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Where Imagination Runs Riot: A Defense of Modern Fantasy

Annarose D. Stewart
Bard College

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By:

Annarose Stewart

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Introduction

Let's Try to Make a Story About It

One evening, J.R.R. Tolkien was grading essays for one of his classes and he stumbled upon a blank piece of paper that had made it into the pile. Without thinking, Tolkien wrote down the first thing that came to his mind: "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit." (*The Hobbit)* Tolkien admits he had no idea what a hobbit was or why they have to live underground, but he decided to investigate further. In doing so, he wrote one of the most famous trilogies of all time: *The Lord of the Rings.* This text was built from a linguistic study, which lead to an extensive history, which lead to an incredible story. This trilogy redefined fantasy and brought to light the sophistication and scholarship that can be brought to the genre. However, this was not the beginning of fantasy itself.

In his essay "On Fairy Stories", Tolkien discusses the connection between fantasy and language. Tolkien argues that fantasy was developed at the beginning of language itself. "The mind that thought of *light, heavy, grey, yellow, still, swift* also conceived of magic that would make heavy things light and able to fly, turn grey lead into yellow gold, and the still rock into swift water" (Tolkien 122). Tolkien explores the idea that once an object is labeled with an adjective, it allows for the possibility of the fantastic. When one labels the color of grass 'green' and the color of sky 'blue' then the possibility of green sky and blue grass is also conceived. Once humanity gives a label, then it presents humans with the opportunity to change the label as it is separate from the innate state of the object. The invention of words allowed for humans to begin fulfilling their desire to make. When they assign blue to grass or green to sky, they have created the concept for a world in which grass is blue and the sky is green. Therefore, the birth of

fantasy did not happen when a particular story was told but occurred five minutes after the origin of language itself.

A genre so interconnected with humanity's innate desires and its form of communication would seem to hold a pace of veneration, but this is not so. At a certain point in time, humans began to believe that they knew everything about their world. They learned that the world is round and the Earth is not the center of the universe. As they explored the world, they learned that dragons do not exist and science seemed to prove that there is no animal that can have four legs and wings simultaneously. As humans began to learn, their world filled with blue grass and a green sky seemed childish and naive. Stories were no longer told of knights and dragons but of sophisticated socialites who could exist in the world humanity knew so much about. Magic was taken overcome by science; dragons morphed into aliens.

During this transition an argument was made claiming that fantasy is escapist; that when one reads or thinks of heroes and dragons one is avoiding reality. This even leads to the assumption that if one consciously chose to read fantasy instead of realistic novels one is claiming that reality is not as beautiful as fantasy. The latter is argued by George Eliot. In her book, *Adam Bede,* she defends realism by implying that people who enjoy fantasy and romance struggle to see the beauty in reality. "The pencil is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffin—the longer the claws, and the larger the wings, the better; but that marvellous facility which we mistook for genius is apt to forsake us when we want to draw a real unexaggerated lion" (234). In this passage, Eliot is implying that enjoying and writing fantasy somehow inhibits the ability to see and represent the beauty in reality. However, fantasy does not discredit or belittle reality; it gives the opportunity for imagination to flourish without limit of the physical

boundaries that exist in reality. Eliot claims that the artistry in drawing a griffin is "mistook as genius". The idea that writing fantasy is easy was proved false by every fantasy writer since. Fantasy has had to fight to be given worth in itself; fantastical texts are interpreted as allegories for reality or are labeled as children's literature. Writing fantasy that stands on its own is absolutely not easy.

When writing about Victorian England, George Eliot merely had to create characters who she most likely was able to base on people she knew. However, acclaimed fantasy writers like William Morris, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien had to create entire worlds before they even began to write their story. Tolkien created an entire history of his world, complete with multiple languages before he began to invent characters like Frodo and Sam. Tolkien had to build a world before he arrived at the place where George Eliot began her work. Eliot seems to have misinterpreted natural as easy; it is not easy to create fantasy but it is natural. Fantasy came with the beginning of language itself; fantasizing is as natural to humans as speaking. Fantasizing is one of the most natural events that humans can participate in.

In "On Fairy Stories", Tolkien explains the stages of creating fantasy. The first of these stages is Imagination. Imagination is derived from the word image; it is the ability to form mental images of different things "But in recent times, in technical not normal language, Imagination has often been held to be something higher than the mere image-making" (Tolkien 138). Tolkien believes that the definition of Imagination must return to the origin: human's ability to conceive of mental images. The next stage of Fantasy according to tolkien is Expression which gives "to ideal creations the inner consistency of reality" (138). Expression is giving life to the imagined images so that these images form to create an existence sincere

enough to be believed. The achievement of this expression is called Art. Art is "the operative link between Imagination and the final result, Sub-creation" (139). Sub-creation is exactly what it sounds like, it is the creation of a world that is as extensive and believable as reality, but is not real. The product of this process and the driving force behind it is encompassed in the word: Fantasy, which "embrace[s] both the Sub-creative Art in itself and a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression, derived from the Image" (139). The Sub-creative Art is the world that is created and the "quality of strangeness and wonder" is the essence of the experience of reading fantasy.

Because of this foundation, Tolkien argues that Fantasy is the purest art form because it is the most directly related to Imagination. Tolkien argues that Fantasy becomes misinterpreted as dreaming and hallucination, the first of which was Eliot's interpretation. Eliot believes that Fantasy takes away from the beauty of reality by presenting seemingly superior possibilities; Fantasy's goal is not to present the reader with an alternative to reality it is an exercise in the beauty and power of the human imagination. For Fantasy to be successful it has to be understood without having to suspend disbelief; however, it is not intended to be a superior reality. Instead of subtracting or escaping from the beauty and harshness of the world, "It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought…[it] lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar" (Shelley). The words written in defence of poetry, apply to the way that fantasy functions as well. Fantasy does not take away from the beauty of reality but opens minds to a new way of seeing the world.

Some may say that the purpose of literature is to examine or understand a higher truth that cannot be explained through any other medium. Literature may have evolved to fulfill that purpose but that purpose was not present at the origin. Story originated as a way to entertain and bring people together. This is the element of literature, which fantasy has continued. Every other genre of literature claims a higher truth, either a moral or a time period or a world, but fantasy does not make this claim. Instead, it subsists merely on the beauty of the image. The worth of fantasy is not founded in its ability to teach its reader but to entertain. This aesthetic of fantasy is what keeps it from being taken seriously; it is seen as a waste of academic time. There is so much that can be studied in the fantasy genre: allegories, influences, commentary, juxtaposition etc. There is so much that fantasy can give to the academic community but first, what needs to be understood, is that fantasy does not need these interpretations to be valuable. A fantastical text should not need to be hundreds of years old to be taken seriously. The first step to understanding fantasy is to acknowledge that fantasy does not need academia to survive. The inherent worth of these texts is the mastery of the world and the experience the reader has living in it. Academia struggles to understand a text that has worth without being analyzed. Once academia understands how much potential these texts have, then they can begin to dissect the many levels of interpretation available in these stories.

This project will use three vital fantastical works to discover three different ways that fantastical texts can be interpreted and analyzed. Each element will show different qualities of the genre as a whole and will demonstrate how the texts can be understood in an academic setting. Through this analysis, both the academic worth and the inherent value of the texts will become apparent. To achieve this end there are terms that need to be defined.

In this essay, there are two different words that will be used to explain magical phenomenon: marvel and magic. For the purpose of this essay, marvel is a supernatural object or being: it is a noun. Magic is a supernatural act that a being does: it is an action. An example of a marvel is an elf or a magic ring or a talking beaver. An example of magic would be turning a lion into stone, or bringing flowers back to life, or turning a person invisible.

Each of the following chapters are dedicated to a specific text. The first chapter focuses on *The Wood Beyond the World* by William Morris. This chapter analyzes the way that Morris builds his world to serve as a background for his higher concerns: reminding his readers of how it felt to read a medieval romance and to reestablish the beauty of pure magic in a world that has been disenchanted. The second chapter focuses on *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis. It investigates the connection between fantasy and children's literature. Lewis's work also serves as a beautiful example of how fantasy can be allegorical without losing the inherent beauty of the world it describes. The third and final chapter, analyzes *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J.R.R. Tolkien. This text exemplifies how complex and masterful fantasy can be. Tolkien demonstrates that by fully understanding the way that the genre functions, it is possible to create a world so detailed and well constructed that the final result is just shy of reality. This essay will prove that fantasy does not take away from reality, it simply allows the mind to investigate other possibilities.

Chapter 1
Moving the Magic

Fantasy, as an established genre, has been around for less than 100 years. However, this is not how long fantastical literature has existed. The term fantasy applies to the genre Modern Fantasy that really came into fruition in the 1950's with J. R. R. Tolkien's three-volume work *The Lord of the Rings*. However, it is impossible to define when this type of literature originated. Perhaps it was invented by William Morris who wrote the first second-world fantastical prose narrative. But before him there was *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and even earlier: *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. Before these texts there was also *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser which was preceded by *Orlando Furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto. Which are, themselves, coming from the Arthurian tradition with texts like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. But these were influenced by old english tales like *Beowulf*. And every fantastical text written after the 500 bce is influenced by the Homeric tradition. This demonstrates that the origins of this genre are impossible to find.

Romance, now known as Chivalric Romance to distinguish it from modern romance novels, is characterized by many different elements. Typically a Chivalric Romance would include knights on a quest and usually involved a aristocratic love affair. This focus on chivalry and courtliness is typically what characterizes a romance. However, many romances include fantastic elements or marvels. These marvels can be integral to the plot or just included in a short scene. The Green Knight in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is an example of a marvel because he is able to get his head chopped off and still live. However, sometimes there is less emphasis on the marvel like in *Lancelot and the Cart* by Chretien de Troyes where a dwarf appears and

tests Lancelot's love for Guinevere. These marvels are not questioned by the characters in the story, they are accepted and dealt with accordingly. The character's acceptance of magic in the human world is what gives romances their bad reputation after the enlightenment.

Since about the 1500's, fantastical literature has not gained the praise that it deserves. Throughout the Enlightenment period, long-form fantastical works, typically called romances, were frowned upon and considered low literature. One of the most famous texts from this era, *Don Quixote,* is about a man who gets so obsessed with romances that he goes insane and believes he is living in one.

After the scientific revolution the world became less magical. People stopped believing old stories and folklore. There were new scientific reasons for previously magical phenomena. This trend is referred to as 'disenchantment', a word coined by Friedrich Schiller but put into practice by Max Weber famously in a lecture given in 1917. "The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization, and above all by the 'disenchantment of the world'" (Smith). This was a hard hit for romances, which rely on the magic of the world. People began considering them naive and juvenile. Romances did not stop being read, but they became guilty pleasures read in the corner of a library and not openly talked about in upstanding society even though many people were reading them.

During the late nineteenth century, there was a surge of genre fiction that took different elements of romances and altered them to be more realistic. Adventure stories became popular, like Robert Louis Stevenson's books, that took the plot of romances and removed the magic leaving the audience with an amazing quest narratives that could technically happen in reality. There was also a rise in supernatural gothic novels where authors tended to separate themselves

from the text. In *Turn of the Screw*, Henry James separates himself twofold from his story. He uses a framing device of storytelling and also, the story is said to be a diary of a governess. This prevents the author from taking responsibility of the supernatural elements of the text and provides the governess's sanity as an excuse. A different type of excuse is used in science fiction where the fantastical elements are explained away with science. H, G, Wells, played a large part in making this interpretation popular. Books of his like *The War of the Worlds* and also books by other authors like *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, use science as an excuse for magic and marvels. *The War of the Worlds* uses science to excuse the use of other species and spaceships. *Frankenstein* uses science to excuse a superhuman monster. While medieval romance seemed to have disappeared, there was someone who was trying to keep it alive: William Morris.

William Morris is a man of many talents: a successful textile designer, author, translator and social activist. While these different titles seem unconnected there was a common thread of logic and principles throughout Morris's work: conservation, accessibility and the need to make life beautiful. The combination of these principles was evident in Morris's textile work. He wanted everything in his life to be both useful and beautiful and he focused his energy on the objects in his house. One of his most famous creations, that is still manufactured, is the Morris chair. This reclinable chair is not only stunning but also practical for both work and relaxation. His obsession with beauty also lead him to many pursuits in conservation, focusing mainly on architecture. He founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings or SPAB. This focus on conservation seems to have flowed over into his literary pursuits at the end of his life. In the 1890's when Morris's health was declining, he began writing what are now known as his Prose Romances.

The Prose Romances were unusual because no one was writing new medieval style romances at this point in time. Earlier in the nineteenth century there was a new surge of Arthurian legends, which lead to the *Idylls of the King* by Alfred Lord Tennyson. While Arthurian romances seem to have gained more popularity, other types of romances with fantastical elements were no longer written except for Morris's Prose Romances. However, the most influential aspect of any of Morris's work is that he invented other worlds for his story to take place. His prose romance written in 1894 , *The Wood Beyond the World*, is the first second-world fantasy prose romance written in English. In doing this, he was able to conserve the fantastical nature of romances while writing for an enlightened audience. By moving the magic to another world, his story was not at war with the culture's obsession with empiricism, which states that all knowledge comes from experience. The focus on experience made it difficult for people to believe in magic in their world. Unlike other authors who used realism and science to hide the magical elements of their text, Morris simply moved the magic to a place where the logic of the world accepted the fantastical phenomena.

