive. One use need not be disastrous on its own, but each use tends to strengthen the urge for another. The addiction can be shaken off in the early stages (which explains Bilbo and Sam), but once it has taken hold, it cannot be broken by will-power alone” (119). Wood makes a compelling argument when describing the effects of the Ring as a “pernicious power” that makes its wearer invisible, “thus overcoming the limits of bodily existence, especially the slowness and discipline and labor required in achieving all good things [...] It has made Gollum an idolater of food, perhaps the best of all the gifts in the good

creation” (90-91). Not only has the Ring brought Gollum into an eternal state of deathlessness (which Bilbo described as a feeling of being “thin and stretched, like too little butter over too much bread” (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, 32)), it forces him to constantly and greedily mutter to himself as he becomes “a parody of authentic community, unable to enter relation with any other human or hobbitic creature” (Wood, 91). Tolkien invites us to view the tragic character of Gollum as something to be pitied. Although Gollum has committed terrible crimes, he represents the *effects* of giving into evil more than an evil character in and of himself. In this way, Tolkien uses him as a physical representation of deprivation, almost like a drug addict who continually acts antagonistically against himself and others because he has given himself over fully to something beyond his control.

Gollum’s descent into evil was both immediate and painfully gradual. Originally a Stoor named Sméagol (one of the three early races of Hobbit-like creatures), he and his cousin Déagol went fishing for his birthday in the Gladden Fields, where Déagol stumbled upon the Ring. Almost immediately, Sméagol was seduced by the power of the Ring and demanded it as his birthday present. When his cousin refused, he descended into a barbaric rage and choked him to death, claiming the Ring as his own (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, 51-53). Tolkien doesn’t elaborate on Sméagol’s personality before this incident, but it can be inferred that the presence of the Ring alone drove him into a kind of temporary madness. Quickly corrupted by its influence, he was banished by his people and receded into the depths of the Misty Mountains, where he “wormed his way like a maggot into the heart of the hills, and vanished out of all knowledge” (53). There, he stayed for five hundred years as his body and mind were twisted over centuries

through the influence of the Ring, warping him into an entirely different creature. He was later renamed Gollum due to the revolving sound of his gurgling, gagging cough, solidifying his transformation. Almost as if resurrected in reverse, Sméagol descended into the cave as a kind of tomb and came out of it neither fully dead or fully living, an undead creature kept alive solely through the power of Sauron's Ring. If an outside benevolent power resurrected Gandalf to bring hope to the battle against evil in Middle-earth, then the spiritual presence of Sauron's wickedness does the opposite: it keeps him constantly alive, but never fully *living*. Rather than made more terrifyingly glorious, like the divine Saruman, or into a physical phantom of shadow and darkness like the Ringwraiths from Men, Sméagol represents the effects of evil on a "lower" creature, who becomes a very symbolic representation of an inner, twisted state of mind being manifested in bodily form.

Throughout the entire *Lord of the Rings* narrative, Gollum is treated with varying levels of disgust and pity. When hearing that Bilbo refrained from murdering Gollum when he encountered him in the Orc-mines deep under the Misty Mountains, Frodo comments to Gandalf, "what a pity that Bilbo did not stab that vile creature"; Gandalf turns this notion on its head, proclaiming that pity is exactly what "stayed his hand" (59). After meeting Gollum in person and spending time with him, Frodo develops a sort of affection for the creature and attempts to remind him of his former self. In certain moments, Gollum seems to obtain some of his previous humanity, such as a touching moment when he sees Frodo sleeping in Sam's lap:

A strange expression passed over his lean hungry face. The gleam faded from his eyes, and they went dim and grey, old and tired. A spasm of pain

seemed to twist him, and he turned away, peering back up towards the pass, shaking his head, as if engaged in some interior debate. Then he came back, and slowly putting out a trembling hand, very cautiously he touched Frodo's knee — but almost the touch was a caress. For a fleeting moment, could one of the sleepers have seen him, they would have thought that they beheld an old weary hobbit, shrunken by the years that had carried him far beyond his time, beyond friends and kin, and the fields and streams of youth, an old starved pitiable thing. (699)

Gollum seems to momentarily break free from the power of the Ring to remember all that he has given up for it: friendship, companionship, and love. This moment acts like a temporary rehab-treatment for Gollum, bringing him back to reality and revealing, if only fleetingly, what a full life feels like.

Sam also demonstrates a surprising moment of pity towards Gollum, “who after many betrayals, spares [him] yet again on Mount Doom, clearly out of some sort of sympathy [...] It seems the ‘something that restrained him’ from a killing thrust is an awareness of what it means to have borne the Ring” (Shippey, 143). Sam cannot help but see the inner humanity of Gollum because he understands on a personal level *why* Gollum has turned into the creature he is. Rather than someone (or something) enacting evil, Gollum is more or less a victim of it. Although he acts in many instances like a villain, it appears that he genuinely cannot help himself.

Gollum’s final redemption is in every way an accident. The moment Frodo fully gave into the Ring’s power and slipped it on his finger at the edge of Mount Doom, Gollum goes into a kind of maddening frenzy similar to the attack on his cousin hundreds



of years before. It seemed the moment Gollum first encountered the Ring and the final moment he felt he was going to lose it made him abandon all inhibition. Sam notices Gollum on the edge of the abyss “fighting like a mad thing with an unseen foe [...] all the while he hissed but spoke no words”; Gollum then bit off Frodo’s finger and was “dancing like a mad thing, [holding] aloft the ring, a finger still thrust within its circle” (925). Rejoicing and crying out “My Precious! O my Precious!” his eyes were too focused on his prize to notice that he had stepped too far, and “waver[ing] for a moment on the brink [...] with a shriek he fell” (925). When Sam laments to Frodo about how glad he was that Gollum was finally gone, Frodo poignantly reminds him of Gandalf’s words: “*Even Gollum may have something yet to do . . .* But for him, Sam, I could not have destroyed the Ring. The Quest would have been in vain, even at the bitter end. So let us forgive him! For the Quest is achieved, and now all is over” (926). Although Frodo had carried the Ring to the edges of Mount Doom, he ends up being unable to save anything (least of all himself), except by the mere accident of being out-fought by Gollum. In the end, despite his complete lack of humanity and twisted desires, Gollum brings about the final salvation of Middle-earth from evil. Gollum may have perished, but the result of his death ironically brought forth life. In this light, Tolkien makes perfectly clear that despite the fallen nature of a being, there is still potential in them to be redeemed—or at the very least, for their life to have been a part of the completion of a greater good.

From the most glorious creatures of Middle-earth to the lowest, the manifestation of evil in Tolkien’s narrative acts as a degenerative force. Although temporarily making them more “powerful,” over time they become little more than shells of their former

nature. Rather than a transformation into a greater self, evil diminishes these characters to nothing more than the absence of the thing they are fighting against. After the Ring slips into the fiery cracks of Mount Doom, successfully becoming “unmade,” every evil creature in the narrative either immediately or gradually becomes “unmade” as well.

With the Ring’s destruction, Sauron was permanently robbed of his physical form and reduced to a malevolent spirit that hovered above Mordor as a “huge shape of shadow, impenetrable, lightening-crowned [...] terrible but impotent,” only to be blown away by a great wind (933). Gandalf predicted this earlier, suggesting, “if [the Ring] is destroyed, then he will fall, and his fall will be so low that none can foresee his arising ever again. For he will lose the best part of his strength that was native to him in its beginning, and all that was made or begun with that power will crumble, and he will be maimed forever, becoming a spirit of malice that gnaws itself in the shadows, but cannot grow again or take shape. And so a great evil of this world will be removed” (861). Having once been a great and mighty being, Sauron’s defeat forced him to lose “the best part of his [former] strength,” and diminished him to nothing more than a powerless shadow. In his arrogance, Sauron infused his greatest power into an object subject to destruction, blinded by pride and any possibility of defeat. Believing himself invincible, the destruction of Sauron’s greatest weapon (by none other than a small, tortured hobbit-like creature) proved him to be little more than a memory.

Appropriately, Saruman’s defeat is similarly humiliating and degrading. Once Frodo exiled him from the Shire, Saruman insults his servant Gríma Wormtongue and demands that he follow him. At this, something “snapped” in Wormtongue and with a “snarl like a dog he sprang on Saruman’s back, jerked his head back, cut his throat, and

with a yell ran off down the lane” (996). Frodo and his companions notice about the dead body of Saruman “a grey mist” that rose “to a great height like smoke from a fire” that wavered momentarily until a cold wind came from the West and “with a sigh [it] dissolved into nothing” (997). As a Maia, Saruman’s spirit doesn’t fully die; separated from his body as an incorporeal spirit, Tolkien indicates that his spirit is left naked, powerless and wandering forever, never to return to either Middle-earth or the Blessed Realms.

As a more “lowly” creature, Gollum’s destruction is less ambiguous. Having lost any connection to his old self the moment he decided to betray Frodo and Sam, Gollum sacrifices his life to the Ring both deliberately and subconsciously. As he leaps upon Frodo to steal the Ring on the edge of Mount Doom, he successfully regains “his precious” as both he and the Ring topple over the edge. Staring adoringly at his long sought after treasure, Gollum quite literally becomes consumed by it as the fiery lava destroys them both. Since Gollum has revealed moments of humanity, like chinks in his otherwise impenetrable armor, his destruction comes almost as a mercy. Rather than existing in an insubstantial, eternal form of darkness, Gollum is finally freed from his addiction at last. To Tolkien, it seems, the greater the power, the more destructive and long-lasting the effects of the fall.

### **Lewis and the Manifestation of Evil**

Wood’s previously discussed argument that evil is “horribly irrational” is perhaps more evidenced in Lewis’s writings than Tolkien’s. In Narnia, the entrance of evil is

devastating, consuming, and intentionally unexplained. I argue that Lewis, unlike Tolkien, takes a much more Augustinian stance in representing the antagonists in his work, with little to no pity encouraged in their narratives. This is not to say that transgressors in the Narnia realm aren't offered mercy or forgiveness (in fact, this is one of the most significant messages of the narrative), but the most powerful villainous forces in Narnia are demonstrated more as personifications of evil, so that their defeat is meant solely to highlight the victory of the good. Lewis does not encourage us to pity the figures of evil in his narrative mainly because their whole purpose is to represent opposition. Rather than a theological exploration of the creation and manifestation of evil, as Tolkien presents, Lewis hones in his narrative solely on the victory of Aslan as a symbol of the passion of Christ. It seems Lewis cares less where the White or Emerald Witches come from or what made them evil; rather, he chooses to focus his narrative on what they choose to represent.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, Lewis examines theological issues, mainly temptation and suffering, in a satirical, epistolary style through the point-of-view conversation of two demons. Screwtape, a Senior Demon, writes to his nephew Wormwood about the character of God: "at His right hand are 'pleasures forevermore.' [...] He has filled His world full of pleasures. There are things for humans to do all day long...sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working. Everything has to be *twisted* before it's any use to us. We fight under cruel disadvantages. Nothing is naturally on our side" (118-119). Here lies the basis for the exploration of evil in his fantasy *The Chronicles of Narnia*; every example of evil works under distinct disadvantages, and must twist things in order to achieve any kind of effective persuasion. In the Augustinian

view, evil is not aligned with divinity, as if it is something eternally inherent in original Creation, nor is it some primordial force equal and opposite of the good. Therefore, “good and evil share no equivalence,” but rather, “goodness and being share ontological status” (Wood, 86). In this view, rather than an equal force to balance or attack the good, evil can be explained more accurately against what it is *not*; just as darkness is simply the absence of light, or cold the absence of heat, evil is merely the absence (or distortion) of the right.