This decision opened a door for countless fantasy writers after him and paved the way for the modern fantasy genre to be established. Two writers who were influenced by Morris's writings were C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien, two authors that practically define the genre of modern fantasy. Placing these three authors side by side it is clear to see the evolution of the way that fantasy functions. *The Wood Beyond the World* is different than the work from either of these two later authors, because it functions like prose poetry. *The Wood Beyond the World* is influenced by medieval romances, but it seems almost that Morris took the marvels from romances and placed them in a world of their own. This marvelous world, is the setting of a

beautiful prose poem that expresses the essence of marvels as they were found in medieval romances. The poetical nature of this text allows for Morris to focus on thematic issues rather than issues of plot and character. In the first section of the story when Walter, the main character, is in the human world, the characters' motivations and relationships are clear to the reader. However, when he passes into the world of marvels, the plot becomes less important. This is when Morris begins to use language and logic from poetic romances.

Another characteristic of this text that separates it from many other fantastical works is the literary nature of the text. Fantastical literature stems from an oral tradition that can be traced back to the origins of literature itself. However, Morris's text is noticeably textual. All of its elements, from the visual nature of the book itself to the language used remind the reader how this book is a book. The non-orality of the text is reflected in the poetry; the lack of definable narrative emphasizes that the book should be seen and not heard. Oral texts are action-based because it is difficult to follow complex ideas or poetical analogies when you are listening to a text. The poetical elements of Morris's text emphasizes that the focus is not the plot or the story but the essence of romance.

The difference between story and poetry can clearly be seen in the way that Morris writes about Walter's journey. The story follows a basic narrative structure while Walter is in the human world. However, when he travels to the new world the plot becomes less clear. The characters do not have names and their history is never explained. The focus of this section is on the marvels and the attractions between Walter and the Maid or the Lady.

The Human World

In “The Fantastic Imagination”, George MacDonald discusses the balance of logic in fantasy worlds. He describes how the author, once a world is created, must stand by a set of rules or law that defines his newly created world. “To be able to live a moment in an imagined world, we must see the laws of its existence obeyed” (65). The audience cannot place themselves in a world that they do not understand; if the logic of a world is not followed then the discordant events pull the reader out of the world and ruin their suspension of disbelief.

The ‘law of existence’ establishes a norm, which is the foundation of any story. What makes a story interesting is conflict. Within a story, conflict is the upset of the everyday or the norm; without conflict there is no story. In addition, to have a conflict there needs to be a norm established to upset. Therefore, when MacDonald writes of the ‘laws of existence’ he is acknowledging the need for an established norm for any form of conflict to arise. Without an established norm, the audience would not recognize a conflict and therefore, there would be no story.

When writing realistic fiction, it not as pressing to establish a norm because a large portion of the norm is what the audience would already know from living in society. However, this norm is still necessary because if one is living in modern day England and reading about sixteenth century India, one might not know how everyday people would function or what they would consider abnormal. However, in both societies, if a person starts flying through the air, or is able to rejuvenate flowers that have wilted and died, this would be considered supernatural. This is not true of fantastical literature; when writing about a world that has been created for the purpose of a particular story, one has to establish whether flying people are normal or abnormal

for that world. Perhaps, flying is the norm but walking is considered incredible and when someone steps on the ground they are considered to be supernatural. Because of the audience's lack of knowledge about the normalcy of a world in which they do not live, the author of fantasy has to be more thorough and detailed about what is normal in their world. *The Wood Beyond the World* does not necessarily reach a harmonious balance between what the audience knows, and what he must convey about the world through the text.

The first section of the story takes place in the human world, and therefore does not need much exposition. Walter, the main character, encounters problems that need no explanation because the audience already understands that the events conflict with their norm. Walter marries a beautiful woman who he believes loves him, but quickly over the course of six months it is clear that she hates him. This conflict, is obvious to the reader without much description. The norm is for a married couple to love each other; therefore, the fact that Walter's wife hates him is a conflict, which makes Walter miserable.

Because of this conflict, Walter leaves home to escape his misery.Over the course of his journey, Walter has three visions of the same three extraordinary characters. The first time that Walter sees them, it is described in great detail. The characters are not introduced as people; in fact, the author avoids calling them anything and refers to them simply as "these were three" (6). The characters are not described as magical, but are distinct from any other character in the story because of the depth and nature of their descriptions. This is the first time in the text that any character's appearance is described in great detail. Even Walter's appearance is merely described as a "fair-faced man, yellow-haired, tall and strong" (*The Wood Beyond the World*, 1972, 1). In contrast, the first character of the vision is described in great detail. The dwarf is described as

"dark-brown of hue & hideous, with long arms & ears exceeding great and dog-teeth that stuck out like the fangs of a wild beast" (*The Wood Beyond the World,* 1972, 6). This creature is clearly different from all the other characters so far in the text; he is described in great detail, and the descriptions point out all the characteristics of the dwarf that differ from a typical human.

Even though the author does not express the human-like characteristics of the creature, they are implied through two specific words: dwarf and arms. The word dwarf implies a human creature that is of shorter stature. There are many different dwarves interpreted in literature, but there are always human creatures that are shorter than the typical human. In addition to this, the human image is reinforced by the world 'arm'. There are very few creatures other than humans that have arms, and the word arm implies that the creature is walking on two legs, rather than crawling or any other movement. While the author details the ways in which the dwarf looks different from a typical human, there is no need to describe the ways in which they are similar because that is assumed in the language that the author uses.

The second of the three characters is still given more description than was given to Walter, but she seems to be human. She is labeled as a maiden and the elements of her physique that the author chooses to focus on are human traits: "grey-eyed, brown-haired, with lips full & red, slim and gentle of body" (*The Wood Beyond the World*, 1972, 7). While these traits are clarified, they are not described in detail. The only elements of her physical characteristics that were described are the elements that shift from person to person. It is not stated that she has two eyes or what shape they are, the author merely describes their color. Unlike the dwarf, the length of her arms or the shape of her teeth are not examined because the nature of her arms and teeth

are not important. The assumed image that the reader would have of a slim maiden's arms is accurate enough that the author does not feel that it requires extra description.

The third description does not detail any particular part of the Lady's physique. Instead, there are sweeping expressions of her stateliness: "so radiant of visage & glorious of raiment, that it were hard to say what like she was" (*The Wood Beyond the World,* 1972, 7). This character is beyond description; Morris does not separate her traits and analyze them like he did with her two companions. However, this does not mean that the reader cannot picture her; the word 'lady' implies a female human who is upperclass and sophisticated. These concepts are supported by the other descriptors: tall, stately, radiant, glorious of raiment, and beauty. The Lady is tall and stately, which implies an elegant grace and feeling of importance. Her description as radiant and her clothing paint a picture of a rich upper class woman who has a beautiful complexion. Unlike the other creatures, nothing about her person is specified besides her height, therefore she is the epitome of what the reader believes is a perfect lady.

Even though the description of both the Lady and the Dwarf seem to imply some kind of abnormality, there is no explicit magic at work during the first vision. Walter sees three interesting characters getting on a boat at the docks. However, on his way home from the harbor, Walter sees these three again. This is the reader's first exposure to something completely out of the ordinary. The second vision is another event that is clearly against the norm. While the miserable condition that Walter has with his wife is a conflict, it is a conflict against the norm of relationships; the second vision is the first time where the reader is exposed to a conflict against the norm of the world. It is the first point where fantasy makes its way into the story: it "seemed for a moment of time that he beheld those three coming out down the steps of stone into the

street..he stood still to abide their coming and looked toward them, lo! there was nothing before him" (*The Wood Beyond the World*, 1972, 9). In this moment, Walter is unaware whether the characters are 'children of Adam' or simply from a dream. For, he sees them on land, near his house, when he had just watched them sail away from the harbor. In addition to the odd circumstances, Walter's image of them vanishes when they are about to approach him. This implies that he is seeing a vision of them. It is yet unclear whether this vision is from Walter's imagination or through some other force. However, what is clear to the reader that this type of vision is not normal and either Walter is beginning to go crazy, or there is something extraordinary happening.

The World of Marvels

Once Walter embarks on his journey, it is clear that he cannot let go of the image of those three characters. This obsession grows when he sees the three yet again on his journey. However, his dreams of adventure are crushed when Walter hears that his father has been killed by his wife's family. Because of this conflict, Walter needs to travel back home to settle his father's accounts and possibly to avenge his father's murder. However, a great storm hits the ship and they are thrown completely off course. They finally arrive at a shore that they do not recognize. As the ship approaches this new land, they notice that the land looks habitable and the only thing that seems strange is "they knew no cause why that land should not be builded, though it were in the far outlands" (*The Wood Beyond the World,* 1972, 27). This confusion is the first sign that something is out of the ordinary.

When a man comes out of the only house and approaches them he explains that he is the only human or 'son of Adam' in that land. The man then goes on to mention the other creatures

who live in this land: the 'Bears'. "As to their bodily fashion, it is altogether manlike, save that they be one and all higher and bigger than most. For they be bears only in name; they be a nation of half wild men" (29). The physique of the Bears is clearly established: they are wild men that are much larger than the average human; indeed, the Bears are simply giants. Again, because the Bears are described as manlike there is no need to go into detail about what they look like. It is not necessary to specify other aspects of their physique, like was necessary with the Dwarf, because the reader's image of a man, be it an abnormally large man, is sufficient.

Soon after arriving, Walter desires to explore the land itself and abandons the ship and crew to travel through a pass in the mountains. After traveling for a few days, Walter hears an incredible noise: "a strange noise of roaring and braying, not very great, but exceeding fierce and terrible, and not like to the voice of any beast that he knew" (*The Wood Beyond the World*, 1972, 54). This noise is clearly not a sound that one would encounter in the human world because Walter clarifies that it is not a sound that could be made from a beast that he knows. However, the sound is described in terms of what the audience would already know 'roaring' and 'braying'. This follows the logic that the reader was introduced to when the man discusses the Bears: this world has creatures that do not exist in the human world.

Shortly after Walter hears the noise, the dwarf appears "whose image he had seen before" (*The Wood Beyond the World,* 1972, 55). It seems that this is not another vision because the dwarf begins to speak: "the dwarf sent out that fearful harsh voice again; but this time Walter could make out words therein & knew that the creature spoke" (*The Wood Beyond the World*, 1972, 55). The structure of this description implies that the dwarf is making the same horrible noise but now Walter can understand him. It is unclear how Walter can understand the noise

now, the use of the word ‘knew’ seems to imply that the creature is not speaking words but Walter can understand him. There seems to have been some sort of translation between the first noise and the second, because now Walter can understand the dwarf.

Once Walter arrives at this new world, it is necessary for the author to establish a ‘law of existence’ otherwise the plot may be lost. This seems to be the problem that occurs during Walter’s stay at the house of the Lady. The focus of the text seems to be on the marvels of the world and the beauty of the magic. However, because of the lack of logical foundation, it is difficult to follow the basic relationships between the characters; therefore, the specificities of the plot get lost. There is another force at work here. Morris seems to be using this world and the plot to engage with a grander theme: the conservation of how magic functioned in romances. Through the use of the language and the way that Morris designed the text to look like an illuminated manuscript, it seems that Morris is trying to revitalize the essence of how marvels existed in romances.

In his essay ‘“On Stories”, C. S. Lewis discusses how stories are a means to an end; the author writes a story because it is the best way to convey a concept or idea he needs to deal with. Lewis writes:

> To be stories at all they must be series of events: but it must be understood that this series--the *plot*, as we call it-- is only really a net whereby to catch something else. The real theme may be, and perhaps usually is, something that has no sequence in it, something other than a process and much more like a state or quality. (18)

The emphasis on theme is necessary to express the overarching meaning of the text. This theme illustrates what motivated the author to write this story. In *The Wood Beyond the World*, Morris seems to have extracted the most marvelous elements of romances and placed them in a world of their own. His theme here being the conservation of the essence of marvel in medieval romances. However, when addressing both Macdonald's argument for the necessity of the 'laws of existence' and Lewis's argument on the necessity for clarity of the overarching theme, it becomes obvious that there needs to be a balance.

The necessity of an overarching theme that gives weight and purpose to a text cannot be discredited. This element of authorship can be vital to a piece of literature. However, when there is no foundation for this theme to rest on, if the plot is not present enough to support this motif, then the reader will not have access to the theme. The plot and character relationships is the tool through which the reader is able to understand and appreciate the theme. As C. S. Lewis writes the plot is a 'net whereby to catch something else'. The plot is not necessarily the focus of the text but if there is no 'net' there is no hope on understanding the overarching theme.

Once Walter enters the Lady's house, Morris does not have the luxury of relying on English norms anymore. This lack of establishment becomes glaringly apparent when the reader attempts to decipher the relationships between the four characters that Walter encounters at the house. Relationships between characters are crucial elements of a story; in realistic fiction, relationships are the foundation of the plot. However, the way that Morris chose to display and use the characters and the marvels of the story, make it difficult to understand the intricacies of the plot.

There is a specific way that marvels functioned in medieval romances. Marvels would exist in the context of the real world, typically England or France. They would be a part of the journey or an obstacle on the hero's quest. The hero, who typically was a knight, would be on his way to achieve a lofty goal and on the way he would meet a marvel that could either help him or hinder him.[1] The marvels tend to be crucial to the plot of the story. In *Lancelot and the Cart*, Lancelot's most detrimental mistake is hesitating before getting into the cart that the dwarf drove. The Lady of the Lake is a prominent character in many stories, most importantly, in one version of the myth, she gives Arthur the sword Excalibur. These small yet vital roles are typical, but there are also stories where the marvelous creatures function as the quest itself. The Quest for the Holy Grail is a common theme in Arthurian literature. This quest was the focus of various Arthurian tellings where many knights attempted to acquire this wondrous object. The entire plot of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is Sir Gawain attempting to defeat this knight who is completely green and can survive when his head is chopped clean off.

The marvels in these tales are crucial to the plot, but they are supported by courtly love or chivalrous actions. Lancelot is trying to save his love so he does not question the dwarf and gets into the cart. Sir Gawain is following the etiquette of a beheading game; the rules stated by the Green Knight say that Gawain must return and allow the Green Knight to attempt to behead Gawain in a year and a day. Because of his honor and his promise, Gawain has to follow these rules. In these two instances, the marvel is not questioned or discussed but is dealt with according to what needs to be done. Medieval romances take place partially in a court setting, which the contemporary readers would be accustomed to. However, because the world of *The*

[1] Marvels could be creatures or objects. The Holy Grail is a marvel but so is the Lady of the Lake or a dragon. A marvel is something that defies the laws of nature and could be part of the journey or could be the object sought for on a journey.

Wood Beyond the World is not in Europe, the reader does not have a norm already established when reading the text.

Once Walter arrives in the marvelous world there is no longer an emphasis on plot; the story becomes more poetic. The function of the book is no longer to articulate a certain story, but to express the essential beauty of the most fabulous aspects of the art in the Middle Ages. This expression is represented in both the poetical language of the poem and the visual nature of the book and the text itself.

The Poetic Language

While *The Wood Beyond the World* is clearly a narrative because of the structure and the way that the text functions, the language that Morris uses is poetic. The most obvious characteristic of Morris's language is the archaic nature of his sentences. There are a few ways that he establishes this aesthetic: using obsolete words, using words that are typically monosyllabic and Anglo Saxon in origin, and using unusual word orders. In Robert Boenig's introduction to *The Wood Beyond the World*, he discusses the use of archaic language and how Morris seems to be emulating many of Malory's language traits.

> Now this was the last country whereto the Katherine was boun; so there they abode some ten months in daily chaffer, and in pleasuring them in beholding all that there was of rare and goodly, & making merry with the merchants and the towns-folk, and the country-folk beyond the gates, and Walter was grown as busy and gay a strong young man is like to be. (Morris 13)

This quote exemplifies the multiple ways that Morris establishes his archaic language.

There are two words that would be considered archaic at this time ‘boun’ and ‘chaffer’. ‘Boun’ means ‘to set out, go” and ‘chaffer’ means ‘trade, buying and selling’. ‘Boun’ had changed spellings but was still being used occasionally at Morris’s time as ‘bown’. However, Morris’s use of the archaic spelling implies that he was attempting to invoke an older usage. Chaffering was a term still used when Morris was writing but the noun ‘chaffer’, as it is used in the text, was obsolete. Even though these terms are no longer in practice, they do not distract from the reading. Morris was talented in giving enough context clues to understand the meaning of the word while still perceiving its archaic origins.

The above quote includes many words that are not monosyllabic; however, Morris’s intention is still clear. There are only two words that do not sound like they are derived from the short blunt Anglo-Saxon language: Katherine and pleasuring. ‘Pleasure’ comes from a combination of Anglo-Norman and Middle French influences. However, even the other three syllable word in the quote is from an Anglo-Saxon etymology. ‘Beholding’ comes from the Old Saxon ‘*bihaldan’.* Also, Morris’s choice to use words like ‘folk’ instead of ‘people’ shows his interest in keeping the language similar to Middle and Old English, which was less affected by French influences.

The archaic word order that Morris uses frequently in his text is exemplified in the sentence “and in pleasuring them in beholding all that there was of rare and goodly”. The order of that phrase is interesting. Instead of saying ‘beholding all that was rare and goodly’ Morris writes ‘all there was of rare and goodly’. This phrasing would typically be followed with a noun like ‘make’ or ‘origin’, for as it is now the adjectives ‘rare’ and ‘goodly’ do not have a noun to

describe. However, this usage again does not take away from the meaning of the text. It is clear that Morris is discussing the beautiful things that the characters would encounter in this country.

This archaic sentence structure and syntax can be seen in Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Another element of Morris's writing that seems to stem from Malory is the additive nature of the sentences. The sentences are quite long and are continued with the use of 'and' and commas.

> So when the duke and his wife were come unto the king, by the means of great lords they were accorded both. The king liked and loved this lady well, and he made them great cheer out of measure, and desired to have lain by her. But she was a passing good woman, and would not assent unto the king (33).

It is interesting to note that even though Malory was written 400 years before Morris was, the language is quite simple. There are rarely occurrences of words that contemporaries of Morris would not understand. The use of archaic words seems to be a technique employed by Morris to make his text feel like an older text, even if the older text he was working with did not include many of those words.

The use of archaic language functions as more than a stylistic choice; it emphasizes a kind of nostalgia that Morris is attempting to express to the reader. The revival of medieval romance and Morris's clear drive for conservation, are both represented in this nostalgia. By using the language of the older texts, Morris is engaging the audience in the experience of reading these old romances. This technique seems to imply that Morris is not simply attempting to engage his contemporaries in a new experience of romantic motifs, but truly wants his

audience to regain the feeling of reading a romance. The language places his reader in this forgotten world and through the language revives the sentiment associated with these older texts.

The Visual Text

While *The Wood Beyond the World* is a poetic text it is also visual. This is represented in not only the images, but the book itself. The book begins with a beautiful image of the Maiden from the story (fig. 1). The image has her wearing flowers and in a meadow where flowers are blooming. It is clear that she is in the woods because of the boughs in the background. This detailed image is framed by a beautiful border of a spiraling vine with flowers. The same frame is present on the opposite page where the first letter is a complex and elegant 'A'. The letter is so large it continues until the tenth line of the text. Throughout the length of the book there are half borders of delicate vines around every chapter heading and each one is unique and detailed (fig. 2). Each chapter begins with a smaller but no less beautiful letter stamp; in addition, each paragraph begins with a small letter stamp that is reminiscent of the vines and leaves present in the rest of the text. Even within the large paragraphs, there are little oak leaves in between the dialog, representing where there typically would be a paragraph break.

The physical nature of this text constantly reminds the reader that they are engaging with a book rather than simply a story. The visual art that is physically in the text is also reflected in the text itself. The way that Morris details the world is reminiscent of Pre-Raphaelite work. With many of his descriptions, Morris could be explaining a Pre-Raphaelite painting by one of his colleagues.

> After he had gone a while and whenas the summer morn was at its brightest, he saw a little way ahead a grey rock rising up from amidst of a ring of

> oak-trees;...he saw that there was a fountain gushing out from under the rocks, which ran thence in a fair little stream. And when he had the rock and the fountain and the stream clear before him, lo! A child of Adam sitting beside the rock fountain under the shadow of the rock. He drew a little nigher, & then he saw that it was a woman, clad in green like the sward whereon she lay. She was playing with the welling out of the water, & she had trussed up her sleeves to the shoulder that she might thrust her arms therein. Her shoes of black leather lay on the grass beside her, & her feet and legs shone with the brook. (60)

The way that Morris details the background of the painting with a description of the trees, rock and stream is characteristic of the Pre-Raphaelite artists who place exquisite detail into elements the background of their paintings. Also, the way that Morris references light in the scene brings to mind how important light was in may Pre-Raphaelite works. In this scene, the 'morn was at its brightest', which gives the reader visual information. In Pre-Raphaelite work, especially paintings, which women are the center, the light plays off their skin in a way that makes it glow. Morris seems to be alluding to this aesthetic when he discusses the physical nature of light. Also, the final image: "her feet and legs shone with the brook" reflects the glowing aesthetic through the image of her wet feet and legs reflecting the bright morning sun.

Pre-Raphaelite paintings that include a body of water, like *The Lady of Shalott* by J.W. Waterhouse (fig. 3), emphasize the woman in the picture in a compelling way that is also used by Morris. Even though water is one of the most reflective materials, the women in these paintings seem to be reflecting the light more than the water; this is true about *The Lady of Shallot*. The Lady is in a boat on a river, which coincides with a particular scene from Tennyson's poem of

the same name. In the painting it is clear that the lady is the focus not only because she is in the center, but also because her bright white dress seems to be reflecting the light in a way that makes her draw the attention of the audience's eyes. The light in the world of the painting must be bright to create that type of reflection, and yet the water is not reflecting the light at all. There are reflections of the sky and trees in the water, but the sun is not reflected. There are no bright colors in the water, simply the darker reflections of the world around her. Even the Lady is not reflected in the water, because the painting cuts off before her reflection would have been necessary. This type of focus is being alluded to in Morris's description of the Maid because though he mentions the shining maid he does not mention the water.

The scene that Morris sets when Walter first meets his love, could be a description of a pre-raphaelite painting. This type of detail is present throughout the text so much so, that the story could easily be portrayed in a series of tapestries. The visual nature of the text adds to the poetical aesthetic that Morris was striving for. The focus of this text is not the plot but to conserve and make accessible the most beautiful elements of Medieval art.

Reviews and Letters

In *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, Morris writes to two reviewers of *The Wood Beyond the World*. Each review was positive and insightful; however, William Morris agreed with one reviewer and disagreed with the other. The first reviewer, Theodore Watts-Dunton, was writing for *The Athenaeum* magazine, a literary magazine published in london from 1828-1921. (Jones) This review discusses the poetical nature of *The Wood Beyond the World.* Watts-Dunton states: "If the name "metreless poem" can properly be given to any form of imaginative literature, these romances are more fully entitled to that name than anything that has gone

before" (1895). Watts-Dunton is touching on a complex question that involves the definition of poetry. Poetry has been defined by form and form had been represented primarily through meter. To answer the question whether or not *The Wood Beyond the World* is poetry, Watts-Dunton argues that though the text does not follow a "*recognized* metrical law" the text could still be defined as poetry. This is because the sentences follow the "simple method" of poetical phrases and the "imaginative literature is imbued throughout with poetical colour". These observations are true of the text, however Watts-Dunton seems to be missing a key element. Much of the innovation of Morris's work lies in its ability to use elements of past fantastical works that were written in poetry, but bringing them into a more contemporary form: a prose romance.

Morris's life's work cannot clearly be defined because he was involved in so many aspects of society, however one of the common themes present in both his literary work and textile design is the need to conserve beauty in an accessible context. Through his design career, Morris worked to bring the high art of the Middle Ages into the home. In doing so, he made the magnificent art, accessible to people on a daily basis: it was beautiful and practical. This is where Watts-Dunton falls somewhat short; Morris is writing with poetical elements but he is definitively not simply writing poetry. The accessible literature of the late 1800's were novels and through his prose romances, Morris was bringing the most beautiful elements of Medieval literature to the nineteenth Century.

In addition to discussing the poetical nature of the text, Watts-Dunton also discusses the way that Morris uses non-contemporary language. He asks the question "Is it legitimate and is it wise for an artist to return up the stream of literature in which he works in order to preserve some of the best of the old beauties of his language from being swept away by modern innovations?"

(1895) This question directly corresponds with the theme of conservation that Morris was trying to achieve with this work: the conservation of how marvels functioned in medieval romances. This conservation effort was represented in the language that Morris chose to use. The archaic language alludes back to how medieval texts were originally written. Even the way that Morris physically represented the text as an illuminated manuscript harkens back to the original romantic tales. The conservation of the text, paired with the accessibility of the medium, makes this text both beautiful and accessible even if the aesthetic of the text is no longer always clear to a modern reader.

After reading this review, William Morris felt inclined to respond to the author. In a letter written to Theodore Watts-Dunton on March 7th, 1895, Morris writes: "One has so often been praised for doing what one has by no means aimed at, that it is a very pleasant change to find some one who understands one's aim, and is so kind as to think the mark has been hit" (*Collected Letters* 252). Watts-Dunton's comments about the nature of the language used in the poem clearly is exactly what Morris intended. Morris uses archaic but simple language that is not didactic or rhetorical in the slightest. It is simply written for the story with no ulterior motive in mind. This simplicity is compared to contemporary poets; however, this simplicity is another sign that *The Wood Beyond the World* is not simply poetry but a prose romance. Poetry at this time was filled with rhetoric and euphuism as Watts-Dunton states, therefore Morris is not writing contemporary poetry.