Similar to Sauron and Saruman, the two Witches in *The Chronicles of Narnia* narrative serve as the most obvious villains. Known as the Jadis (the White Witch) and the Lady of the Green Kirtle (the Emerald Witch), both characters embody the “femme fatale” trope as they seek not only to usurp traditional Narnian authority, but to destroy and reconstruct the very fabric of Narnia’s existence. The basis for both Witch’s evil is found in their lack of humanity. When Peter asks Mr. Beaver if the White Witch is human or not, the beaver responds that “she’d like us to believe it [...] but she’s no daughter of Eve. She comes of your father Adam’s [...] first wife, her they called Lilith. And she was one of the Jinn. That’s what she comes from on one side. And on the other she comes of the giants” (147). One could read the fact that the White and Green Witches are daughters of Lilith as a commentary by Lewis on the nature of Biblical inerrancy: the act of “adding” a later Jewish mythology to the original Messianic text taints the truth of the gospel, and is therefore an act of evil.

As the creator of Narnia, Aslan has ordained that a “daughter of Eve” shall someday rule as queen. Therefore, in accordance with this law, the White Witch has no right to rule. Although her blood more or less disqualifies her, it doesn’t make her

*inherently* evil. By evoking the Islamic mythology of Lilith, it seems doubtful that Lewis meant to evoke all of the gender and sexual implications of this myth, but rather, to unite the separate worlds of Narnia and Earth with a common thread. Although it is potentially problematic to explore the misogynistic undertones of the Lilith narrative, Lewis uses this idea mainly to explain how the Witches can *appear* human without actually being so at all. The White Witch and the Emerald Witch's main evil, therefore, is their attempt rule Narnia through defiance and deception. Although it is unclear how the Witches came to be as evil as they are (or if they were always that way), Lewis focuses on their deliberate decisions to defy the rules of the Creator of the world they seek to dominate. Through their conscious, sinful choices, the Witches come to embody evil itself.

In her exploration of White and Emerald Witch's depiction within in the realm of Narnia, McSporrán claims that Lewis "makes them out-Lilith Lilith: they demand not 'equality,' as she did, but cruel and tyrannical domination. Like another Lilith, the eponymous Witch-princess of George MacDonald's *Lilith*, she insists on being 'queen of Hell, and mistress of the worlds'" (215, 193). Jadis and the unnamed "Lady of the Green Kirtle" imitate and twist the original nature of Eve to lure in their prey. As described in Genesis, Eve was God's final creation that made Him proclaim that all was complete and "very good" (Genesis 1:31). In this narrative, Eve's glory is beyond physical—being made from the very bones of Adam's ribs, she is both equal and wholly good, the only creation worthy enough to be united "in one flesh" with her companion. Her physical body makes her glorious because it is *human*, rather unlike the beasts of the field that were described as "unsuitable companions" for Adam (Genesis 2:20). Twisting this idea, the Witches use their physical bodies to deceive and manipulate rather than divinely rule.

As McSporran points out, the witches “are at [their] most formidable when being seductive [...] While most women are routinely described as beautiful in Narnia, the Witches are the *most* beautiful: the Green Witch is ‘the most beautiful lady’ Drinian has ever seen,’ while Digory reflects in later life that he has ‘never known a woman so beautiful’ as the White Witch” (34).

Along with their physical bodies, both Witches use modes of reason and logic to undermine and poison faith in Aslan (or the idea of “Real Narnia”) as a whole. The White Witch convinces Edmund through silky words that she will make him the sole prince of Narnia if he obeys her commands, and the Green Witch effectively persuades Eustace and Jill that there is in fact no Narnia or Aslan outside of the underground world they were trapped in. By using both mind and body, the Witches leave no means of persuasion untouched. In this light, Lewis seems to personify the two Witches as the embodiment of sin itself, fleshed out both mentally and physically. In his book *Enchiridion*, Augustine argues that when something is corrupted, “its corruption is an evil because it is, by just so much, a privation of the good [...] Where there is evil, there is a corresponding diminution of the good” (6). The evil that plagues Narnia, therefore, is a direct reaction or encouragement from the two Witch’s influence, as evil is born *from* sinful action rather than something equally opposite to it. As a force that plagues Narnia until the final eucatastrophic redemption at the end of *The Last Battle* when all of the “old” Narnia has passed, the White Witch acts as the physical embodiment of sin that is figuratively resurrected throughout the narrative. Although the Emerald Witch is a separate entity from the White Witch (both referred to as “Northern Witches” who are “from the same crew” (*The Silver Chair*, 577)), she represents a very physical resurrection of evil that

seeks to consume and destroy Narnia as deliberately as Jadis's attempt in *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. As physical manifestations of sin, whatever form it may take, they can only be completely defeated with the end of Narnia itself.

### **Jadis: The White Witch**

When we first meet the White Witch in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Edmund sees her riding towards him on a sled and comments that she seemed a “great lady, taller than any woman he had ever seen”; she had “white fur up to her throat” and her face was “white — not merely pale, but white like snow or paper or icing sugar, except for her very red mouth. It was a beautiful face in other respects, but proud and cold and stern” (123). Although she is beautiful, Lewis suggests something more monstrous beneath her surface, something completely contrary to nature. Jadis is not merely dressed in white; she is the essence of the most destructive, deadly kind of whiteness: ice and snow. Similar to Théoden's described appearance before his transformation, the White Witch's association with snow suggests death and suffering, a blizzard of cold without any sign of shelter. McSporrán argues that Jadis's “undead palor, together with her ‘very red mouth,’ makes her appearance vampiric. The White Witch produces whiteness, the snow of eternal winter; she turns her enemies into stone, freezing them into her own state of un-death” (194). Edmund uses the words “snow” and “icing sugar” to describe the pale Queen, which suggests that she twists the good and desirable into something more destructive. Although both things are wonderful in small doses, they can harm or even



kill you if you experience too much. Her beauty and charming demeanor immediately deceives Edmund, and as the narrative unfolds we come to realize that the White Witch's sole purpose is deception and destruction; like her numerous fur coats, she wraps herself in angelic beauty to disguise the demonic nature beneath.

As explained in the creation story of Narnia in *The Magician's Nephew*, Jadis was brought into Narnia accidentally by a young man named Digory Kirke. Having destroyed her previous homeland, Charn, through use of the "Deplorable Word" (a spell that essentially destroyed the entire realm and everyone in it) Jadis left no possible option for anyone else but herself to be Queen. When explaining why enacted a mass genocide, she claims, "I was the Queen. They were all *my* people. What else were they there for but to do my will?" (42). Little is known about Jadis's biography, but we do know that she delved into dark magic in her previous world far beyond what was considered acceptable. After destroying all of the inhabitants of her homeland, she cast a spell over herself that would preserve her sitting picturesquely beside statues of her ancestors in the palace's Hall of Images until someone came and awoke her by ringing a bell. She waited like this for nearly a thousand years until a young man named Digory Kirke (who eventually became the professor in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*) and a girl named Polly accidentally stumbled into her world and awoke her. Through physical force and irresistible charm, Jadis convinced the two young companions to bring her back to their world, where she wreaked havoc in London before accidentally stumbling into the unborn world of Narnia.

As the first evil to enter Narnia, Jadis continued to be the sole purveyor of suffering until her eventual defeat by Aslan. The White Witch's main talent was the art of

persuasion, and she plays a double tempter in the narrative: both the serpent and Eve (McSporran, 195). Upon learning that Aslan intended to plant a Tree of Protection in order to keep her out, Jadis tells Digory, “If you do not stop and listen to me now, you will miss some knowledge that would have made you happy all your life” (93). She then appeals to both his reason and physical body, claiming that the seed he has to plant the tree is really “the apple of youth, the apple of life” and she implores him, “Eat it boy, eat it; and you and I will both live forever and be king and queen” (93). When her propositions of knowledge and power don’t work, she then appeals to Digory’s heart. As Digory’s mother lay dying of cancer back on Earth, Jadis proclaims how “one bite of the apple would heal her. We are here by ourselves and the Lion is far away. Use your magic and go back to your own world [...] Soon she will be quite well again. All will be well again” (94). Similar to Satan in the Biblical narrative, Jadis uses good things to twist the truth and taint the desire of others. She could care less for Digory’s mother or for his life to be “well again”—what Jadis cares most deeply about is the promotion of her own desires, and by appealing to Digory’s virtuous heart, she uses the good to further her evil. As McSporran notes, “The White Witch, therefore, as both Lilith and Satan, has a double dose of what Lewis described as the ‘Great Sin’: Pride, through which ‘the devil became the devil [...] the complete anti-God state of mind’ (100). Lilith demands equality; the White Witch demands, like Milton’s Satan, to ‘reign in Hell,’ even if she must turn Narnia into hell to achieve her aim” (McSporran, 194). Jadis’s highest form of evil is her complete selfishness, which informs all of her decisions. The good that she tries to appeal to in Digory therefore, is merely a means of persuasion.

The tree Aslan had planted in the original garden of Narnia eventually dies

hundreds of years later, suggesting that the divine protection over Narnia has faded. Now that Aslan was “gone” from Narnia, Jadis proclaimed herself Queen and the Empress of the Lone Islands at last. Perpetuating an eternal climate of snow and winter throughout Narnia, Jadis successfully tortured her subjects into fear while simultaneously preventing any more Trees of Protection to be grown. In fear of a Golden Prophecy that proclaimed two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve would eventually overthrow her, Jadis banned all humans from Narnia. When she then encounters Edmund in the forest unexpectedly once day, she treats him in a manner similar to that which she had treated Digory, charmingly appealing to both his body and his mind. Jadis offers Edmund enchanted Turkish Delight, so that once he tasted it, he “would want more and more of it, and would even, if [he] were allowed, go on eating it until [he] killed [himself]” (126). Just as she tried to twist the meaning of the apple seed at the creation of Narnia, claiming it would cure all of Digory’s ailments and make him immortal, so too she perverts Edmund’s favorite dessert into something dark, deadly, and wholly opposite of what it was created to do (delight and fill, rather than crave and empty). Then, once Edmund has been sufficiently filled physically, the White Witch appeals to his pride. Claiming that she “wants a nice boy whom [she] could bring up as a prince and who would be a king of Narnia” since he is the “cleverest and handsomest young man [she’s] ever met,” the White Witch delivers the final blow when she claims that Edmunds brothers and sisters will serve below him as his “courtiers” (126). Not only does the Witch appeal to Edmund’s stomach, she feeds the seed of pride and jealousy within him that longed to be more important than his siblings. Jadis not only twists the truth, but warps the very fabric of nature to achieve her desires. As Aslan creates a new world, Jadis eventually invades

it—negatively resurrecting Narnia to become the antithesis of its original design, cold and frozen rather than warm, alive, and free.