The second review that Morris directly discusses in his collected letters appeared in *The Spectator*, a magazine started in 1828, which is still in print making it the longest running magazine in the English Language. The author of the review was not published, so Morris

addressed his letter to the editor of the magazine. The article begins by discussing allegory and writes "There are probably many people who read an allegory as they read a fairy-tale, without seeking for hidden meanings" (Spectator). The author goes on to explain how *The Wood Beyond the World* is an allegory for Capital, Labor and Aristocracy and their relationship. The author implies that Morris is using the text to explain his socialist political views. The article concludes with:

> The story of *The Wood beyond the World*, taken as a fairy-tale, is poetical and highly imaginative, but if we are compelled to look into its teaching we are reminded of the mirror in which we now see life darkly, and of an ancient mirror in which the faces look somewhat distorted, though the frame is quaintly set and enriched with jewels. (Spectator)

This critic enjoyed the story itself and believes it is 'poetical' and 'highly imaginative' but seems to believe that the value of the story comes from the socialist allegory. This clearly is not what Morris was attempting because he just agreed with the previous reviewer that he did not intend any hidden meaning behind the story. While the first reviewer believed Morris's lack of didactic teaching was refreshing, the second reviewer seemed incapable of enjoying a story without it and had to project a teaching onto a story that did not intend to be didactic.

In his letter to the editor, Morris writes his thanks for the positive review, but also discusses the problematic nature of the analysis. He expresses that he does not typically respond to review of his work because the "writers have formed their opinions on grounds sufficient to themselves" (*Collected Letters* 291*)*. However, he believed it was necessary to respond to this review because he did not want other readers to be lead astray by this overly confident analysis.

Morris explains: “If I have to write or speak on social problems, I always try to be as direct as I possibly can be. On the other hand, I should consider it bad art in any one writing an allegory not to make it clear from the first that this was his intention” (*Collected Letters* 291*)*. In this way, it seems that the reviewer was incorrect about the work for two reasons: Morris does not discuss politics unless directly addressing the problems, and if he had wrote an allegory he would have done his best to make it expressly clear what he was attempting to do.

Authors of medieval romances did not have ulterior motives when writing their texts; they were simply attempting to convey a beautiful story. This is exactly the type of writing that Morris was trying to conserve and revitalize by writing his Prose Romances. Morris’s work was not written to discuss a larger issue facing his society by using allegory; it was an effort to conserve multiple different aspects of Medieval Literature.

Conclusion

There are many aspects of Modern Fantasy that were pioneered by William Morris. One of the most important is that Morris established how the fantasy itself is enough to drive a text. The beauty of marvels needs to be preserved and continued even if romances themselves need to change drastically to account for shifting fashions. Morris shows that the essence and beauty of medieval romance lies in the marvels of the text rather than in the courtliness.

Morris’s text conserves many aspects of medieval literature using different tactics to initiate nostalgia in his reader. He uses archaic words and word order to represent a time far in the past. Morris also illuminated his manuscripts in his own way with the visual art that he prints alongside his stories. To emphasize the focus of the story, he lets the plot fall to the wayside and

lets the romantic images take the spotlight to further establish the beauty and significance of the marvels.

Morris's use of imagery in the story justifies the marvels present in medieval romances by emphasizing their beauty. In his text, he does not feel the need to explain or detail the ordinary but instead focuses on the fantastic. This tactic concentrates the text on the essence of marvel itself and allows the reader to bask in the beauty of the fantastic images without having to worry about their relation to a larger plot.

Unlike some fantasy, Morris's works were not an allegory for a greater idea because, for him, fantasy itself was his greater meaning. Morris found society had shifted away and lost its magic. The revival of the Arthurian legend prior to Morris's texts may have reminded him how fantastic the world used to be, but as he grew older literature began to shun marvels and magic. To battle this decision, Morris took it upon himself to make a safe haven for these magical things and paved the way for more to be created and admired.

Chapter 2

Fantasy Gravitated to the Nursery When it Went Out of Fashion

Children's literature has not always been separate from literature written for adults. There were fairy tales and nursery rhymes, but there was not a surge for children's books unitl after WWII. Children's literature has both censored content and censored language. The content is censored because there are topics that adults have deemed inappropriate for children to read about. Two of the most common of these topics are sex and graphic violence. The language of children's literature is also censored in two ways. Children's literature does not include swear words or words associated with sex, and it also has a more simple vocabulary than other literature. Children's literature has a simpler vocabulary so that children will be able to understand the text with their own limited vocabulary. These elements define what is foundationally different between children's literature and other literature.

Before there were children's authors, there were authors associated with children. Aesop is a perfect example of this type of author. Aesop was not writing specifically for children and his work is not read only by children. However, his work slowly became associated with children and *Aesop's Fables* became a popular book for children because of the strong moral lessons present in the tales. After WWII, Jella Lepman established the International Board on Books for Young People in Zurich, Switzerland in 1953. This event lead to many major developments in establishing Children's Literature as its own genre. Following these developments came what is known as the second 'golden age' of children's literature. While there is no distinguishable reason that children's literature flourished at this time, it was in accordance with developments in education. (Hunt, 255)

During this time there was also a shift in how children's literature was viewed. This genre started to draw prominent authors who wrote some of their best work during this time: Lucy Boston, Philippa Pearce, William Mayne, Alan Garner, Rosemary Sutcliff, Beatrix Potter and many others. One of these such authors was C.S. Lewis. C.S. Lewis is one of the most prominent and influential children's authors of all time. His series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, became an instant classic when the first book was published in 1950. However, C.S. Lewis would disagree with his title as a children's author, in fact he would disagree with the whole concept of children's literature.

While C.S. Lewis may be most famous for his Narnia series, he was much more than a children's author. Lewis was also a poet, literary critic, theologian, essayist and academic. He wrote many fiction works including a science fiction trilogy and *The Screwtape Letters*: a Christian apologetic novel. Lewis was the chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University though he began his career at Oxford. Through his time at Oxford, Lewis became a member of the group the Inklings to which J.R.R. Tolkien also belonged. Lewis's work has had a lasting effect on many different aspects of literature, some of his most illuminating works are his essays, especially those collected in the book *Of Other Worlds.*

Of Other Worlds consists of many different works including both essays and short stories. In this book, he discusses two important and blossoming genres in the 1950's: fantasy and children's literature. C.S. Lewis has a few descriptions about why it is problematic to separate children's literature and adult literature. The first issue is separating them implies that adults should not read children's literature. Lewis argues: "that a children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story" (24). Children can enjoy stories that are written well and

have levels of engagement; however, if a story lacks a more complex meaning or is simply not very interesting then the story is not good. These are the tropes that people write when their goal is to sell books to children. The reasons that children's stories can be bad are the same reasons why any story could be bad. Children are not necessarily judges of what constitutes good literature, but that does not mean that children's authors are allowed to be lazy. Lewis continues by explaining how children's literature should be approached: "Where the children's story is simply the right form for what the author has to say, then of course readers who want to hear that, will read the story or re-read it, at any age" (24). This continues to explain that adults who like a certain genre of literature tended to read that type of literature when they were children. There is no 'juvenile taste' of literature; there are individuals opinions of what they prefer to read. The stories that C.S. Lewis enjoyed reading as a child, he also finds enjoyable as an adult.

C.S. Lewis uses these arguments to discuss the nature of the fairy tale. "In most places and times, the fairy tale has not been specially made for, nor exclusively enjoyed by, children" (26). The association between fairy tales and children is arbitrary and was established when fairy tales were no longer considered fashionable. The Realism movement, established after the age of enlightenment, pushed fantastical literature to the side. During the late nineteenth century, fantastical literature began to make a comeback but pure fantasy or fairy tales were still considered immature or naive literature. Therefore, fantasy was doomed to be solely for children. C. S. Lewis defends fairy tales in this essay and argues that there is no concrete reason for fantasy to be considered juvenile. In his experience: "I now enjoy the fairy tales better than I did in childhood: being now able to put more in, of course I get more out" (26).

Clearly, C.S. Lewis knows that children's literature is essential. However, he dislikes that it has been separated from adult literature, which lead to Lewis's conclusion that it has been defined incorrectly. The implication that children's literature should be written for and exclusively read by children is incorrect and unhelpful. Lewis argued that the only reason an author should write a children's story is because "a children's story is the best art-form for something you have to say" (23). Treating children's literature like any other genre is innovative and crucial. Understanding children's literature as a medium for art addresses the problem with bad children's literature. If the only reason one has to write something is because they want to write something, that piece of literature will not be interesting.

The idea that children's literature can be accessible to children but also constitute as good literature is exemplified by *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*. "The *Lion* all began with a picture of a Faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood" (42). The iconic image of Mr. Tumnus that begins Lucy's adventures in Narnia, is one of the most important images in this text. It does not have much to do with the overarching allegory that is essential to understanding the work as a whole but the beautiful images present in this text are one of the most compelling aspects of this work.

One of the other intriguing elements of the story is the way that the narrator functions as a character. *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* clearly comes out of a storytelling tradition. The way that the narration keeps reminding the reader that they are reading a story, and the narrator's interjections, are typical of a story teller. The oral based nature of this text is typical of children's literature because children are not completely literate beings yet. They are slowly learning how to think and reason in accordance with literature, but they are still transitioning.

That is why children's literature is less complex and is more action-based than adult literature. However, while these characteristics are associated with children, they do not exclusively apply to children. Many aspects of reasoning that intellectual society deems as 'juvenile' are actually simply oral-based processing.

The oral based nature of children's literature is also present in many Fantasy works because of the significance of its oral tradition. While there are many reasons why the association between children's literature and fantasy literature have been incorrectly equated, the oral based nature of the two types of literature is a characteristic that they both share. It is important to explore the way that the Narnian world balances a 'law of existence' with an overarching theme and the way that this text utilizes elements of oral reasoning.

Laws of Existence

One of the aspects most interesting in the world of Narnia, is the way that the world balances imagined logic with the logic and events present in the human world. When Lucy first enters Narnia she notices that she is in the middle of a snowy wood; however, she soon finds a lamp-post. The combination of two images that she is used to seeing, a wood and a lamp-post, are made magical by their juxtaposition. Combining the fantastic with the normal is part of what makes *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* so amusing. This allows Lewis to base a lot of the laws of his new world in the logic of the real world. However, unlike Morris, Lewis is dedicated to explaining the logic of the magical world to the reader in a way that makes the plot and the situations of the world the focus of the work.

The first instance of this explanation occurs during tea with Mr. Tumnus. This scene is vital to establishing how the world functions. While Mr. Tumnus is explaining what is going on

in the world of Narnia, the two characters are having an English-style tea with food, drink and manners that are typically found in English society. “And really it was a wonderful tea. There was a nice brown egg, lightly boiled, for each of them, and then sardines on toast, and then buttered toast, and then toast with honey; and then a sugar-topped cake” (14). There is nothing magical or unnatural about the tea that the two character share, each food is available to the people who would be reading this story and they are all foods that could be eaten at tea time.

After this norm is established, Mr. Tumnus then goes on to tell stories about Narnia that are not typical of England. “He told about the midnight dances and how the Nymphs who lived in the wells and the Dryads who lived in the trees came out to dance with the Fauns; about long hunting parties after the milk-white Stag who could give you wishes if you caught him” (15). This discussion clearly exemplifies the way that this text functions; there is magic and new creatures but the actions of the text typically are events which occur in the real world. There are Nymphs and Dryads but they do a typical thing: dance. In addition to this, it is necessary to notice how Lewis makes sure to include details about what these creatures are during the story. Mr. Tumnus explains that the Nymphs come from wells and the Dryads come from trees. This inclusion can be credited to the fact that Lucy would not know what these creatures are, but Lewis is making sure she, and the reader, know about each of the creatures.

Another opportunity for detailed description occurs at the house of the Beavers. This scene is filled with beautiful juxtapositions of beaver life and the life of English people. Lucy walks into the beaver house and “the first thing she saw was a kind-looking old she-beaver sitting in the corner with a thread in her mouth working busily at her sewing machine” (66). This image of a beaver at a sewing machine is delightful; it also emphasizes the presence of English

life in this world. The animals seem to function exactly like British people but they happen to live in the places that they would live in the human world. The Beavers' mound is filled with human tools and different things that people eat, but it is still a mound.

Many objects and behaviors of the animals come from England, but the animals even have the same manners as a British person. When Mr. Beaver brings the children to his house they pass by the dam made by Mr. Beaver. The children see the dam and then "They also noticed that he now had a sort of modest expression on his face--the sort of look people have when you are visiting a garden they've made or reading a story they've written" (Lewis, 64). This emphasizes that manners and the code of behavior is the same in Narnia as it is in England. The Beavers act like English people rather than any kind of animal; they even eat the same thing. However, there are some things that are still animal-like: Mr. Beaver spends his free time making a dam.