### **Lady of the Green Kirtle: The Emerald Witch**

In *The Silver Chair*, the Lady of the Green Kirtle is first introduced to the reader through a flashback. Eustance and his friend Jill have been brought to Narnia by Aslan to find and rescue the lost prince Rillian, and upon their arrival they are brought to a council of Owls to hear how the young prince has miraculously disappeared without a trace. As the young prince and his mother were enjoying the day in a northern glade of Narnia, Rillian notices his mother had fallen asleep; in the attempt to not disturb her rest, the prince and the rest of his company “went a little way from her, that their tales and laughter might not wake her” (575). Without them realizing, a great serpent came silently out of the wood and bit her hand, escaping before anyone could kill it. Rillian’s mother “seemed to be trying hard to tell him something [...] but she could not speak clearly and, whatever her message was, she died without delivering it” (575). Devastated, the young prince continually went back to the glade to enact revenge on the “great, shining, and green as poison” snake that took his mother from him, but slowly, his courtiers began to notice a change in him (575). Those around Rillian remarked that he had the “eye of a man who has seen visions,” and when his servant Drinian inquired what the Prince has been up to in the glade, Rillian responded, “I have almost forgotten the worm this seven days [...] I have seen there the most beautiful thing that was ever made” (576). This “beautiful thing” is none other than the Emerald Witch, who Lewis presents as someone

equally beautiful and mysterious. It seems suspicious that Rillian should be so seduced by the presence of a woman in the very spot his mother was killed, and Drinian is understandably perplexed. When he accompanies the young prince to the glade, Drinian sees the Lady and remarks that she “was the most beautiful lady he had ever seen [...] tall and great, shining, and wrapped in a thin garment as green as poison, the Prince started at her like a man out of his wits” (576). Drinian, although captivated, silently thinks to himself how “this shining green woman was evil” (576). Lewis makes this connection even more overt, as Jill remarks, “I bet that serpent and that woman were the same person” (576). As evidenced with the White Witch, this Lady is defined completely by one specific color, or, as McSporrán argues, “the color’s negative associations: her ‘green’ is not the shade of grass and living things, but the color of poison. Poison is what she is and what she does” (197).

After Drinian’s encounter with the Emerald Witch, Rillian rides out to the glade by himself and never returns; from that moment forward, “no trace of him was ever found in Narnia nor any neighboring land, and neither his horse nor his hat nor his cloak nor anything else was ever found” (576). After several close-encounters, Eustace and Jill finally discover the prince in an underground world known as Underland, found deep beneath the world of Narnia. Having been successfully kidnapped by the Emerald Witch, Rillian is put under a spell that makes him forget his country, his title, and forces him to become wholly submissive to her whims. For ten years he has lived under this enchantment, but an hour everyday, he is said to “go mad” and turn into a great green serpent. To prevent escaping or harming anyone, he is bound to an enchanted Silver Chair until the hour is over and he is “himself” again. In Underland, reality has become

madness, and madness is seen as truth. When Eustace and Jill realize that the Prince is quite sane in the midst of his “fitful rage” (even calling upon the name of Aslan to aid him and set him free) they decide to cut him loose.

As with Jadis, the Emerald Witch manipulates both the body and mind. Although her enchantment over Rillian has been broken, the Emerald Witch’s greatest weapon is her ability to warp perception. When physical enchantment fails, the Emerald Witch appeals to reason. Casting a spell over the group to confuse their thinking, she questions Narnia’s existence and wonders if they are mentally ill. When Puddleglum claims that Narnia is real and that he has lived there all his life, the queen asks patronizingly, “Tell me, I pray you, where that country is? (629). Puddleglum responds that it is “Up there...I—I don’t exactly know where.” The Witch responds with a kind musical laugh, wondering if they actually believe there is a world “among the stones and mortar of the roof” (629). When Jill, Eustace and Puddleglum remind her that she met them in the Overworld, she has to change her tactics slightly, suggesting that they had only imagined it in a dream. The Emerald Witch doesn’t just twist the truth, as Jadis does, she attempts to redefine truth altogether. As Charlie Starr notes, “The witch-queen’s greatest lie here is not in denying that she met them in Overworld. It is in making the imaginative knowing of myth, fairy-tale, and the heart’s desire out to be mere dream and play. If our dreams and play are mere fun and fancy, then our deepest wishes and desires for life can just as easily be reduced to nothing, to an allusion or projection of our own psyches” (14). Soon, the entire group falls under her spell and begins to believe that there really is no Narnia, no other world besides that the Witch has created. In one brief moment the spell is broken when Puddleglum remembers seeing the sun, and Rillian explains how it is like a lamp,

“only far greater and brighter. It giveth light to the whole Overworld and hangeth in the sky” (631). The Witch responds with a reductionist argument, wondering, “Hangeth from what, my lord? [...] You see? When you try to think out clearly what this *sun* must be, you cannot tell me. You can only tell me it is like the lamp. Your *sun* is a dream; and there is nothing in that dream that was not copied from the lamp. The lamp is the real thing; the *sun* is but a tale, a children’s story” (631). As Starr argues, this is “a perfectly reasonable question which, of course, can’t be answered because, while the description is an analogy, the witch makes it literal [...] Here the witch attacks not only knowledge of the heart but another quality of the imagination as well” (15). She argues that the truth the group clings to is mere wish fulfillment, “foolish dreams”; in the end, it is only Puddleglum’s conviction that his deepest desires are “truer than the world he sees around him that saves the heroes from the witch’s spell” (Starr, 15).

Whereas Jadis’s every action was an attempt to establish her dominance in the real world, the Emerald Witch wants to destroy reality itself. She steals Prince Rillian as a kind of husband-slave, establishes a falsely constructed reality of Narnia in Underland, and convinces all who wander there that her world is the only “true” world there is. She is a mockery of the real: of monarchy, relationship, Narnia, and even truth itself. Therefore, she represents a resurrection of evil in Narnia, becoming a new, destructively evil force that Jadis only represented. As McSporrán argues, “The Green Witch is, in many ways, more of a threat than her White counterpart, and her heresies against Aslan are more extreme. Jadis dismisses Aslan as a mere ‘wild animal’; the Queen of Underland casts doubt upon his very existence. Using hypnotic music and green fire-herbs, she persuades her prisoners to doubt the existence of Narnia, the sun, and Aslan himself [...] This is

worse than rebellion against God; this is atheism” (198). The Emerald Witch, therefore, is Lewis’s fantastical example of the fulfillment of the dystopian future he prophesied against in *The Abolition of Man*, where he criticizes modern attempts to disparage “natural” values on rational grounds. Arguing against relativism—the theory that there are no absolute truths—Lewis suggests that a culture that fully embraces the rationalistic worldview would lead to the decay of morality and a bankruptcy of virtue. The final chapter describes the ultimate consequences of this train of thought, where the values and morals of the majority are controlled by a small group who rule by a “perfect” understanding of the world. As rulers of the culture, able to “see through” any system of morality that might force them to act against their desires, they are dictated solely by their own unrestricted passions. He refers to relativism as “The Green Book” (which echoes back to the Emerald Witch) that produces “Men Without Chests,” who follow “a preserving devotion to truth but cannot be long maintained without the aid of a sentiment” (36). The Emerald Witch, therefore, is the ruler of her own created culture. She is a symbol of reason without imagination, a force that creates “men without chests” to live in a cold, calculating false reality. As a symbolic representation of calculated reason, she knows truth and yet denies it completely to design her own view of meaning. In this way, she creates perhaps the most dangerous creature in Narnia: the irreligious being who, Lewis would argue, can only see part of the truth but attempts to make it the whole reality.

Both Jadis and the Emerald Witch represent the physical manifestation of evil in Narnia, and they work in tandem, although hundreds of years apart in rule, to bring about the end of traditional Narnian hierarchy. Many whispered in the dark about the White



Witch's potential ability to be resurrected from the dead and form a resurgence against Aslan once again. In *Prince Caspian*, a dwarf named Nikabrik tries to convince the prince that the White Witch was in fact still (in some form) alive, asking him to "call her up" and to "draw the circle [and] prepare the blue fire" (394). Although her body is never physically resurrected, her memory was enough to keep the fear of evil alive for centuries. The Emerald Witch, therefore, represents a deeper, more extensive body of evil figuratively resurrected from the White Witch's memory. She is a manifestation of greed itself: her complete green attire, seductive nature and silky tongue, combined with the fact that she can actually take on the bodily form of snake, makes her the complete, more destructive resurrection of the serpent figure Jadis took in the garden at Narnia's birth. Both Witches innate lack of humanity allowed them to embody the full personification of evil. By presenting the effects of following such evil, as well as their eventual destruction, it seems Lewis attempts to appeal to the good angel on his reader's shoulders while effectively demonstrating the disastrous results of following the enticing devil on the other.

By showing the genesis and evolution of evil in *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien was able to explore its nuanced effects throughout his extensive narrative. It is clear that he struggled with allowing any character to be utterly irredeemable (as evidenced in his difficulty over how to define the orcs), and in the end, even the triumph over evil is wrought with complications. Lewis, on the other hand, personifies evil simply to provide contrast to the divine figure of Aslan. Although the narrative doesn't negate the fact that the Witches have the option to choose good, their deliberate actions represent evil itself. As caricatures of sinfulness, therefore, their eventual defeat is meant to be a sign of

triumph and joy rather than pity. Instead of exploring the complex nature of evil, Lewis focuses his narrative on the triumph of the good. Choosing to manifest the notion of evil in different ways, Lewis and Tolkien encourage their audiences to focus on separate yet congruent ideas of theology: the Fall of mankind and the triumph of Christ. In this light, each exploration is appropriate to their intended purposes for their narratives, and reflects the core of their mutual theological beliefs in the triumph of good over evil.

#### IV. THE FIGURATIVE RESURRECTION OF MEN

The previous two chapters have looked at the literal and figurative resurrection narratives of divine and evil forces in Middle-earth and Narnia, and the way several characters assisted in the final eucatastrophic redemption of both worlds either through intentional action or eventual defeat. This final chapter will examine how Lewis and Tolkien explore a more symbolic resurrection of a few key characters as a metaphor for redemption, specifically through mankind. These characters are not necessarily divinely good or infernally evil, but like all human beings, are capable of both good and bad acts. By focusing the crux of the narratives on the importance of mortal beings to bring about a complete, final eucatastrophe, both Lewis and Tolkien invite the reader to see him or herself in the story—and perhaps, even to translate those narratives into their own lives. Although there are numerous examples of redemption in both Middle-earth and Narnia, I have chosen the few that I believe represent this notion the most effectively. However, as demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2, Tolkien's and Lewis's characters represent distinctly different aspects of the Christian doctrine they are trying to evoke. Since Narnia's manifestation is meant to be symbolic of the goodness of God, the "redeemed" figures in Narnia, Edmund and Eustace, are appropriately described as sinners in need of salvation. On the other hand, as Middle-earth is meant to embody various themes of the Christian doctrine "infused in the narrative" (as Tolkien previously argued), the "redeemed" beings in Middle-earth, Aragorn and Frodo, are already good characters who go on to fulfill great destinies. Although both authors explore the transformative effects of redemption, Lewis uses the idea as a metaphor for spiritual salvation, while Tolkien, contrastingly,

uses it to demonstrate the process of embracing our individual, necessary calling in the battle against evil.

**Aragorn: “The crownless again shall be king”**

Although Gandalf experienced the most literal resurrection in the *Lord of the Rings* narrative, there is perhaps no other character who provides a more profound figurative resurrection than that of Aragorn. In every way, Aragorn represents hope, restoration, and redemption. Belonging to the royal bloodline of the Numenorean’s, Aragorn is the sole Heir of Elendil, the long-awaited king destined to unite the disparate realms of Middle-earth. Possessing the broken shards of Narsil, the sword broken in the overthrow of Sauron at the end of the Second Age, Aragorn has the sword reforged, signifying his rightful status as king and symbolizing the future restoration of his people. Aragorn’s journey to kingship plays an essential role in the final victory of Middle-earth and heralds in a new age of glory and peace.

Playing an imperative role in the eucatastrophic redemption of Middle-earth in the battle against Sauron’s forces, Aragorn can be read as a kind of savior figure equivalent to that of Gandalf. Although not a divine creature, Aragorn is figuratively resurrected into his “true” self to assume kingship over Middle-earth and bring it into full redemption. Consistent with the Biblical narrative, Aragorn gradually revealing his true identity to more and more people over time echoes the narrative of Jesus. Initially, Jesus made sure that his true identity was kept hidden to assure that he wasn’t revealed as the Son of God until the necessary time. Performing his first miracle at a wedding in Cana by turning

water in wine for the wedding guests, he made sure it was done in secret, as his “hour [had] not yet come” (John 2:1-9). Several times throughout his ministry, he made sure his disciples refrained from revealing his true identity as to not incite a rebellion that would try to forcefully make him king. Gradually, Jesus began to reveal his identity to more and more people, until he finally openly claimed the title of Messiah and was embraced by the masses, most notably seen in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem days before the Last Supper (referenced in all four gospels). In a similar fashion, Aragorn patiently waits to reveal his true identity until the right time has come. In order to fulfill his own ministry, in a sense, Aragorn must prove himself as a true messiah figure before claiming the title of king.

Assuming his role as the sixteenth Chieftain of the Dúnedain (or the Rangers of the North), Aragorn goes into the wild to live with the remnants of his people whose kingdom had been destroyed several centuries before. In doing so, Aragorn reflects the Biblical theme of “going into the wilderness” before beginning a specific ministry or calling given by God (as seen in Moses fleeing from Egypt to Midian, where God revealed His mission for Moses through the burning bush [Exodus 2-3], and Jesus, who went into the wilderness to fast for forty days before gathering his disciples [Matthew 4]). By going into the wild, Aragorn learns valuable skills as a tracker and guide, gains deeper knowledge of the lands of Middle-earth, and develops his strength as a warrior before assuming the weight of the responsibility set before him. As with Moses and Jesus (in the New Testament theological argument that Moses is the foreshadowing of Christ), Aragorn gradually unveils his purpose and destined leadership to more and more people. First, he reveals it to the hobbits, who notice how “in his eyes gleamed a light, keen and

commanding” (168). As with Jesus, who revealed himself to his chosen disciples (a ragtag team of fishermen and tax collectors), it is significant that Aragorn chooses neither kings nor prominent figures to reveal himself to in Middle-earth, but rather (seemingly) insignificant, weak creatures who have no association with fame or glory. Through the “savior’s” assistance, however, the hobbits (like the disciples) go on to accomplish mighty things in the battle for redemption.

Aragorn seemingly grows in confidence as he continues to unveil his real identity through a series of various encounters. Upon meeting Éomer in the fields of Rohan, he reveals his true name and asks Éomer to either help or hinder his cause. Those around him notice how “he seemed to have grown in stature while Éomer had shrunk; in this living face they caught a brief vision of the power and majesty of the kings of old” (423). Like lifting a veil, Aragorn almost supernaturally demonstrates his lineage through prophetic revelation. As Scott notes, “He continues to reveal himself to larger and larger audiences, first at Edoras, then through his prowess at the battle of Helm’s Deep. Having openly proclaimed his title, Aragorn demonstrates his power to claim kingship when he reveals himself to Sauron in the palantír and then forces the power of the Seeing Stone to do his will” (145). Bravely attempting to make Sauron believe he held the Ring rather than a hobbit, Aragorn explains to the members of the Fellowship what he has done. When Gimli admonishes him, Aragorn replies, “You forget to whom you speak [...] Did I not openly proclaim my title before the doors of Edoras? Nay, Gimli [...] I am the lawful master of the Stone, and I had both the right and strength to use it” (763). Although he had already publically proclaimed his title, this moment defines Aragorn’s credibility as king and reveals to the rest of the fellowship his inherent power.

Although Aragorn and Jesus's claims upon "kingship" differ significantly, the basis of their right to rule is seen in their miraculous healing of others. Scott elaborates: "the final sign of [Aragorn's] power [was] his ability to heal those wounded by the power of darkness, fulfilling the words of the wise-woman of Gondor: *'The hands of the king are the hands of a healer, and so shall the rightful king be known'*" (145, citing LOTR 844). After the battle of Minas Tirith, Aragorn heals Éowyn with "due skill" and calls her out of her coma with the words, "Awake! The shadow is gone and all darkness is washed clean!" (850). As with Christ, Aragorn's willingness and ability to heal, combined with his bloodline (and divine ordination), proves he is the most worthy figure to claim the kingship. He is almost supernatural in his abilities: a great warrior, benevolent ruler, and gifted healer, and the physical healing he brings to Éowyn represents the symbolic healing he will bring to the Middle-earth, mending old wounds and "wash[ing] clean" the "darkness" of the past as he leads them into the future.

Comparable to the life and eventual resurrection narrative of Christ in the New Testament, Aragorn's gradual shift throughout *The Lord of the Rings* from wayward ranger to destined king parallels the battle and final victory of Middle-earth over evil. As Aragorn grows in power, so too does the resistance against Sauron. On their way into Gondor, the Fellowship passes under the Gates of Argonath, formed by two enormous statues carved in the likeness of Isildur and Anárion. Two of the greatest kings of Middle-earth, Isildur and Anárion jointly ruled the realm of Gondor and were responsible for establishing the kingdom, as well as the final defeat of Sauron in the final battle of the Second Age. However, their lineage is somewhat tainted, as Isildur failed to destroy the Ring in the fires of Mount Doom and instead kept it as a price for the deaths of his father

and brother. Encountering these massively imposing figures, Frodo notices how “the weatherworn Ranger [was] no longer there. In stern sat Aragorn son of Arathorn, proud and erect [...] a light was in his eyes, a king returning from exile to his own land” (384). While everyone else around Aragorn shrinks down at the sight of the statues (“awe and fear fell upon Frodo, and he cowered down, shutting his eyes and not daring to look up [...] Even Boromir bowed his head as the boats whirled by [...] and Frodo hears Sam muttering and groaning: “What a place! What a horrible place!” (384)), Aragorn himself seems to grow in confidence and strength. As he passes under the massive statues, he seems to be transformed through his confrontation with kings of old. He tells his companions not to fear, as “Under their shadow Elessar, the Elfstone son of Arathorn of the House of Valandil Isildur’s son heir of Elendil, has nought to dread!” (384). Almost as if preaching to himself, Aragorn speaks out his true name as a sign that he has embraced the full weight of the title. As a direct descendent of Isildur, Aragorn is worthy to hold the same title as the glorified kings of old. The massive statues suggest the immense power of the two rulers, and as the company encounters them, Aragorn’s growth in stature proves that he is equal to their glory. To provide comfort and assurance to the rest of the company in the midst of their dread, he knows the power of his name alone is sufficient.

In order for Aragorn to complete his transformation from ranger into king, however, he must first prove that he is worthy of his given name. Desperately needing reinforcements in the battle against Sauron, Aragorn is reminded of a prophecy by Elrond that “the Dead [will] awaken” when “the heir of whom the oath they swore” walks the Paths of the Dead and “calls them from the grey twilight” (764). This prophecy



references the moment when the King of the Mountain and his men refused to aid Isildur and Gondor in the first battle against Sauron in the Second Age, despite previously pledging to do so. Infuriated at their treachery, Isildur cursed the King and his men, proclaiming that they would find no rest in life or in death until their oath to the king was fulfilled. Over time they dwindled away to nothing more than myth, trapped in a state of restless limbo.

Out of options, Aragorn knows that he must travel into the most despairing and dangerous of places in order to bring hope to Middle-earth and maintain any chance of victory. Shortly before embarking on his mission, Aragorn and his company are joined by a group of Dúnedain from the North, accompanied by Arwen's brothers. They present Aragorn with a banner that Arwen has made for him, with the words "*Either our hope cometh, or all hopes end*" stitched in black cloth (758). A play on his childhood name, Estel, meaning "Hope," Arwen reminds Aragorn of his true destiny to not only reign as king, but to restore hope to a broken world in a way only he can accomplish. Carrying this banner with him into the mountain, Aragorn literally brings hope to both the undead men of the mountain and to the ongoing battle of Middle-earth.

Bringing Gimli, Legolas and a small company with him to traverse the dark and haunted Paths of the Dead, the company grows more and more terrified as they approach the doors. Leading the way, it was only through "the strength of [Aragorn's] will" that all of his men followed him. Summoning the ghostly Dead Men of Dunharrow, Aragorn demands that they fulfill their broken pledge to aid the king of Gondor in war against Sauron once again. He tells them valiantly "you shall come after me [...] and when the land is clean of the servants of Sauron, I will hold the oath fulfilled, and ye shall have

peace and depart for ever. For I am Elessar, Isildur's heir of Gondor" (772). Aragorn alone is capable of freeing the spirits from their earthly bondage. Recognizing that their only hope for redemption has just walked into their midst, the Dead Men of Dunharrow agree to finally fulfill their oath to the rightful king of Gondor and aid the battle against Sauron. Following Aragorn through Gondor's lands south of the Mountains, the ghostly army and the company of men were led on a trail to battle "of greatest haste and weariness that any among them had known, save he alone, and only his will held them to go on. No other mortal Men could have endured it, none but the Dúnedain of the North" (772). At the port of Pelargir, the undead army drove away the armies of Sauron, fulfilling their oath. Aragorn grants them their freedom, and they vanished "into the darkness of the Storm of Mordor and were lost to mortal sight" (773).

After redeeming the Dead Men of Dunharrow, Aragorn gathers the remaining warriors of the region to himself and leads a naval army to Minas Tirith on their defeated enemies own ships, turning the tide of the Battle of the Pelennor Fields by providing essential aid when all had seemed lost. Again, Aragorn arrives as the literal personification of hope, coming up from the sea and unfurling the standard of Arwen before Théoden's weary army. When Éomer sees Aragorn leading reinforcements, "wonder took him, and a great joy; and he cast his sword up in the sunlight and sang as he caught it. And all eyes followed his gaze, and behold! Upon the foremost ship a great standard broke, and the wind displayed it [...] the signs of Elendil that no lord had borne for years beyond count" (829).

Aragorn's actions throughout the war continuously suggest some form of redemption of the past. As John Marino states, "[Aragorn's] role as one who builds

continuity between past and present, a link in a long and old line of kings, resembles that of the horse Shadowfax, of which it is said: ‘In him one of the mighty steeds of old has returned’ (173, quoting *LOTR* 511). Marino also points out the significance of Tolkien’s terminology: “

Throughout the *Lord of the Rings*, we witness not the coming of the king, but the *return* of the king, a restoration of the dynasty that has persisted throughout the many years, albeit in the shadows [...] He ascends to a kingship centered in the realm of Gondor, which itself is a relic of the distance past [...] [and even] his sword, another relic, reflects Aragorn’s representation of both past and present, establishing continuity by its existence before even the men of Rohan established their land (173).

Marino argues that Aragorn signifies the past haunting the present; I suggest, however, that Aragorn more accurately represents the past *restored*. Not only has he successfully led the men of the mountain against Sauron and reunited Gondor and Rohan in battle, he assists the Ringbearer in destroying the Ring (either by guiding him directly or distracting Sauron indirectly), therefore succeeding in all the ways Isildur had failed. In many ways, Aragorn can be seen as the more perfect (figuratively) reincarnated version of Isildur, completing the old king’s original mission to free Middle-earth from the evil that should have died with him.