Lewis uses the logic of the human world to create the foundation for fantastical logic. This foundation enables him to then establish the magic of the text. When Lucy first enters the world she has tea with Mr. Tumnus. After they have tea, Mr. Tumnus breaks down and admits that he has kidnapped Lucy to give her to the White Witch. This is the first moment that the reader is introduced to real magic in the story. Mr. Tumnus is a marvel, but the White Witch has magic. "It is she that has got all Narnia under her thumb. It's she that makes it always winter. Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!" (17). This is the first moment when the reader is told about the politics of Narnia and this is the first time the reader encounters the main conflict.

Conflicts are in opposition to the norm of a world; Lewis has set the norm of the world through Mr. Tumnus's house, his manners and the stories he tells. Then, he describes what is wrong with the world and in establishing the conflict he also defines it as conflict. Because he is describing the actions of the Witch in a negative light, he is clarifying that the eternal winter is against the norm of the world; therefore introducing conflict. Not only does this conflict immediately engage the reader in the world itself, but also engages the reader in the story because it places the protagonist in danger. In one interaction, Lewis is able to establish the basis of an entire world.

Unlike in Morris, Lewis explains how and why magical things happen in Narnia. The White Witch kills Aslan in place of Edmund but returns from the dead. This magic is explained to Lucy and Susan. Aslan says that the Witch knew a deep magic but there is an even deeper magic that she did not know, which saved Aslan. "She would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards" (Lewis 156). This situation is different from Morris and medieval romance in two ways: the protagonists question the magic and then the magic is explained. Because Lucy and Susan ask why Aslan was able to live again, he answers them and explains the logic of how the magic works.

After Aslan rises from the dead he performs another miracle: he brings all the stone animals back to life. This magic is not questioned by Lucy or Susan but instead they just watch in amazement as Aslan is able to free all the creatures. However, Lucy or Susan have not ceased their curiosity; in Lewis's text, once a creature has proven that they are able to perform magic each new act of magic they perform does not necessarily need to be explained by the story. Also,

because they see Aslan bringing the creatures to life with his breath, they do not need to ask how he is doing it.

The two creatures in this text that can perform magic are the Witch and Aslan. Each one has specific powers that they display over the course of the story. However, the once it is established that the character can perform magic, each following act of magic does not need to be explained. The first time in the story that the Witch performs magic is when she meets Edmund and gives him food.

> The Queen took from somewhere among her wrappings a very small bottle which looked as if it were made of copper. Then, holding out her arm, she let one drop fall from it on to the snow beside the sledge. Edmund saw the drop for a second in mid-air, shining like a diamond. But the moment it touched the snow there was a hissing sound and there stood a jewelled cup full of something that steamed. (32)

This moment is important because it is the first time that the reader encounters magic in the story. It is also important because it establishes the magical power of the White Witch. Lewis's choice to have the first magic she performs to come from a source other than wand is interesting because her wand is her most terrifying weapon. The magic of this moment is present in the imagery. The copper of the bottle invokes the image of a bright and shining object that would be glistening with the reflections of the snow. Then the drop of liquid is so bright it was 'shining like a diamond'. A typical metaphor for a shining liquid would be a crystal because crystals are transparent. However, Lewis's use of diamond invokes a more mystical and extravagant image while also expressing that the liquid is not similar to water but must be much more bright and reflective.

The magic of the world is explained and described with clarity and intention. Lewis is clear about how the world functions and what is the main conflict. Lewis uses imagery to establish both the foundational logic of English society and the magical logic of the Narnian world. Through the images of the text and the explanations of characters, Lewis is able to integrate English objects and behaviors with magical creatures and forces flawlessly.

Use of Imagery

Lewis's explanations build the world for the reader using a combination of images. This style is typical of William Morris and functions in Lewis's text to help the reader picture Narnia. Lewis is more focused on plot and character than Morris, but he still uses images to portray his story. The first image of a faun with an umbrella and parcels passing by a lamp post in the middle of a snowy wood is an iconic image from this text. In fact, this image is what inspired Lewis to write *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In his essay, 'It All Began with a Picture" Lewis describes how he had this image in his head since he was a teenager "Then one day, when I was about forty, I said to myself: 'Let's try to make a story about it.'" (42). Like *The Wood Beyond the World*, Lewis's text uses distinct images to create the world. The images in Lewis's text function like illustrations that help make the world specific even to those who were hearing it read aloud. The first time that Edmund sees the White Witch is painted like a detailed picture. The colors are clarified and the dimensions of characters are detailed with precision:

> The reindeer were about the size of Shetland ponies and their hair was so white that even the snow hardly looked white compared with them; their branching horns were gilded and shone like something on fire when the sunrise caught them. Their harness was of scarlet leather and covered with bells. (27)

The first element of this scene to be described are the reindeer. They are not only defined as white but “so white that the snow hardly looked white in comparison”. The emphasis on the color gives the reader a clear image of how to picture the reindeer but also gives them a mystical quality for what can be whiter than snow? The next detail is that their horns are gilded in the colors of fire, which would make a beautiful contrast to the white of their fur and the white of the snow that is all around them. This contrast is repeated in the color of their harness: scarlet. This description goes on to detail the dwarf and the Witch in the same detailed description as the reindeer, using language to paint a vibrant picture, which also adds to the fantastical nature of this scene.

These images are not styled after any particular visual medium. However, they lend themselves beautifully to illustration. The first edition of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* was illustrated by Pauline Baynes and the above passage was rendered by her in the text (fig. 4). This image is intriguing and captures the essence of the moment even if it does not successfully follow all of the specific details. The reindeer are not whiter than the snow but the image captures what is important about Edmund’s first meeting with the White Witch: how terrifying and powerful she looks. The blank whiteness of her body and clothing make her seem absolutely inhuman and also visually connect her with the curse that she placed on Narnia: the eternal winter. The illustration shows how her sledge stands out from the snowy background and the ornate gold pattern seems to imply her wealth. This illustration also clearly establishes how out of place Edmund is in this new world. While the Queen seems to come from the snow of the land itself, everything about Edmund clashes with the world around him. The bright color of his shirt stands out against the immaculate white of the snow around him. He is also dressed in a light

sweater vest and shorts, which seem ridiculous while he is standing in snow and the other characters in the picture are covered in blankets.

Lewis uses imagery to establish many different aspects of the world. One of the clearest uses is defininging the difference between the White Witch and Aslan. Throughout the text, the Witch is associated with white and red, which have connotations of winter and death. “Her face was white-- not merely pale, but white like snow or paper or icing sugar, except for her very red mouth” (28). Everything associated with her is white and red including herself. Contrastly, Aslan is associated with saturated colors for he brings spring with him. “For when they tried to look at Aslan’s face they just caught a glimpse of the golden mane” (120). The most obvious example of these contrasting color palettes is when Aslan brings the creatures to life who have been turned to stone by the witch. “For a second after Aslan had breathed upon him the stone lion looked just the same. Then a tiny streak of gold began to run along his white marble back--then it spread--then the color seemed to lick all over him as the flame licks all over a bit of paper…” (162). The marble statues, which would be bright white and covered with snow is the perfect imagery to be associated with the witch. Not only does she stop life because she makes it eternally winter, but that is also her greatest power that she can turn living beings into stone. In contrast, Aslan is the bringer of life; he brings spring to the world when he arrives and over the course of the story winter slowly ends.

The passage that describes Aslan bringing the lion back to life exactly exemplifies Aslan as a life-bringer. He breathes on the pure-white, marble lion and slowly color and life spreads until he is alive and well. The use of fire in the description is helpful because Aslan ‘melts’ away

the stone and also 'melts' the snow in Narnia. The deep fiery gold that is associated with Aslan immediately alludes to the sun, which also defeats winter and brings spring back to the world.

The Witch and Aslan are contrasted in another way as well: the Witch is associated with material wealth and Aslan is associated with natural beauty. The first time we are introduced to the White Witch she is in a sledge drawn by beautiful reindeer and she has a servant who does everything for her. "She was covered in white fur up to her throat and held a long straight golden wand in her right hand and wore a golden crown on her head" (27-28). She is "covered" in furs and has a "golden" wand and crown, which are both symbols of great wealth. When she gives Edmund some hot chocolate it is presented in a jeweled mug and the box of food was "tied with a green silk ribbon, which, when opened, turned out to contain several pounds of the best Turkish Delight" (Lewis 32). The Witch is associated with extravagance; hot chocolate, which usually would be served in a mug was served in a jeweled goblet. The box of Turkish Delights was tied with silk and the Turkish Delight was the best that could exist. She lives in a huge castle and travels in a beautiful sledge.

The lavish lifestyle of the Witch is juxtaposed with the natural essence of Aslan. Aslan does not wear any clothing but his great mane. He does not own any possessions and there is no description of where he lives. He is associated with nature; the wealth and beauty that he is associated with is that of spring.

> Every moment more and more of the trees shook off their robes of snow. Soon, wherever you looked, instead of white shapes you saw the dark green of firs or the black prickly branches of bare oaks and elms. Shafts of delicious sunlight struck down onto the forest floor and overhead you could see a blue sky between the

> tree-tops. Coming suddenly round a corner into a glade of silver birch trees Edmund saw the ground covered in all directions with little yellow flowers… (Lewis 114).

In this passage, Aslan's power shakes off the snow cover of the Witch. Under the Witch's power, everything was the same: "white shapes". However, Aslan brings back the individuality and diversity of the natural world. Now the green fir trees and the oaks can be differentiated. The sun begins to shine brightly and actively affects the world around it. The sky ceases being a grey void and slowly the clouds part to allow the sun through. The richness of the natural world emerges and begins to thrive because of Aslan's presence and slowly, the Witch's power begins to melt. Through these descriptions and associations, Lewis is able to discuss the larger themes of the text.

Images are essential in understanding Narnia in many ways; they were the origin of the world, the world is built through them, and the meaning of the text is established in images. There are many meanings behind the stories about Narnia; the most famous of these being the Christian allegory that stems from Aslan's character. In this way, Narnia itself is an image that represents another belief system. "I am [in your world].' said Aslan. 'But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name." (*The Voyage of the Dawntreader*) . The faith that the children feel in their love for Aslan is a reflection of how people feel about Jesus. Like the painting in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Narnia itself can be a vehicle that guides the reader to the Christian faith. To Lewis, Narnia is not a fictional place; it is imagination. It is real in the way that Religion is real to people of faith; it exists because you believe it exists. It is not real in a physical way but in a spiritual way.

While the meaning behind Morris was conserving the essence of medieval romance in its own beautiful world, Lewis's meaning is establishing a place of magical faith. In this place, good and evil, nature and material can encounter each other head on and characters can explore who they are for an infinite amount of time.

Orality of the Story

Lewis uses images to establish the laws of the world and to emphasize important elements of the plot. However, the visual nature of the text may also be stemming from another characteristic of Lewis's writing: storytelling. The storytelling nature of the text is impossible to miss when reading *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.* The narrator directly addresses the audience and uses colloquial language. In addition, there are many more subtle characteristics of the text that also stem from an oral tradition.

There are two elements of this text that add to the storytelling nature: the logic of children's literature and the oral tradition of fantasy literature as a whole. Fantastical literature has been around since the beginning of literature itself. Homer's texts were fantastical in nature and included types of characters that are present even in modern fantasy. Giants, dwarves and witches are character tropes that have been around since before written literature existed. Because fantasy literature began as an oral tradition, there are still characteristics of the text that are present from when these types of stories were told in great halls.

One of the main characteristics of oral stories is the action-based nature of the text. "There is nothing to backloop into outside the mind, for the oral utterance has vanished as soon as it is uttered" (Ong 39). When one is hearing a story told, there is no way to reread a passage that has just been said. Because of this, the plot cannot be lost in unnecessary detail or else the

audience would forget what had just happened in the story. There are moments in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* where the text is focused on detail, but even these detailed sections are focused on action. There are very few long descriptive passages that are not focused on action. The passage where the Queen gives edmund cocoa and turkish delight is a prime example of this phenomenon (quoted on page 40).

Each verb in the passage is an active verb, so each sentence continues the plot in a small way. 'The Queen took', 'she let one drop fall', 'it touched the snow' and 'there stood a jewelled cup...steaming' all add to the action of the plot that describes how the Witch performs this piece of magic. While, the passage is focused on description including what the magical objects look like, the main description is active.

However, there are other passages that describe a scene not an event and these tend to be less active. When Lucy first enters Narnia, Mr. Tumnus is described in great detail:

> He was only a little taller than Lucy herself and he carried over his head an umbrella, white with snow. From the waist upwards he was like a man, but his legs were shaped like a goat's (the hair on them was glossy black) and instead of feet he had goat's hoofs. He also had a tail, but lucy did not notice this at first because it was neatly caught up over the arm that held the umbrella so as to keep it from trailing in the snow (Lewis 9).

This passage is mostly descriptive but also keeps coming back to action. After Mr. Tumnus's basic body structure is described, the passage focuses on what he is doing with his tail. The description is necessary but the focus of the passage is the fact that he is carrying an umbrella and does not want his tail to drag in the snow. The important and fantastical elements of the text

are not simply the way that Mr. Tumnus looks but the what he is doing. This is the charm of Narnia: the juxtaposition of fantastical and ordinary. The faun carrying an umbrella or a talking beaver at a sewing machine. The same delightfully marvelous aesthetic comes from two ordinary things being placed next to each other where they usually would never meet: a lamp post in the middle of a snowy wood.

Next to imagery, one of the most charming aspects of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is the storytelling language of the text. Lewis writes like he is telling a story to the audience. This is characteristic of many children's stories because it can be read out loud easily and also it establishes a character who the reader follows throughout the text: a narrator. Having a narrator is a technique that helps the reader engage in the text and helps establish themes and tropes within this text. The storytelling language of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is created by using colloquial language, the second-person point of view and interjections by the narrator.

The language of Lewis's text is not academic or sophisticated; this is typical of children's literature because the audience may not understand complex vocabulary. Lewis constructs his sentences to sound the way he wants them to sound. In a letter to another author Lewis writes "Every sentence should be tested on the tongue, to make sure that the sound of it has the hardness or softness, the swiftness or languor, which the meaning of it calls for" (881). This focus on the sound of the words exemplifies how Lewis's writing can easily be read outloud. Even when simply reading the text, the sound should add to the narrative.

The attention to easily spoken language also indicates that Lewis to include young children. The colloquial language that is used in this text is engaging and delightful. When the

children first arrive at the house they begin exploring and they find some rooms that were “lined with books-- most of them very old books and some bigger than a Bible in a church” (Lewis 6). Lewis uses ‘very’ a great deal to emphasize what he is discussing because children may not know the more advanced vocabulary, which would allow him to use a more specific word. In addition, there are little metaphors and similes that are simple and would be understood by anyone of any age. This type of speech is typical of children’s literature because they have a smaller vocabulary and may not understand certain references. For instance, he refers to large books as the Bible not Encyclopaedia Britannica.

In addition to the colloquial vocabulary, the narrator plays an important role in the language of the text. The book opens by introducing the children: “Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy. This story is about something that happened to them when they were sent away from London during the war because of the air-raids” (3). The first sentence simply introduces the four protagonists of the story. The second sentence begins to establish the relationship between the narrator and the reader because the narrator calls attention to the story itself. Writing “This story is about” automatically tells the reader that they are going to hear a story. Because a story is being told, someone needs to be telling it: the narrator. By bringing attention to the story, Lewis also brings attention to the narrator. It is important to note that the narrator is introduced after the four protagonists. This sets the standard for who is the important in the story; the narrator is not a character in the story but is someone who will be on the journey with the reader instead of with the characters in the story.

Shortly after the narrator is established, they have their first interjection. When describing the people who live in the house that the children travel to, the narrator jumps in with a

qualifying statement. “(Their names were Ivy, Margaret and Betty, but they do not come into the story much.)” (3). This statement again draws focus to the story nature of the text and also begins to give the narrator their own voice. Throughout the text there are interjections like this that slowly build the character of the narrator without interrupting the flow of the text. In this instance, the narrator is being polite. He may have worried that it was rude not to name the servants so he included their names but wanted the reader to know why he had thought it unnecessary to include them in the first place.

Many of these interjections, like the servant’s names, are used to give extra details about the characters or the plot. When discussing how the children reacted to seeing the professor for the first time, the narrator mentions Lucy and Edmunds reactions specifically. After stating each of their names he qualifies them with a discussion of their age “Lucy (who was the youngest) …and Edmund (who was the next youngest)” (Lewis 4). These qualifiers help remind the reader of the narrator without taking away from the plot of the text itself. They also function as an easy way for Lewis to interject important description without jeopardizing the flow of the narrative.

Another way that the narrator makes himself known are interjections that are a little less descriptive but still based in the text. These qualify the actions of the characters or give the reasons why they did what they did. “(She had, of course, left the door open, for she knew that it is a very silly thing to shut oneself into a wardrobe.)” (Lewis 8). This interjection is amusing because it is stating the actions of one of the characters by referencing a piece of common sense that any reader of this book would know. The humor of the interjection comes from the specificity, especially to a modern reader where wardrobes are less common. Nowadays, it is not common knowledge not to close the door when you enter a wardrobe and, possibly, it never had

been common knowledge. It is also possible that Lewis was emphasizing this point to make sure that children reading this text would not attempt to find Narnia and get themselves stuck in a wardrobe.

These interjections are also used to tell the reader information about how the characters are thinking and feeling. When Mr. Tumnus is telling Lucy the terrible thing that he has done to a human girl, Lucy responds but she does not want to hurt his feelings: "(for she wanted to be truthful and yet not to be too hard on him)" (Lewis 18). This tells the reader that the narrator knows all the action that is happening but also is aware of what the characters are thinking and feeling. This implies that the narrator is omniscient, which is important to clarify when creating a narrator. Since the narrator knows everything that is happening in the story he is separate from the story itself. If he were not omniscient, he could be seen as a character in the story and Lewis would have to clarify who the character is.

Another way that Lewis establishes the storytelling language is by occasionally switching into the second-person point of view. There are a few instances of this and it typically happens when the narrator is setting the scene for the audience. One of the first times this happens is when the children have just arrived at the Beaver Dam. "And out in the middle, and partly on top of the dam, was a funny little house shaped rather like an enormous bee-hive and from a hole in the roof smooke was going up, so that when you saw it (especially if you were hungry) you at once thought of cooking and became hungrier than you were before" (Lewis 65). Switching to the 'you' pronoun is a direct address to the audience. This invites the reader to imagine that they are also looking at this dam with the children and Mr. Beaver. The narrator explains how the reader would feel looking at this little house and what it would make them think about.

The clear use of storytelling by Lewis is a useful tool for writing children's literature because it is a successful way to keep the reader engaged. However, this type of writing is also alluding to the tradition of storytelling that can be traced back to Homer and earlier. The tradition of oral stories is complex and intriguing but one element of traditional storytelling is that there is always the implication that some part of the story is true. Whether there is a clear moral or whether the story is about a legendary figure who lived at some point, there is usually a kernel of truth in storytelling. This implication is verified by the Christian allegory that Lewis creates in the text. The truth, for Lewis, in his story is his faith in God and faith in the goodness of the world.

While the Christian allegory is Lewis's truth that is not the only truth found in Narnia. There are many truths to be explored in this text, so if the reader does not consider Christian values as truth, Narnia does not lose its significance. It is important to know that before Lewis discovered Aslan, he saw a faun carrying parcels in a snowy wood. The marvelous juxtaposition that makes Narnia beautiful came before the Christian ideals. While the fight between good and evil is an important theme in the text, it is not the origin. The origin of Narnia was the beauty of juxtaposing the ordinary with the fantastic.

Reviews and Letters

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is a classic children's story and readers knew this only a few years after it was written. In 1952, in a review of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Chad Walsh states that *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is "destined to become a modern fairy-tale classic" ("Caspian and Reepicheep"). He then continues by commenting on Narnia itself: "One finds a strong poetic sense and awareness of the loveliness and mystery of a universe

which cannot be wholly grasped by common sense" ("Caspian and Reepicheep"). Like Morris, Lewis's reviewers specify the poetry of his text. The idea of poetry may stem from the same image-based functionality as Morris's work. Walsh seems to understand Lewis's intention when he writes that Narnia cannot 'be wholly grasped by common sense' for common sense is exactly what Lewis is playing with throughout the text. Lewis's use of juxtaposition threatens the readers common sense and makes them set it aside for the purpose of the story. Until the reader realizes this, they will be stuck on forcing the logic of the real world onto the logic of Narnia. While much of Narnia's logic is based in the real world, one could not justify everything that happens according to the laws of the real world.

The author of a fantastical text encounters the issue of reality in a similar way: the fantastical world cannot represent the real world too much or the fantasy falls apart. In a letter to Jane Gaskell about her book *Strange Evil*, Lewis lists a series of constructive criticisms for Gaskell about how she built her world that is telling about how Lewis constructed Narnia. "In a fantasy every precaution must be taken never to break the spell...But when you add upholstered seats, lavatories, and restaurants, I can't go on believing in faerie for a moment. It has all turned into commonplace technological luxury! (*Collected Letters* 880). There seems to be a specific balance that has to be made about how much and what aspects of the real world can be brought into the fantasy world.

There are certain parts of the real world that cannot exist in the fantasy world. For this reason, there are arguments that the fantasy genre can seem conservative. This is because the aspects of the real world, brought into fantasy cannot be innovative: they have to be long established. This is one of the reasons why fantasy is typically medivalistic. Because the real

elements of the world are juxtaposed with that of the fantastical world, the real aspects have to be ingrained in the mind of the audience. A good example of this is the relationship between Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. The two animals are beavers and therefore, there is no reason for them to inhabit a traditional role of husband and wife. But it is easier for the audience to understand their relationship because they have heard stories about typical heteronormative couples for their whole lives. An reader can only focus on a certain amount of new ideas at a time. Pushing gender roles, by using talking beavers while the reader is also trying to understand the overall plot in a world they do not know, would be too much for them to process. This is true for *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* especially because it is a text for children.

In a letter to W. E. Scudamore, Lewis writes "It is impossible for the wit of man to devise a story in which the wit of another man cannot find, and quite plausibly, an allegory" (877). Lewis and Scudamore were discussing *The Faerie Queene* and Scudamore seems to have expressed an allegorical interpretation in a letter to Lewis. In this quote, Lewis seems to be implying that any text can be read as many different allegories, so he is hesitant to believe that any particular one is correct.

This interaction is amusing when recalling the reviews of Morris's work. Morris was almost offended when it was suggested that his work was an allegory while Lewis believes that any text can be interpreted as allegory. This difference in opinion is clearly defined in their work where Morris was intentionally writing a text that was definitively not allegory and Lewis was writing a text that definitively was.

Conclusion

The two forces on this work, children's literature and oral tradition, merge to create a delightfully clear narrator and text. The narrator voice seamlessly guides the main characters and the reader from the human world to Narnia. This orality makes the text feel authentic and adds to the inherent value of the story. In this way, the storytelling language of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is similar to the way that Morris uses archaic language in *The Wood Beyond the World.* Nostalgia is a useful technique to inject a story with aesthetic value.

Lewis's text differs from *The Wood Beyond the World* in many ways, the most important being that while Morris focuses his energy on establishing the inherent beauty and worth in marvels themselves, Lewis uses his fantasy world to express a larger meaning. While they both are reaching for different goals, they use some similar techniques. The use of imagery in both their writing is similar. Both authors use imagery to establish the greater theme. Lewis also uses the imagery to establish the characters and the larger plot themes. The difference between the Witch and Aslan is important to his grander concept about good and evil but it also establishes the conflict in the story.

Lewis also uses imagery to define the rules of magic and the juxtaposition between the human world and Narnia. The rules of magic are established by seeing each character perform the magic that they are capable of. The juxtaposition is established through all the images in the text: this is where most of the fantasy comes from. The source of Narnia's delight and fantasy is Lewis's use of juxtaposition of the ordinary with the ordinary and the ordinary with the fantastical.

It is necessary to note that while Lewis has a higher goal in writing this text, that the text does not simply exist to fulfill that function. Most of the fantasy and magic in this text does not add to the overarching allegory. If it did, then the text would not be entertaining for anyone who is not Christian. However, the beauty of Lewis's masterful juxtaposition inherently possesses enough value and work on its own to carry the text without the allegorical concept.

Chapter 3

When We Take the Green from Grass our Mind Awakes

It is understood that J. R. R. Tolkien's work, *The Lord of the Rings*, can be considered the origin of modern fantasy. However, it is necessary to understand that the term "modern fantasy" is in itself redundant because the genre and the term 'fantasy' has been around for no more than seventy years. In the Oxford English Dictionary, the first mention of the word in relation to a genre of literature is the title of the magazine *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* first published in 1949. The magazine was first called *The Magazine of Fantasy*, which encompassed all fantastical literature. For its second issue it expanded the title to specify the difference between fantasy and science-fiction. This specification is significant because it was one of the first publications that defined a difference between the two genres.

Indeed, this genre was in essence, created by Tolkien's work. J.R.R. Tolkien was exceptionally influential to his future peers in the fantasy genre. His most important work was published at the same time that the genre was being defined. Tolkien's work specifically falls under the category of 'High Fantasy', a term that was coined by Lloyd Alexander in 1997. This subgenre of fantasy is more specific and represents the type of second-world fantasy where the rules of the world are consistent but not the same as the human world. This is in contrast to 'low fantasy' that brings magic into the human world. 'High Fantasy' began with Morris but was truly born through Tolkien.