Aragorn accomplishes these things willingly, but not without a price. As with any great hero or savior-figure, Aragorn must sacrifice his own wants and needs for the sake of his mission. In a conversation with Éowyn before departing for the Paths of the Dead, he tells her he must go “Only so I can see any hope of doing my part in the war against

Sauron [...] Were I to go where my heart dwells, far in the North, I would now be wandering in the fair valley of Rivendell” (766). Aragorn’s heart resides with Arwen, the princess of Rivendell, but he denies his own personal desires in order to more effectively aid the battle against evil. Tolkien uses the love story between Aragorn and Arwen to emphasize Aragorn’s most significant connection to the Jesus-like savior figure: the main motivator for all Aragorn does (or is able to accomplish) is love. It is love that drives him, gives him hope, and provides him with the strength necessary to continue to fight, and it is love in the end that prevails above all. *Love* separates Aragorn from the temptations of evil, and allows him to fulfill a destiny he alone can accomplish. As Scott points out, “His love for Arwen and for the people of Middle-earth motivates all the actions of his life, and he claims his kingship as a means to gain the woman he loves” (140). Although I would argue that there are many reasons for Aragorn to claim the kingship (as mentioned previously), it is evident that Arwen is the main source of Aragorn’s hope.

Tolkien symbolizes this idea mainly through objects (like the banner), and mythic poetry. For instance, while camping on Weathertop with Frodo and the rest of the Company, Aragorn sings the “Song of Beren and Lúthien” to distract them and ease their fears. Lúthien Tinúviel, an elf maiden, is pursued by Beren, a human, whom she eventually falls for and pledges her love to. When Beren first sees the beautiful elf, he notices that “the light of stars was in her hair / And in her raiment glimmering,” and immediately, “Enchantment healed his weary feet” (187). Aragorn explains that Lúthien’s beauty was “as the stars above the mists of the Northern lands [...] and in her face was a shining light,” and that the elf-maiden “chose mortality, and to die from the

world, so that she might follow [Beren] [...] from her the lineage of the Elf-lords of old descended among Men [...] Elrond of Rivendell is of that kin” (189). Undoubtedly thinking of Arwen, the Company notices a change in Aragorn: “they watched his strange eager face, dimly lit in the red flow of the wood-fire. His eyes shone, and his voice was rich and deep. Above him was a black starry sky” (190). The description of the stars above Aragorn suggests that Arwen is present both in thought and physical representation, acting as a pseudo-resurrection of Lúthien from the past. To further exaggerate this idea, Tolkien gives a description of the first time Aragorn met Arwen in his Appendix A at the end of the *Lord of the Rings*. Singing the “Lay of Lúthien,” Aragorn spots an elf-maiden and “halted amazed, thinking he had strayed into a dream, or else that he had received the gift of the Elf-minstrels, who can make the things of which they sing appear before the eyes of those that listen”; fearing she would get away, he cries out “*Tinúviel, Tinúviel!* even as Beren had done in the Elder Days long ago” (1033). Arwen and Aragorn, therefore, act as a kind of reincarnated Beren and Lúthien, resurrecting the past to bring about a more complete, perfect future. The fact that Arwen’s father, Elrond, was a direct descendent of Lúthien and Beren’s union further reinforces the idea that Aragorn and Arwen represent a new version of the legend to bring hope again to Middle-earth.

Arwen also presents Aragorn with the Elfstone, which had been passed down to her through the centuries as a direct gift of hope. Gandalf (or Olórin, in Maiar form), brought the Elfstone to Middle-earth as a sign from the Valar that they had not been forgotten. He gave it to Galadriel to hold onto, but proclaimed, “it is not for you to possess. You shall hand it on when the time comes. For before you grow weary, and at

last forsake Middle-earth, one shall come who is to receive it, and his name shall be that of the stone: Elessar he shall be called” (*Unfinished Tales*, 250). Through her grandmother, Arwen receives this jewel and passes it onto Aragorn as prophesied, serving as both a link to the past and the reassurance of his true calling. Aragorn is not only meant to carry the diadem, he *is* the Elfstone, the very essence of hope given to a broken world. He is the past reborn and the future of Middle-earth restored, and by the proclamation of the god-like Valar, it seems Aragorn has forever been destined to redeem it. When Aragorn and Arwen finally marry “on Midsummer in the year of the fall of Sauron” their wedding serves as a complete antithesis to the war that separated them, representing the union of Middle-earth and its complete eucatastrophic redemption (LOTR Appendix A, 1036-37).

By taking the throne at the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn not only redeems his lineage, providing essential aid in the triumph over evil where Isildur had failed, he represents the redemption of Middle-earth itself. When Gandalf crowns Aragorn after the final victory on the Field of Cormallen, “all beheld [Aragorn] in silence, for it seemed to them that he was revealed to them now for the first time. Tall as the sea-kings of old, he stood above all that were near; ancient of days he seemed and yet in the flower of manhood” (947). In his time as king, the City was “made more fair than it had ever been, even in the days of its first glory [...] all was healed and made good [...] and after the ending of the Third Age of the world into the new age it preserved the memory and the glory of the years to come” (947). Not only does Aragorn help to bring about a renewed Middle-earth, this new kingdom is *greater* than even the kingdoms of old. Parallel with Christ’s resurrection (to be seated “at [God’s] right hand in the

heavenly places” Eph 1:20), Aragorn’s figurative resurrection from Ranger to King heralds in a new, more glorious kingdom than the one before, redeeming not only past evils, but Middle-earth itself.

### **Frodo: The Reluctant Ring-bearer**

Although Gandalf and Aragorn prove essential to eucatastrophic redemption Middle-earth, there is another character whose transformative journey rivals them for the role of the savior-figure. As a humble, lowly hobbit, Frodo is thrust into a dangerous adventure that he neither desires nor fully understands. In many ways, Frodo becomes a kind of “new Bilbo,” inheriting not only his elderly cousin’s mannerisms, love of adventure, and courage, but his physical possessions as well. Whereas Bilbo discovered the Ring, Frodo must destroy it; as Bilbo had to leave the Shire on an adventure to help reclaim the Lonely Mountain from certain evil (the dragon Smaug, as detailed in *The Hobbit*), so too must Frodo leave the comforts of his hobbit-hole on a own mission to help reclaim Middle-earth from the ever-growing power of Sauron. When Bilbo gives him the Ring, Frodo unknowingly accepts a burden that will change the course of his life permanently. Frodo’s journey to destroy Sauron’s greatest weapon represents a very symbolic struggle with the effects of evil. Although he eventually experiences a physical (and emotional) resurrection at the end of his long journey, Frodo must first carry a burden across the expansive lands of Middle-earth that continuously seeks to consume him.

Frodo’s journey represents an important element of Biblical and philosophical

teaching: anything worth having, or worth doing, takes time and faith. Any attempt to thwart these necessary steps can, in turn, make one almost “less” human, or at the very least, force them to forget the truth that hard work and patience are an integral part of the human experience. In his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth argues that “gross and violent stimulants” plague the mind of modern readers, and that “a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor” (599). Tolkien presents a similar argument against modern technology as “gross and violent stimulants” (to reuse Wordsworth’s phrase) in a letter to Milton Waldman, where he equates the “Machine” with “Magic”:

“I intend all use of external plans or devices (apparatus) instead of the development of the inherent inner powers or talents—or even the use of these talents with the corrupted motive of dominating: bulldozing the real world, or coercing other wills. The Machine is our more obvious modern form, though more closely related to Magic than is usually recognized” (*Letters*, 145-6).

In other words, the inherent danger of “Machines” and “Magic” lies in their ability to “[make] the will more quickly effective” (145). Consistent with this theological argument, Tolkien explores the effects of evil in Middle-earth as a contrast to the Biblical themes of time, patience, and the relinquishing one’s own will to the will of God. Not only is there a season for everything, “a time for every matter under Heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8), but the Old and New Testaments continually reference the fact that God works “in the fullness of time to unite all things to Him” (Ephesians 1:10). Jesus



continuously speaks about the nature of spiritual reality through parables of harvesting, the planting of seeds, and labor, suggesting that anything worth having comes through patience, faith, and hard work.

Taking all of these references in mind, Tolkien's example of the One Ring proves to be the antithesis of the Biblical argument for a rewarding life. The Ring was not solely evil because Sauron created it, but rather, because it was created to *quicken his will*. As Tolkien argues in the preface to *The Silmarillion*, "the sub-creator wishes to be the Lord and God of his private creation. He will rebel against the laws of the Creator—especially against mortality. Both of these (alone or together) will lead to the desire for Power, making the will more quickly effective,—and so to the Machine (or Magic)" (xvi). Therefore, as Tally argues, "the real force of this 'black' magic lies in its influence or domination over other wills" ("Places" 49). There is sacredness, therefore, in the qualities of mortality: hard work, patience, growth over time, and lack of control. When one goes against the basic laws of humanity and seeks to become "the lord of his private creation," therefore, the result is "a gross and violent stimulant" that corrupts not only the will, but the fabric of human existence, eventually turning you into a shadow of darkness (like Sauron) or a wraith-like creature (such as Gollum or the Ringwraiths).

In order to destroy the Ring, therefore, Frodo must do the opposite of quickening his will: he must accept the burden of something he (initially) has no desire for and walk a long and arduous journey to the very place where the Ring was created. Physically walking to Mordor is the only way to remain undetected, as emphasized by Elrond's proclamation, "Now at this last we must take a hard road, a road unforeseen. There lies our hope, if hope it be. To walk into peril—to Mordor" (260). While Frodo uses the Ring

occasionally for his own benefit (such as to become invisible when in danger), Tolkien suggests that the only possible way for the Ring to be “unmade” is through the process of extensive laboring and the denial of personal will. Although Frodo is eventually unable to perfectly live out this idea—as evidenced in his claiming of the Ring on the edge of Mount Doom—his (and just as importantly, Sam’s) hard labor to bring the Ring to brink of its destruction allows Gollum to unintentionally destroy it. Therefore, even in Frodo’s failure, not all of their work had been in vain.

As it had with Gollum, the Ring slowly consumes Frodo over time (or, as Shippey argued, turns him into a kind of “wraith”), demonstrating the effects of evil on a “lower” creature (in this sense, less powerful or glorified). Just as Frodo needed help in destroying the Ring at Mount Doom, there are several moments of metaphoric “death” which he experiences throughout his journey that require an outside force of redemption. As he and his friends first leave the Shire to set out on their journey, they travel through the Old Forest where they encounter trees that simultaneously enchant and attack them. Sam shakes himself from an unusually strong bout of sleepiness to find Frodo close to the waters edge with a tree root holding his head underwater. After rescuing him, Sam and Frodo find Pippin completely enveloped in the strong limbs of an oak tree, which had circled around him like a python. Calling desperately for help, Frodo suddenly hears “a deep glad voice singing carelessly and happily,” and they are introduced to “the master of the wood,” Tom Bombadil. When they explain their predicament, he says that he “knows the tune [for] Old Man Willow” and mends their troubles as he sings into the bark and commands the tree to “Eat earth! Dig deep! Drink water! Go to sleep!” (118). Frodo and his friends are saved literally and figuratively by Tom, as his timely arrival rescues them

from potential death and their collectively depressed and hopeless state of mind.

After letting the hobbits recover at his idyllic, almost other-worldly home, Bombadil sends Frodo and his companions on their way. Pursued relentlessly by the Ringwraiths, they flee onto the hilly plains outside the town of Bree, known as the Barrow-downs. Naïve and unprepared for the dangers awaiting them on their journey, the hobbits are soon ensnared by an evil spirit (or “wight”) and taken underground. As Marjorie Burns points out, this wight “is not a reanimated corpse belonging to the barrow but an opportunist who has moved—the way a hermit crab does—into someone else’s abode” (191). Frodo is able to shake himself out of his trance long enough to notice his friends beside him: “lying on their backs [...] their faces looked deathly pale [...] Swords lay at their sides, and shields were at their feet, but across their three necks lay one long naked sword” (*LOTR*, 137). Frodo and his companions were brought into the tomb and dressed as though prepared for a funeral, while the ghostly wight sings an incantation over the hobbits to “let them lie / till the dark lord lifts his hand / over dead sea and withered land” (138).

This wight relates to both the past and future terrors in Middle-earth (referencing the dragon in the Lonely Mountain described in *The Hobbit* and the Balrog they will later encounter in the Mines of Moria), all evil creatures whose defeat suggests a kind of death and rebirth. Every time the “good characters” enter the mountain, cave, or barrow (all tomb-like places), some outside force must come and redeem them from the evil that resides there (such as Bard the Bowman killing Smaug, or Gandalf defeating the Balrog). In similar fashion, another must come to save the hobbits from their hopeless situation. Despite “the dread in his heart” and feeling “chilled to the marrow,” Frodo was able to

fight off the wight long enough to call for Bombadil, who again frees the hobbits from certain peril, singing a song to dispel the evil spirits: “Get out, you old Wight! Vanish in the sunlight!/Shrivel like the cold mist, like the winds go wailing/Lost and forgotten be, darker than darkness/Where gates stand for ever shut, till the world is mended” (139).

Although the wight had meant for the hobbits to remain in a sleep-like trance until Sauron ruled Middle-earth, Bombadil dispels the evil spirit with the command to vanish from a world he believes will someday be healed.

This scene is rather a puzzle to the overall story (as is Tom Bombadil, for that matter), but it effectively relays two very important ideas: first, that evil is growing at an uncontrollable rate, in many different forms, and second, that Frodo is qualified, and perhaps even destined, to fight it. Frodo’s remembrance to call upon Bombadil in their hour of need, when no one else in his company could find the strength, foreshadows his specific calling to take the Ring to Mount Doom at the Council of Elrond. Although unable to save himself (much less the world) on his own, he proves to have the insight and fortitude to seek help and accept it when the time comes. This quality proves to be essential on his quest, as he accepts the companionship of Sam and the guidance of Gollum, both of which he would have never been able to complete his mission without.

Although Frodo barely escapes turning into an actual wraith after being stabbed by a Ringwraith on Weathertop (where he felt “a shadow [...] coming between him and the faces of his friends” (86)), his spirit and sense of self gradually deteriorates the longer he carries the Ring. Although almost killed by Shelob (a giant spider who had dwelled in the mountains near Cirith Ungol since the First Age) before reaching Mordor, Frodo’s final “death” occurs at the very edge of Mount Doom. In the very moment he is forced to

part with the Ring and destroy it for good, he looks at Sam and speaks in a voice very unlike his own: “I have come [...] but I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine!” (924). As if fighting off the power of the Ring for so long had finally broken his defenses, Frodo is eventually overwhelmed with desire for the power it possesses. As Gollum attacks Frodo for control of the Ring, one could read their interaction as a struggle mainly against themselves: being invisible after putting on the Ring, Frodo’s attempt to fight Gollum represents his inner struggle against the Ring’s powerful effects, while Gollum, to any outsider, would appear (appropriately) to be battling with himself. Ironically, it is only through Gollum’s direct attack that Frodo is brought back to himself. By biting the Ring off of Frodo’s hand, Gollum violently redeems his adversary from the clutches of Sauron. Ironically, Frodo now represents a kind of “redeemed” ruler of the Ring (as Sauron had only four fingers on one of his hands as well), suggesting that the past has finally been made right. Perhaps echoing Biblical parallels, Frodo’s blood is shed (albeit unwillingly) in order for him to be “resurrected” back into his rightful body and proper mind. Although the Roman guards may have nailed Jesus to the cross, they paved the way for him to be risen from the tomb. Through their antagonism, they *enacted* salvation. Similarly, without Gollum’s interaction, Frodo would have been lost for good and the Ring never destroyed. Through his attack, he effectively destroys the very thing he so desperately fought for. Frodo and Gollum, then, complete Tolkien’s argument that “the great policies of world history, ‘the wheels of the world,’ are often turned not by Lords and Governors, even gods, but by the seemingly unknown and weak—owing to the secret life in creation, and the part unknowable to all wisdom but One” (*The Silmarillion*, xxi).

Frodo's journey represents a very long, slowly drawn out figurative death analogous in many ways to life. While he experiences small moments of salvation through his journey, it takes Frodo leaving Middle-earth and sailing from the Gray Havens at the end of the narrative for him to find ultimate, complete salvation. When explaining to Sam why he must leave Middle-earth, Frodo claims, "I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them" (1006). Because of the depth of his suffering, only the process of leaving Middle-earth will heal Frodo from the effects of evil he has carried. Rather than finding peace in his scarred, broken body, Frodo embraces the chance to find complete healing (in what can be seen as another kind of resurrection) in the Middle-earth's equivalent of Paradise.

In Aragorn and Frodo, the eucatastrophic redemption narrative comes to its completion, as they separately represent full restoration of the both the physical and spiritual attributes of mortal beings. Aragorn's figurative resurrection from ranger to king heralds in a new age of hope for Middle-earth, restoring the land to its original, intended glory by purging it of evil and establishing a new era of peace. Frodo, though imperative to Middle-earth's victory over evil, signifies a deeper redemption found in the narrative: that of the soul. By choosing to sail to the uttermost West from the Gray Havens (an opportunity very seldom made available to anyone outside of the Elvish race) Frodo represents the chance of salvation and the promise of complete restoration outside of the physical reality of Middle-earth. Through a very long, physical battle with evil, Frodo can only find true peace by giving his life over to the spiritual. In both of these characters,

Tolkien explores the transformative effects of redemption and the way it manifests itself in the process of two very different, yet equally important characters, as they embrace their calling in the battle against evil. While initially good men, their labor and battle against the dark forces of Middle-earth is imperative both in the restoration of the world and in their process of finding peace, whether in Middle-earth or the realm beyond.

### **Edmund and Eustace: Redemption Through the World of Narnia**

While Tolkien uses Gandalf, Aragorn and Frodo as representations of the savior-like figure in Middle-earth, Lewis's desire to explore the narrative of Christ in a mythological framework appropriately reveals Aslan as the sole provider of redemption in the *Chronicles of Narnia* narrative; through his intervention, several characters are significantly and permanently changed for the better. Often, this is manifested in both a very literal manner. After defeating the White Witch, Aslan break into her castle and goes about resurrecting all of the creatures she has turned to stone over the course of her long reign. Breathing on each one tenderly, "a tiny streak of gold began to run along the white marble—then it spread—then the color seemed to lick all over [them] as the flame licks all over a bit of paper" (187). According to the children witnessing it, "the sight was so wonderful that they soon forgot about [the first statue]. Everywhere the statues were coming to life [...] Creatures were running after Aslan and dancing around him till he was almost hidden in the crowd" (188).

Other times, however, this change is manifested in a more figurative, symbolic experience. Although Aslan has proven he can physically bring frozen creatures back to

life, the most powerful stories of transformation in the *Chronicles* involves the restoration of the petrified heart. In this light, Lewis uses the transformative effects of two very different (figurative) resurrection experiences in his narrative as a metaphor for spiritual salvation. While Aragorn and Frodo may have been good characters who went on to fulfill great destinies, Edmund and Eustace are horrible, selfish boys who need to be brought *into* Narnia to experience redemption. Before either of them can go on to fulfill any kind of destiny, they must first be saved from themselves.

At the start of *The Lion the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Edmund is self-centered, miserly, and childish. Forced to leave his home in London during the air-raids of the Second World War, he and his siblings are taken in by an elderly professor and his wife on their country estate. When he first meets the professor, Edmund thinks he is so odd-looking that “he wanted to laugh and had to keep on pretending he was blowing his nose to hide it” (111). Although Edmund is a child (and acts accordingly), his ungrateful, callous nature is evident from first day he arrived at the professor’s door. When his youngest sister Lucy explains how she found a magical world called Narnia through a spare wardrobe, he mocks her and calls her “quite batty”—when he then sees her slip into the wardrobe again one afternoon, he follows her “because he wanted to go on teasing her about her imaginary country” (122). Edmund is a bully to his siblings, ungrateful to his caretaker, and focused solely on himself. When he follows Lucy into the wardrobe, he stumbles into Narnia confused and slightly embarrassed. Unaware that Lucy has gone to dine with Mr. Tumnus, a faun she met on her first trip into Narnia, Edmund searches for his sister momentarily until very unexpectedly overtaken by the White Witch on her sled. Giving up the search for his sister rather quickly, Edmund allows himself to be persuaded



to sit and talk with the Witch. Realizing that she can grant him any wish with the flick of her wand, he greedily asks for endless Turkish Delight. Unaware that the dessert is enchanted, Edmund becomes consumed with the taste of it. Natasha Giardina points out the inherent difference between Edmund and his sister Lucy, as evidenced in their chosen first meals in Narnia: “while Lucy ate healthy wholesome and prosaic foods [...] the sugary stuff tempting Edmund was a mysterious and unnatural concoction [...] its appeal lay precisely in its dark, guilty, sensual pleasures, its rich, exotic, and emphatically unBritish flavors and its improbable, magical origin” (41). By choosing to eat the Turkish Delight, Edmund reveals his inner inclination towards “bad” behavior. “Sin,” Giardina argues, “comes in ‘a round box, tied with green silk ribbon’” (37, quoting *Chronicles* 125). Similar to Tolkien, Lewis explores the idea that evil is dangerous not only because it is destructive, but rather, that its desirable and intoxicating. Rather than appalling the senses, the taste of evil is “sweet and light to the very centre” (37). Because he chooses to ignore the signs of evil in front of him (or rather, he doesn’t care), Edmund is overcome by the power of the Witch’s enchantment. Although the dessert is designed to make him continuously want more, it doesn’t blind him to the Witch’s true character or alter his opinion of her in any fashion. What it does, on the contrary, is serve as a spotlight on the negative characteristics already inherent within him.

The White Witch begins to coax Edmund as he eats the Turkish Delight, praising his handsome stature and claiming that she wanted to adopt him as her prince. Although the Witch doesn’t infuse her full power the dessert (as Sauron does with the One Ring) both antagonists use their “sub-creations” to “quicken their will” for ultimate power and control more effectively. Each item forcibly creates an unusually strong desire or

attachment with the potential to consume its victim completely. As Edmund finishes the box of Turkish Delight, the White Witch “knew quite well what he was thinking [...] that anyone who tasted it would want more and more of it, and would even, if they were allowed, go on eating it till they killed themselves” (125-6). After tasting this “dark magic,” in a sense, Edmund’s hunger for the Witch’s creation (like so many of Sauron’s victims) reflects his inner greed and lust for earthly cravings, and the consumption or use of those objects perpetuates the same evil that created them.