Even now, almost seventy years later, long-form, medievalist works of high fantasy are being published and popularized. *Game of Thrones* by George R.R. Martin is an prominent book

series that inspired a leading television series. Also, *The Kingkiller Chronicles* is a three part series by Patrick Rothfuss that is currently popular. Both these series follow the same format as *The Lord of the Rings*. They are second-world, long-form texts that are set in medieval-like worlds. Clearly there are differences between the three texts, but it is fascinating that such a specific form is still popular over a half-century later.

Tolkien's fantasy works are not simply engaging; his process was complex and began with a linguistic exploration. Tolkien was well versed in the Anglo-Saxon language and graduated with a degree in English specializing in Old Norse. He was a Reader of English Literature at the University of Leeds where he wrote many of his translations. He then returned to Oxford, where he gained his undergraduate degree, as a Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon. It was during this professorship when he wrote *The Hobbit*. Tolkien created multiple languages and through their origins he was able to compile an intricate history of a fantastical world: Middle-earth. This history slowly morphed itself into what we now know as *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings.* However, Tolkien's linguistic skill set was not the only source of his work; he also used many stories and myths to inspire the plot of his books. He used orally-based stories from Norse history, which he was well versed in, and Anglo-Saxon texts like *Beowulf*, which he finished translating in 1926.

Unlike the fantastical writers before him, Tolkien built the world and its history before writing the books themselves. By building the text from the ground up, Tolkien's work has an intricate history behind it. This type of scholarly approach creates a fantastical text that is more literate than any that had previously been written. While the plot structure and the basic actions

of the text still follow an oral narrative arch there are many sections of this text that would not translate perfectly to an oral story.

The laws of existence in Tolkien's world are evidently defined through many different mediums. While Tolkien does use some of English norms to create his foundation of logic, he does not do so to amuse the audience. Rather, he uses the foundation of logic to help the audience to understand the more complex elements of the world that he has created. The juxtaposition that happens with everyday reality and fantasy in Lewis's works are not the focus of Tolkien's work. Especially when the characters leave the Shire, the everyday juxtaposition that was delightful about Lewis, is ignored or glossed over to give way to the more important aspects of the world.

Like both Morris and Lewis, images are important to Tolkien. However, the important images in Tolkien are related to the history of the world. The story seems to begin in the middle of a larger piece of history. Tolkien gives enough explanation of the world so that the audience is not lost, but he does not immediately define terms that the typical Englishmen would not know. This may come from the fact that *The Fellowship of the Ring* is a continuation of a story that Tolkien wrote about in *The Hobbit* but it seems that it serves a greater purpose. The story of *The Lord of the Rings* seems to mimic legends as if this text were Middle-Earth's version of an Arthurian legend. The history is included for the audience's benefit, but the way that Tolkien writes, especially at the beginning, seems like he expects the reader to know basic information about the world like what a hobbit is.

Laws of Existence

Like Lewis, Tolkien addresses the necessity of the laws of existence in a fantastical text. Through his explanation of his sub-creator theory, Tolkien describes how authors creating a Secondary World need to follow a set of logic. “Inside it, what he relates is ‘true’: while you are, as it were, inside” (“On Fairy Stories” 132). This truth is necessary to establish and continue throughout otherwise the audience will cease to be engrossed in the story and will be forced to suspend their disbelief to continue reading. Tolkien’s theory of suspension of disbelief, a term originally coined by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, can be understood in two ways. When a reader is invested enough in the story that they forget that they are not in the world of the story, the reader has not suspended their disbelief. However, Tolkien uses the example of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* to show when suspension of disbelief is necessary. It will never be true that an adult, educated audience would really believe that the actors onstage are truly witches capable of magic. In this situation, it is necessary for the audience to suspend their disbelief to follow the story. This is what bad Second World story-makers do; they put the reader in a position where they would have to suspend their disbelief. “The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken; the magic, or rather art, has failed” (“On Fairy Stories” 132).

Because of Tolkien’s need to make his world believable, Tolkien makes the logic of the world perfectly clear. This is evident in the first chapter, which discusses Bilbo’s party. Throughout this chapter, the reader learns about the world of the shire and also specific information about the main characters of the story. The first few paragraphs introduce the reader to Bilbo and Frodo and details their reputation in the Shire. He explains their history with the

Sackville-Bagginses. Through the description of Bilbo's party and events leading up to it, the reader learns a lot about hobbit life.

> Hobbits give presents to other people on their own birthdays. Not very expensive ones, as a rule, and not so lavishly as on this occasion; but it was not a bad system. Actually in Hobbiton and Bywater every day in the year was somebody's birthday, so that every hobbit in those parts had a fair chance of at least one present at least once a week. But they never got tired of them (*The Fellowship* 35).

Tolkien uses these types of descriptions frequently at the beginning of *The Fellowship*. He does not explicitly describe important details about the Shire and the world itself, those are learned through context clues, but the smaller details, like how hobbits deal with birthday presents, are explicitly explained by the author.

There are more general aspects of hobbit life that the reader learns about through context clues. Hobbits are a small population of people who are averse to change, they rarely travel and do not much care for the news of the world around them. Therefore, they only ever hear rumors of what is going on outside the borders of the Shire and when they do, they do not pay much attention. All these characteristics are revealed to the reader through a few different conversations that mostly occur at The Green Dragon, the local bar. "'Queer things you do hear these days, to be sure,' said Sam. 'Ah,' said Ted, 'you do, if you listen. But I can hear fireside-tales and children's stories at home, if I want to" (Tolkien 53). Sam and other hobbits who talk about what is going on in the rest of Middle-Earth are constantly brushed off during this

exchanges. Through this short and simple conversation, the reader learns a great deal about hobbit life and how the characters function with each other and with the outside world.

As the story progresses, larger truths and themes about the world start to be defined by Tolkien. Tolkien built Middle-Earth through a history of languages, so it is no surprise that words are undeniably vital to the way the world functions. When Gandalf throws Frodo's golden ring into the fire, a line of text slowly appears on the ring. Gandalf explains: "The letters are Elvish, of an ancient mode, but the language is that of Mordor, which I will not utter here" (Tolkien 59). It is not explained why Gandalf chooses to not speak the language of Mordor, but this interaction proves that specific word and specific languages hold power enough to worry a mighty wizard.

Another instance of words holding power occurs when the Fellowship are on their journey and they encounter the door to Moria. This is the first occasion where Gandalf does not seem to know exactly what is going on. The group encounters a riddle that says "*Speak, friend, and enter*" (*The Fellowship* 318). Gandalf interprets this: "these doors are probably governed by words...any who knew the opening word could speak it and pass in" (*The Fellowship* 318). This is one of the instances in the text where magic is not in a wizard's staff but in a specific word. In this case, to enter Moria one needed only to speak the password. This scene emphasizes the power of words in this text, because it distinctly shows that words can produce magic. It is also important to note, that certain languages seem to hold more magic than others. The common tongue, while it is what all the characters speak to each other, does not seem to have much power. Gandalf felt comfortable speaking the prophecy of Mordor in the common tongue and at

the gate, the password needed to be spoken in Elvish. The power of ancient languages in this text is explicitly clear and language is crucial to the story arch.

The laws of existence for Hobbiton tend to be shown through context and examples or through quick descriptions. However, the laws of existence for the world as a whole are gained through different techniques. There are, of course, still context clues and short descriptions but much of the way the world functions is told through long descriptions of history by worldly beings. Like Lewis, Tolkien was able to create a main character who would not know much about the history of the world, so through enlightening Frodo, Tolkien is able to enlighten the audience. This technique is advantageous, because it keeps the narrative voice from having to do the explaining and allows the characters themselves to explain the story. “I told you of Sauron the Great, the Dark Lord. The rumours that you have heard are true: he has indeed arisen again and left his hold in Mirkwood and returned to his ancient fastness in the Dark Tower of Mordor” (*The Fellowship* 60). The imagery in this section defines Sauron as a terrible enemy of the good in the world. This is the the first instance where the reader is introduced to the main conflict in the story: the ring and Sauron. Immediately after this description, Gandalf goes on to refer to Sauron as “The Enemy”. This tells the reader that this being is against all of Middle-Earth, not simply one person or species.

Unlike Lewis, Tolkien establishes a law of existence mostly through the history of the text. He never explains behavior or manners to the reader because that aspect of the world does not interest him. Instead, the focus is on who the characters are and their history. This is exemplified with how many of the characters introduce themselves. Once Frodo leaves the Shire, most people are formally introduced with their name and the name of their father. After Strider is

revealed to actually be Aragorn he is referenced frequently as ‘Aragorn, son of Arathorn’ or ‘Aragorn, Isildur’s heir’. This is true about other characters as well such as Gimli, who is introduced as ‘Gimli, son of Gloin’. These formal titles exemplify how deeply the laws of the world are connected to their history. Each person is not merely an individual, but an individual with a great historical family. Aragorn’s familial history is one of the focuses of the story because he has come to take his throne back from the Stewards.

Uses of Imagery

Tolkien was inspired to write all his texts about Middle-Earth by one sentence. In this sentence, is the image of a hobbit living in a hole in the ground. “In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort” (*The Hobbit* 1). This opening is delightful but not specific; Tolkien does not explain what a hobbit is or what their house looks like but a hobbit’s home is encapsulated in one word: comfort. This is the only look into a hobbits life that the author is giving the reader to work off of. All these adventures begins with the imagined comfort of a hobbit hole.

Tolkien’s world is complete fantasy, so it is necessary for him to have detailed explanations to tell the audience what certain things look like. When Gandalf sets off fireworks at Bilbo’s birthday party, Tolkien takes the time to describe the show in detail.

> There were rockets like a flight of scintillating birds singing with sweet voices. There were green trees with trunks of dark smoke: their leaves opened like a whole spring unfolding in a moment, and their shining branches dropped glowing flowers down upon the astonished hobbits, disappearing with a sweet scent just

> before they touched their upturned faces. There were fountains of butterflies that flew glittering into the trees; there were pillars of coloured fires that rose and turned into eagles, or sailing ships, or a phalanx of flying swans; there was a red thunderstorm and a shower of yellow rain; there was a forest of silver spears that sprang suddenly into the air with a yell like an embattled army, and came down again into the water with a hiss like a hundred hot snakes. (*The Fellowship* 35-36)

The author does not feel the need to describe to the audience what a firework is or how it works, but it is necessary to describe what the spectacle looks like because Tolkien can be sure that the readers have never experienced watching Gandalf's fireworks. The details present in this passage describe the elements of the fireworks that are magic. The specific shapes and sensory experiences other than sight are explained in great detail.

This passage is mostly filled with natural imagery; most of the fireworks, while the actual description of fireworks is not touched on, create natural pictures like trees or rain. The type of firework that comes from "pillars of coloured fires" end up turning into eagles, swans or ships. The mention of ships is the first unnatural image that appears in this passage. However, the three images all seem to feel the same. A bird in flight and a sailing ship have similar patterns of movement. This section leads into a more violent list of images. There is a thunderstorm that rains on the onlookers. While this image is natural, it is violent and loud in comparison with the rest of the imagery, which are slow and unfolding. The final image in the passage is a violent and unnatural image of spears and a battle cry. This dangerous image foreshadows the eventual violence and war that occurs later in the texts. Even though the image is of Gandalf's fireworks, the violent implication of this last display is that even the Shire will not be free from the violence

of the world. However, at this time the unsuspecting hobbits have no idea of the evil that is growing in Middle-Earth

The language in this passage emphasizes the magic. The image of a tree's leaves "opening like a whole spring in a moment" is a beautiful and poetic description, but it emphasizes the magic of the moment. These fireworks would not be found in the human world: the way they are described makes them seem alive. The flowers of the trees smell like flowers and the birds sing songs. This type of animation of light and sound is a complex image to decipher. However, picturing the beauty of these fireworks, adds to the excitement of the party. After this moment, the reader understands why the hobbits were so excited when Gandalf shows up with his wagon. Through these images, Tolkien is able to manipulate the audience into being a part of the story. He has succeeded in making a believable world.

Like Morris, Tolkien has moments in his text that could function like a tapestry or a painting. When Frodo and the other hobbits arrive at the home of Tom Bombadil, they see the river daughter for the first time.

> In a chair, at the far side of the room facing the outer door, sat a woman. Her long yellow hair rippled down her shoulders; her gown was green, green as young reeds, shot with silver like beads of dew; and her belt was of gold, shaped like a chain of flag-lilies set with the pale-blue eyes of forget-me-nots. About her feet in the wide vessels of green and brown earthenware, white water-lilies were floating, so that she seemed to be enthroned in the midst of a pool" (*The Fellowship* 134).