Once the Witch discovers that Edmund has siblings, she asks him to bring them to her in order to make them his servants. Edmund responds that “there’s nothing special about *them*” but promises he will try; he then begs for “just one piece of Turkish Delight to eat one the way home” but the Witch leaves him empty handed, perhaps to motivate him to betray his siblings in order to receive more (126). In this moment, Edmund sees more worth in food than in his own family, and he is fully willing to sacrifice them over to the Queen for the opportunity to live unbridled as a prince. Because he is so focused on himself, Edmund is unconcerned about any other characteristic of the Witch besides her ability to endlessly fulfill his desires. Edmund is therefore fully responsible for his actions and falls victim to his own pride and gluttony. If he had been more concerned with his siblings, he may not have been deceived by the Witch in the first place. Although enchanted by food, Edmund proved to be the sole source of his own downfall.

Through his gradual descent into evil, Edmund can be read as both the Adam and Judas of Narnia. Since we have already established the fact that the White Witch represented the serpent from the Garden of Eden (as well a kind of warped, twisted Eve), Edmund is the first character described in the narrative who fully gives into her

temptation. His selfish, villainous choices eventually brings about the sacrificial death of Aslan, just as Adam's choice to disobey God eventually required the substitutionary atonement of Jesus for the sinfulness of mankind. On the other hand, he also represents the Judas-figure in his intentional desire to betray those closest to him. The greatest similarity lies in their inner struggle after consigning to give into temptation. Upon first hearing Aslan's name, Peter felt "suddenly brave and adventurous"; Susan felt as if "some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music had just floated by her"; Lucy "got the feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realize that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer," but Edmund, quite differently, "felt a sensation of mysterious horror" (141). Once he sees the two white hills the Witch told him to follow to find her castle, he "thought of Turkish Delight and about being a King ('And I wonder how Peter will like that?' he asked himself) and horrible ideas came into his head" (142). Similarly, Judas is said to have given into temptation ("Satan entered into him") and he sought out the chief priests and officers on how he might hand Jesus over to them; greedy for money, he "consented and sought an opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of a crowd" in return for "thirty pieces of silver" (Luke 22:3-6, Matthew 26:15). Once his siblings realize that Edmund has abandoned them to go meet the Witch, Mr. Beaver remarks, "the moment I set eyes on that brother of yours I said to myself, 'Tracherous'. He had the look of one who has been with the Witch and eaten her food. You can always tell them if you've lived long in Narnia; something about their eyes" (149). The idea that something was innately, obviously treacherous in Edmund's appearance echoes that of Judas, when Jesus tells his disciples at the Passover Feast that "not all of you are clean" (John 13:11-13). Through these parallels, Edmund's betrayal is

further exaggerated, and his eventual redemption is significantly more meaningful.

Edmund first begins to feel transformation by witnessing tragedy. As he rides with the White Witch in her sled on the way to overtake his siblings, they come across a small, merry party of woodland animals enjoying a feast. When the Witch demands to know the reason for “such gluttony, this waste, this self-indulgence,” an elderly fox explains that Father Christmas gave it to them (163). Infuriated that Christmas had come at last (which suggested that her power was weakening), the queen immediately turns the entire group to stone. Here is Edmund’s first taste of reality, where the Turkish Delight begins to turn against him, in a sense. Edmund realizes that “all the things he had said to make himself believe that she was good and kind and that her side was really the right side sounded silly to him now”; after the White Witch gives him a blow to the head for asking to spare their lives, Edmund, “for the first time in the story, felt sorry for someone besides himself” (162-3). Realizing her true character, Edmund begins to shift from self-focus to empathy and pity. As the initial temptation of the Queen’s power begins to fade, Edmund begins to realize the weight of his horrible decision.

However, his redemption isn’t fully complete just yet. Once Aslan rescues Edmund from the Witch, he takes him aside to have a long discussion. Although “no one ever heard” what Aslan said to Edmund, it was “a conversation which Edmund never forgot”; as the others go to meet their brother, Aslan explains that there was “no need to talk to him about what is past” (174). Aslan begins Edmund’s symbolic resurrection by both admonishing him and saving him from hurtful questions or accusations. Aslan has erased the past for Edmund, and although Edmund doesn’t yet realize it, he has also consented to give up his own life in order to give Edmund a future. The text suggests that

Aslan is unaware that he will rise from the dead: while walking with Susan and Lucy, he says that he is “sad and lonely” and tells them, “lay your hands on my mane so that I can feel you are there,” and after reaching the Stone Table where he will be sacrificed, he declares that “whatever happens, do not let yourselves be seen” (179). Despite his lack of foreknowledge, he deems Edmund worthy enough to sacrifice his life for regardless of the outcome.

Realizing that Aslan had performed this supreme act of sacrifice and love for him alone changes Edmund completely. During the final battle, Edmund sees the White Witch turning creatures to stone; fighting through several seasoned warriors in his path, he successfully faces her and destroys her wand. This accomplishment, though literally significant to the battle, symbolizes Edmund’s final break of his enchantment with evil. Fighting his own battle, Edmund has assisted in his final redemption. Ultimately, this proves to be just as important as Aslan’s sacrifice for him; although he didn’t save himself completely, he embraces his second chance at life and boldly lives into it. Lewis seems to suggest through Edmund’s narrative that it isn’t enough to simply accept salvation—one must also be *different* because of it. Once Lucy heals Edmund with a magic vial, she claims that her brother was “not only healed of his wounds, but looking better than she had seen him look —oh, for ages; in fact, ever since his first term at that horrid school which was where he had begun to go wrong. He had become his real old self again and could look you in the face. And there on the field of battle Aslan made him a knight” (193). Edmund’s acceptance of Aslan’s sacrifice and his own participation in his salvation suggests that Edmund has finally become the man he was prophesied to be. The fact that Aslan knights him not only solidifies this change, but provides an

opportunity for Edmund to grow into a benevolent and successful ruler. Christened “Edmund the Just,” Aslan gives Edmund a new name to signify his redemption.

By taking Edmund out of the “real” world of “horrid schools” that had corrupted him and bringing him into a new reality, Aslan uses the transportation into Narnia as a kind of baptism. Initially a narcissistic, broken sinner, Aslan submerges Edmund into another world and then figuratively resurrects him to embrace his new identity. Narnia “purifies” Edmund, but only through Aslan’s intervention. In a similar fashion, the great lion brings Edmund’s cousin Eustace into Narnia to remove him from his cynical, rationalistic world, and submerges him into a new, more “truthful” reality. By the end of the narrative, Eustace emerges from Narnia as what can only be described as a new creation.

Lewis seems to use the character of Eustace as representative of the everyman outside of the Narnian narrative: he is the Pevensie’s cousin and has no personal connection to the world they so intimately know. When hearing his cousins talk of Narnia, he harasses them about it and asks if they’re “still playing [their] old game,” echoing Edmund’s teasing remarks to Lucy before entering Narnia himself (427). In fact, Eustace is described very similarly to Edmund at the start of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. Selfish, proud, and egocentric, Lewis describes Eustace as a character who “almost deserved” such an unfortunate name, as “deep down inside him he liked bossing and bullying, though he was a puny little person who could’ve have stood up even to Lucy” (425). Here was a boy who was “educated by the trends of the day” and was “the worst kind of child Lewis could imagine,” a child who hated fairy tales and preferred books of reason and information (Starr, 8). He is pretentious, insufferably haughty and

self-absorbed. On the sea voyage, he steals rations in the middle of the night when supplies are low, acts like a coward while hiding behind his self-righteous claims of being a pacifist, and complains when he doesn't have his own private cabin. Echoing Lewis, Starr argues that Eustace's problem is that "he hasn't read any imaginative books like fairy tales or adventure stories and so hasn't received proper moral instruction [...] What Eustace needs most is to experience reality so that he can know with his heart and not just his head; however, because he is too far gone into the abstract, theoretical shadow world of facts, figures, and practical applications, he needs more than just a dose of reality. He needs a higher reality, a world of the fantastic far more real than his own" (9). It isn't enough for Eustace to simply know about things; he must truly *experience* life if he is to understand it fully. Eustace finds this "higher reality" in Narnia, although it takes divine intervention to make him realize it.

Aslan (though unseen), literally forces Eustace into the world he so adamantly refuses to believe in by causing a painting on the wall to come to life. As Eustace, Lucy, and Edmund stare at a painting of a great Narnian-looking ship, suddenly "a great, cold splash [broke] right out of the frame and they were breathless from the smack of it, besides being wet through" (428). Eventually the ship draws up beside them and someone brings them on board, where Lucy and Edmund discover their old friend, Prince Caspian, on a quest to find the seven lost lords of Narnia.

Docking on an island one evening to rest and find provisions, Eustace decides to secretly slip off from the group to alleviate the chance of actually having to do any work. Eventually, he ends up getting lost and decides to take shelter in an empty dragon cave. Realizing there is no danger, he falls asleep on a pile of gold after hoarding some of it in

his clothes. By “sleeping on a dragon’s hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart,” Eustace awakens to find that he has been literally turned into one (466). These “dragonish” thoughts reflected his attitude towards those who he felt were below him, and in return, the inner beast became an outward reality.

Although distraught, Eustace comes to realize how horrible he has been to those around him. He begins to wonder “if he himself had been such a nice person as he has always supposed [...] and that the others had not really been fiends at all” (466). Edmund is forced to tackle the beast within himself before he is worthy to shed the outer appearance of one. His process of redemption begins in this realization, but is further developed through his actions. In dragon form, he helps to secure a new mast for the ship, hunts and cooks food for the group, and provides warmth against the cold. Here, Lewis seems to be arguing the same point as Tolkien that evil resides both in selfishness and the desire to more effectively (and quickly) enact one’s will. By following his own desires by hoarding, laying around lazily, and eventually stealing, he is transformed into a warped, beastly version of his former self. Only by relinquishing his pride and genuinely working hard does Eustace become more human-like. Although Aslan alone was able to remove Eustace’s dragon form, his transformation began the moment he started to put others’ needs before his own.

Early one morning, to Edmund’s astonishment, Eustace walks back into the camp a newly restored boy. Telling Edmund how he regained his human body, he describes a life-changing encounter with a lion he later learns is Aslan. He explains that the lion beckoned him to a pool and told him, without words, to undress and get in, which he took to mean shedding his skin. Eustace tries several times to shed the dragon skin on his own,



but each time he tries to get into the pool, the skin has grown back as thick and hard as before. Aslan explains that only *he* could take the skin off, and Eustace states, “the very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I’ve ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off [...] And there [the skin] was, lying on the grass: only ever so much thicker, and darker, and more knobbly-looking than the others had been” (475). Through Eustace, the Biblical idea of salvation is clearly articulated: when Eustace allows Aslan to strip away his outer skin (which can be interpreted as an outer reflection of his inner sinfulness), Lewis demonstrates the metaphor of someone allowing God to strip them of their old self and giving them new life; to be “reborn,” in a sense, into their true identity. Eustace’s explanation of his transformation allows the audience to witness his redemption firsthand, and in turn, internalize his experience. Importantly, Eustace’s transformation is both difficult and painful; by shedding his skin, Eustace is also shedding the deeply ingrained ideologies he holds about life and himself. In this way, his resurrection is both a physical and spiritual one. By the end of the novel, this change is not only evident to his siblings, but to everyone that knows him: “back in our own world, everyone soon started saying how Eustace had improved, and how ‘You’d never know him for the same boy’” (541).

Appropriately, Edmund is the first person Eustace sees after his transformation. When Eustace explains how simultaneously good and painful it felt for his dragon skin to be pulled off by Aslan, Edmund replies, “I know exactly what you mean” (475). When Eustace apologizes for his behavior, Edmund comforts his cousin and explains how he too behaved horribly upon first entering Narnia: “Between ourselves, you haven’t been as

bad as I was on my first trip to Narnia. You were only an ass, but I was a traitor” (475). Through this confession, Edmund’s story has come full circle. Although Aslan had enacted Eustace’s baptismal experience by bringing him to Narnia, Edmund is able to help his cousin embrace his new identity through his own personal experience. In several ways, Edmund’s figurative resurrection is proof of the lasting impact Eustace’s redemption will have on him. Almost like obtaining a new, better version of themselves, Eustace and Edmund represent in human form what Narnia becomes at the end of the narrative in *The Last Battle*: a redeemed, perfect world with no semblance of past evil scarring its surface; the most real, truthful version of themselves that they were always meant to be.

In alliance with Tolkien and Lewis’s view of myth, Northrup argues:

“Remembering that a good sub-creator echoes or imitates the ultimate creation of God, all happy endings of good fairy-stories should this echo, or give us an underlying glimpse of, the ultimate Creator’s one fairy-story that culminates, in Tolkien’s Christian view [...] with the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ” (832). As sub-creators of the “ultimate” Creation, Lewis’s and Tolkien’s figurative resurrection narratives of men in their individual works reflects a similar desire to express the full eucatastrophic, unexpected joy of redemption. Although Lewis explores this through the lens of salvation, and Tolkien through the idea of embracing an individual calling, both narratives reflect the overall joyful sensation of complete restoration found in labor, patience, and self-sacrifice. In using men to explore this process, Tolkien and Lewis encourage their audiences to be personally moved by their narratives. To reference Sir Philip Sidney’s famous words, perhaps through each story, they will be “delighted [to] take that goodness

in hand” and in turn, “know that goodness whereunto they are moved” (*Defense of Poesy*, 16).

Perhaps even more than being moved by delight, these stories (and their characters) teach us to cling to hope, even when all evidence points otherwise, because ultimately we know that there are some things only emotional experiences can explain. Rather than wishful thinking, these kinds of eucatastrophe stories (as opposed to the dycatastrophe stories we see around us everyday) give us the hope that light, in any form, will always conquer darkness. Perhaps the best example of this is seen in Sam’s song at the end of *The Return of the King*, when all hope had seemed lost. Although we all know the ending of the story, Sam’s spirit in the midst of his pain echoes the heart of the eucatastrophic narrative itself: even if we cannot see it, there is always hope to be found. To end, I quote the finale of Sam’s song:

“Though here at journey's end I lie  
in darkness buried deep,  
beyond all towers strong and high,  
beyond all mountains steep,  
above all shadows rides the Sun  
and Stars forever dwell:  
I will not say the Day is done,  
nor bid the Stars farewell.”

## V. CONCLUSION

By exploring themes of resurrection and redemption in their respective mythological narratives, Lewis and Tolkien express the kind of meaning “which can only be grasped in the experiential imagination. [...] From them we do not get truths about reality but tastes of reality itself” (Starr, 12). Despite their differing intentions in expressing Christian theological truths to the audience, both artists still create, express truth, explore myth and relay human experience in their separate worlds according to “the [specific] law in which we’re made” (“On Fairy Stories,” 55). As sub-created worlds, therefore, Narnia and Middle-earth reveal deeper truths than a simple, enjoyable reading experience (although, they would certainly argue that is important as well). Narnia and Middle-earth invite the reader to “return home,” in a sense, through a “there and back again” narrative that ends with a complete, eucatastrophic redemption of full and unexpected joy. This is evidenced not only in the redemption of the worlds the characters occupy, but in the glorious journey to the “true” world of Heaven itself.

In “Meditations In a Toolshed,” Lewis explores the distinctly separate experience of looking “along” something as opposed to just looking “at” it. Using the example of a sunbeam, he explains how staring at the streak of light allowed him to analyze and study its properties, but by moving *into* the beam itself, “the whole previous picture vanished [...] I saw no toolshed, and (above all), no beam” but rather “green leaves moving beyond the branches [...] and beyond that [...] the sun” (quoted from *God on the Dock*, 212). In order to fully understand something, therefore, Lewis suggests that we must study *and* experience it, since “looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences” (212). Lewis expands on this idea further in *Myth Became Fact*,

where he explains the dichotomy between thinking and feeling: “Human intellect is incurably abstract [...] yet the only realities we experience are concrete [...] While we are loving the man, bearing the pain, enjoying the pleasure, we are not intellectually apprehending Pleasure, Pain, or Personality. When we begin to do so, on the other hand, the concrete realities sink to the level of mere instances or examples” (65). In other words, “Our dilemma as knowers is that we can ‘taste’ while not knowing or ‘know’ while tasting. When we think we’re ‘cut off from what we think about,’ and the better our reasoning, the more cut off we are, the more abstract our thinking becomes. Conversely, the deeper we go into an experience of reality itself, the less we can think. You don’t study humor when you’re laughing, pain when you’re suffering, or pleasure when you’re making love” (Starr, 7).

For Lewis and Tolkien, the greatest marriage of thinking and feeling came through religious experience. In order to truly understand faith, both analytical study and personal experience is necessary. While studying the sunbeam is important, one actually has to step *into* it to gain the full picture. On the other hand, you cannot fully experience something without first knowing what it is. As with any kind of relationship or experience, Lewis argues that there is a vast difference between knowing *about* God and actually *knowing* Him. In their minds (as discussed previously), the greatest way to merge these two juxtaposing realities was through storytelling and myth. Rather than simply studying a story, Lewis and Tolkien stress that one should be *moved* by it, as all stories connect to a deeper, ultimate reality. Although “not an organ of truth” (which Lewis connected to reason), imagination is the “organ of meaning” (“Bluspels and Flalansfers” 157). Although Elves, dragons and magic Rings may not be *true*, per se, they

impart a very important and specific meaning to our human understanding.

In his short allegorical story entitled *Leaf by Niggle*, Tolkien explores the process of finding meaning through a character named Niggle. In a letter to Caroline Everett on June 24, 1957, he claims that the story “arose from my preoccupation with *The Lord of the Rings*, the knowledge that it would be finished in great detail or not at all, and the fear (near certainty) that it would be ‘not at all’” (*Letters*, 199). *Leaf by Niggle*, therefore, effectively presents the underlying philosophy of Tolkien’s Middle-earth. In this story, Niggle is a small, rather frazzled painter who struggles nearly all his life to paint the perfect landscape. Painstakingly obsessed over every stroke, he continually stresses that his painting will never be completed. As he watches his life pass by, he realizes with depressing realization that his dream will never come to fruition. Although talented, Niggle’s main enemies are time and the constant, unrealistic expectations he places upon himself.

Once he dies, his paintings are mostly forgotten, except for one perfect parchment of a leaf, taken from his much grander unfinished landscape. The public celebrates this small contribution for a while, until it too eventually turns to ruin. It isn't until Niggle dies that he finally sees his masterpiece before him—not in paint, but in a complete physical reality right before his eyes. In a sort of afterlife, Niggle is allowed to “move onto the next stage,” where he walks through a meadow and sees a beautiful tree, *his* tree, magnificently perfect in front of him. According to the narrator, the tree was finally finished:

You could say that of a Tree that was alive, its leaves opening, its branches growing and bending in the wind that Niggle had so often felt or

guessed, and had so often failed to catch. All the leaves he had ever labored at were there, as he had imagined them rather than as he had made them; and there were others that had only budded in his mind, and many that might have budded, if only he had had time. [...] ‘It’s a gift!’ he said. He was referring to his art, and also to the result; but he was using the word quite literally. (113)

Finally, Niggle understands that his work is complete; he and his work have been redeemed only through the process of death. Although in life Niggle saw a part of his dream painting come to life, it was only in losing his life that Niggle was able to fully comprehend that small grasp of beauty was only an echo of ultimate beauty itself.

Taking this allegorical story into account, the end of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* epic takes on a distinctly more powerful meaning. Although *Leaf by Niggle* makes the journey into Heaven much more overt (at one point, a “shepherd” comes to Niggle and guides him “on”), Tolkien still infuses the narrative with symbols of longing, joy, and the realization of more “perfect” reality. As Frodo sails from the Grey Havens at the end of *The Return of the King*, the ship passes into the West “until at last on a night of rain Frodo smelled a sweet fragrance on the air and heard the sound of singing that came over the water. And then it seemed him that as in his dream in the house of Bombadil, the grey rain-curtain turned all to silver glass and was rolled back, and he beheld white shores and beyond them a far green country under a swift sunrise” (1007). Just as Niggle’s dream of a perfect painting had come to fruition before his eyes by leaving Earth behind, so too Frodo’s distant dream of peace is made real in front of him as he enters into Middle-earth’s version of paradise.

In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lewis ends the narrative with his characters entering into the heavenly realm known as Aslan's Country after the old Narnia has passed away. This new country looks very similar to the old Narnia, except somehow it is distinctly different. Lucy is unable to put her emotions into words, claiming that the hills and mountains "have more color on them and they look further away than I remembered and they're more...oh, I don't know"; Digory, who had seen the creation of Narnia in *The Magician's Nephew*, answers, "More like the real thing" (759). Digory explains that the Narnia they knew "was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and will always be here: just as our own world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan's real world" (759). This "shadow" of the real world echoes Plato's sentiments in "The Allegory of the Cave," where people are trapped in a world of illusion they believe is completely real. Following Plato's line of thinking, Starr argues that "we need to break the chains of illusion and turn and walk out of the cave into the light of the sun. That's where the real world is" (3). Although Lucy initially laments losing the "old" world that has passed away (as the Elves had done leaving Middle-earth with "a sadness that was yet blessed and without bitterness" (*LOTR*, 1006)), Digory tells her, "you need not mourn over Narnia, Lucy. All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow, or as waking life is from a dream" (759). Lucy momentarily laments the cave, in a sense, but soon discovers the glory and joy of life outside of it.

Tolkien and Lewis leave us with similar sentiments of ultimate fulfillment at the



end of *Leaf by Niggle* and *Chronicles*. As Niggle walks away with the shepherd, Tolkien says that “he was going [...] to look at a wider sky, and walk ever further and further towards the Mountains, always uphill. Beyond that I cannot guess what became of him. Even little Niggle in his old home could glimpse the Mountains far away, and they got into the borders of his picture; but what they are really like, and what lies beyond them, only those can say who have climbed them” (118). Similarly, Lewis explains how for the characters in Narnia, “it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before” (767).

In many ways, Lewis and Tolkien invite us to view their created worlds as a shadow or copy of the ultimate world they believe we will someday experience. Through Middle-earth and Narnia, we get a taste of the “real” world that we so desperately long for. Although not a complete representation, these epic fantasy worlds provide us with a perfect leaf by which we can better understand the final, glorious tree in that “real” life beyond our worldly experience. Through their continuous examples of resurrection and redemption in each’s painstakingly crafted imaginary world, the authors perhaps echo the shepherds last words to Parish in *Leaf by Niggle* as an invitation and a promise of hope: “it was only a glimpse [...] but you might have caught the glimpse, if you had ever thought it worth while to try” (117).

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