This description could be of a romantic era painting; the woman and scene is perfectly described. However, Tolkien uses a specific collection of metaphors to describe this woman. If read at a

glance it would seem that she is in the middle of a stream and is covered in flowers and plant life. However, Tolkien is merely using this imagery to describe what the woman looks like. Yet, the metaphors are so clear and distinct that the final image falls somewhere between material and natural. This is "Goldberry, daughter of the river" (*The Fellowship* 134). She both exists as a human-esque woman and a river, simultaneously. The most human element about her is her hair but Tolkien uses the verb "rippled" to describe how it falls down her back. Through this adjective, the hair automatically assumes physical characteristics of water and moves like a fluid. The next description of her gown is described as reeds with dew. However, the gown is soon forgotten as the metaphor becomes characterized. The gown is described as being "green as young reeds", but then the reeds are the subject that is being shot with "silver, like beads of dew". While this metaphor is describing the dress, the dress is not the focus or the subject of the sentence.

The next description, of her belt, follows the same logic; it runs away with the metaphor. The belt is described as gold but the focus of the sentence is the metaphor describing its shape. Again, the belt is described as looking "like a chain of flag-lilies" and these lilies are what are set with blue forget-me-nots. In this description, the reader does not even learn what the forget-me-nots are made out of; the audience is only left with the metaphor. Through this phrasing and focus the actual material of the woman and her outfit is not remembered, nor is it important. Instead, what is retained from this passage are the metaphors that describe these elements.

Tolkien's mastery of language is evident in how he blends ordinary things with the fantastical. Instead of using juxtaposition like Lewis, Tolkien blends the line between fantasy

and ordinary so that nothing is merely ordinary. Fireworks are a phenomenon that occurs in the human world, but Gandalf's fireworks are much more than a human event: these fireworks are almost alive. In the same way, Goldberry's clothing is not a simple dress but is also a river. The goldwork on her belt was made in a smithy but at the same time it is also living flowers.

This type of magical element is also true about living things themselves. The trees in Middle-Earth are more alive than the trees in the human world. Over the course of the trilogies, the consciousness of the trees increases until a forest becomes an army and they fight the orcs. When the four hobbits are on their way to meet Gandalf they pass through a forest that has a terrifying reputation in Hobbiton. The hobbits slowly begin to feel comfortable in the forest when they stop to rest by a great willow tree right by the River Withywindle. The hobbits begin to fall asleep but Sam wakes and realizes something is happening. The other three hobbits have been captured by the tree. There is no description of the tree moving, but the hobbits understand what is happening quickly. Merry and Pippin are trapped inside the tree, so Frodo and Sam light a small fire at the foot of the tree to force it to let the hobbits go. "A tremor ran through the whole willow. The leaves seemed to hiss above their heads with a sound of pain and anger. A loud scream came from Merry, and from far inside the tree they heard Pippin give a muffled yell" (Tolkien 128). Up until this point, the living and moving of the tree was only expressed in what the hobbits were saying. The hobbits commented on what the tree was doing but Tolkien did not describe what was happening directly. This passage is the first moment when the animation of the tree is described. The tree "shudders" and the leaves seem to make a sound of anger.

This type of description is almost opposite to the description of Goldberry because the magic is subtle. When magic is actually happening, Tolkien does not draw attention to it. This makes the magic somewhat ordinary. The characters are focused on the danger rather than the moving tree, so the conscious element of the tree seems natural. This passage emphasizes the blending of the normal and magical that helps Tolkien build a world that is fully believable but quite spectacular and fantastical.

Orality of the Story

Through Tolkien's ancient language specialty, he was able to build Middle-Earth from the ground up beginning with the languages. Through the evolution of these languages, Tolkien began to develop the history of the world itself. Because of the way he built the world, it would be impossible for Tolkien's story to not acquire many literary elements. The world itself is based in language and literariness. However, there are still many elements of the text that stem from an oral tradition.

While, unlike Lewis, Tolkien does not have a specified narrator character, there is a narrative voice that does describe elements of the world to the reader.

> There were rumours of strange things happening in the world outside...Elves...could now be seen passing westward...they were leaving Middle-earth and were no longer concerned with its troubles. There were, however, dwarves on the road in unusual numbers...some spoke in whispers of the Enemy and of the Land of Mordor. That name the hobbits only knew in legends of the dark past, like a shadow in the background of their memories; but it was ominous and disquieting" (*The Fellowship* 52-53).

This passage defines the scope of the narrator. Because the narrator knows what the hobbits are thinking and what they whisper about, it is clear that the narrator is omniscient. Unlike Lewis, this narrator does not seem to have a distinct personality. There is an element of drama to what the narrator is saying, an underlying sense of doom. However, there is no specific characteristics. It does not seem like Tolkien intended the narrator to be a character and for most of the text, the narrator does not engage with the reader at all. The narrator simply acts as a being of knowledge when one of the characters in the story cannot.

Most of the history of the world is told by characters in the story. Gandalf plays this part often and through his discussions with Frodo, the reader learns much of what they need to know of the history of the world to understand the danger Frodo will face. Lewis used a narrator as a storyteller in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, but most of the storytelling in *The Fellowship of the Ring* happens through characters in the story. When Gandalf is telling Frodo about what happened when the Dark Lord rose last time, he becomes a storyteller within a story: "If I were to tell you all that tale, we should still be sitting here when Spring had passed into Winter. But Last night I told you of Sauron the Great, the Dark Lord. The rumours that you have heard are true" (*The Fellowship* 60). Gandalf tells Frodo about what has been happening in the outside world, and tells him the significance of Bilbo's ring. In this way, Gandalf takes the place of the narrator and details what is going on in the rest of the world. Gandalf speaks with certainty about what happened during the last battle but then he qualifies his story: "One day, perhaps, I will tell you all the tale, or you shall hear it told in full by one who knows it best" (*The Fellowship* 61). In this way, Tolkien clarifies that Gandalf does not know everything in its entirety and that he is still a character in the story, and not omniscient.

Tolkien uses elements of storytellers in his work, even if there is not a specific storytelling character. However, there are other elements of oral stories that neither Morris nor Lewis use that Tolkien incorporates into his text. One of these elements is verse. There are many qualities that verse has that make it perfect for oral storytelling, the meter and rhyme scheme make it much simpler to memorize. Most ancient stories that survive today were written in verse because the storytellers had to memorize them rather than read them. "In a primary oral culture to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence" (Ong 34). Verse is a perfect example of this; the specific meter and rhyme scheme make it memorable and easy to recite. This pattern also makes it easy to emphasize certain words and phrases. Other techniques can be added to verse to make it even easier to memorize like alliteration and repetition. Tolkien uses verse both to instil important information in the reader and also to emphasize important moments and characters.

Verse is present in two instances in Tolkien: prophecy and song. These pieces of text are written in verse for two different reasons. Prophecy is written in verse because it is some of the most important text of the entire book, both the characters and the reader need to remember it. Also, this text needs to sound ancient and powerful because it is the core of the story. One of the most famous prophecies from this text is about the rings of power:

> Three Rings for the Elven-Kings under the sky,
> Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
> Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
> One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
>
> In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
> One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
> One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them

In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie. (*The Fellowship* 59-60)

A section of this prophecy appears on the one ring that Frodo possesses. This proves to Gandalf that Frodo's ring is indeed the One Ring that the prophecy mentions. This prophecy has a rhythmic pattern and a rhyme scheme. The first stanza follows a basic rhythmic pattern where all the lines except the third have the same meter. The last line has one less syllable but there is a pause implied after the word "Lord" that makes up for the missing syllable. Therefore, there is a significant pause after the word "die", which then draws the focus and adds morbidity. The other rhyming pair is a long syllable of "stone" and "throne", which both sound heavy and final. The first stanza is dark even though there is a meter to it.

The second stanza follows more exact rules. The first and last line are the exact same and share meter with the first, second, and fourth lines of the first stanza, connecting the two stanzas. This is emphasized by the fact that the first iteration of this line is a continuation of the first stanza. This continuation connects the two stanzas, but because of the way that the prophecy is visually laid out the line seems to stand on its own. The repetition of this line emphasizes its significance. This is one of the first times in the story the reader is told about Mordor, which ends up being Frodo's destination. The rhyming couplet in the middle of this stanza is also vital and it is emphasized by the structure of the poem. These two lines stand alone from the rest of the poem for multiple reasons; the rhyme scheme connects them, they are bookended by the same line, and they have two distinct metered phrases, which are separated from the rest of the poem by an indent. In the text itself, this phrase is repeated because Gandalf reads it off the ring and then repeats the prophecy. This structure emphasizes the importance of this couplet.

The structure of this prophecy makes it easier to remember than the rest of the text in the book. The prophecy tells the story of the rings of power and how they relate to each other. These rings are the core of the story because they are how Sauron gained control. The reader needs to remember the significance of the ring to understand the rest of the story. Therefore, this story is told over and over again, and the language is memorable verse. The other times verse is used is when the characters sing songs. One of these instances is when the hobbits meet Tom Bombadil.

Tom Bombadil is a character who is not fully explained in the text. When Frodo asks Goldberry about him she simply replies "He is". She then continues: "'He is, as you have seen him,' she said in answer to his look. 'He is the Master of wood, water, and hill.'" (*The Fellowship* 163). This is one of the moments where a marvel is explained just enough for the reader to be able to follow the plot, but not well enough for the reader to fully understand who Tom Bombadil is. His title "the Master" seems to be more authoritative and daunting than Tom is. Tom is a short, stout man who is constantly singing, and yet he has power over the whole forest.

Before the hobbits meet Tom Bombadil, they hear him. While Frodo and Sam are struggling to get Merry and Pippin out of the tree, the hobbits hear someone singing seeming nonsense:

> *Hey dol! merry dol! ring a dong dillo!*
>
> *Ring a dong! hop along! fal lal the willow!*
>
> *Tom Bom, jolly Tom, Tom Bombadillo!* (*The Fellowship* 156).

This song both makes the hobbits nervous and hopeful because it means someone can help or someone is coming that could harm them. However, it turns out to be Tom Bombadil who is

exactly the person whom they needed for help. The song that Tom sings seems like gibberish. However, Tom mentions the willow in this song so it seems as though he is either on his way there or knows that the willow is up to something. This type of rhyming song is sung multiple times by Tom and becomes associated with him. This repetition would help the reader remember this verse and Tom himself. This is interesting because Tom does not play a large role in the story.

While Tom is not important to the overarching plot of the story, he seems to be important to the essence of the world that Tolkien is building. Tom is a fascinating character who seems to have incredible powers that the reader does not get to see. He is master over the entire forest and can control beings with his words. Tolkien shows the reader one small moment that begins to express the extent of his power. Tom uses merely his words to command the willow to release Merry and Pippin: "'You let them out again, Old Man Willow!' he said. 'What be you a-thinking of ? You should not be waking. Eat earth! Dig deep! Drink water! Go to sleep! Bombadil is talking!' He then seized Merry's feet and drew him out of the suddenly widening crack" (*The Fellowship* 158). While Tom seems to have amazing powers, the way that he speaks is simple and he seems to have an unsophisticated accent. "What be you a-thinking of" has a few grammatical errors that are common in certain dialects that have typically been associated with pastoral traditions. The use of the word "be" instead of "are" characterizes him as pastoral rather than urban. Also, words like a-thinking are associated with agrarian people who knowledge is embedded in the land.

Tom Bombadil and Gandalf seem to have similar powers where they can communicate with animals who cannot speak. They also both use words to express their powers and spells.

Gandalf uses words to cast spells and Tom uses words to keep his power over the wood. However, unlike Gandalf, Tom speaks simple and unsophisticated English. His power does not come from intellectual vocabulary or study, his power comes directly from the land. While Tom does not necessarily play an important part in the story, his character is at the heart of what *The Lord of the Rings* implies. The concept mentioned earlier about Tolkien using juxtaposition between real and fantasy to build his world is true about Tom. Tom's character is incredibly powerful but most of the time the audience does not see that; they simply see a short, stout man living in the forest.

Tom's character does not play an important role in the plot but he does play an important role in the foundation of the world itself. The most powerful characters in the story are Gandalf, Elves and evil beings. However, it is hinted that Tom is as powerful as some, if not all of them, but his power is not in intellectual knowledge. The Elves are a sophisticated society that lives in a beautiful civilization, which they have built for themselves. Much of their power comes from intellectual knowledge and senses. Gandalf's power is similar to this because he seems to have learned much of it. In addition, Gandalf's power is connected to his staff, which he carries around with him. However, because of the way that he speaks, it seems that Tom Bombadil is not intellectual. His power does not come from a staff or a hoard of knowledge. Tom's power seems intricately connected with the land for he is the "Master" of the forest. This connection implies that not just the creatures in the world, but the world itself has some kind of power. This is also reflected in the behavior of the trees. The power of the world is a subtle but intrinsically important element of the way that Middle-earth functions. While this may be true of other

fantasy texts, it is vitally important when discussing the world of Tolkien because he uses it as a foundation of the world itself.

Tolkien's text uses elements from literary tradition and oral tradition, but unlike the writers before him, he uses orality as a tool to reveal innate qualities of and connections between his characters and the world around them. This awareness is another way that Tolkien's work is more subtle and scholarly than other fantasy works before him. He is aware of the way that fantasy functions and is able to use those characteristics to emphasize different aspects of his world.

Reviews and Letters

On October 31st, 1954, W. H. Auden praised Tolkien in a review of *The Fellowship of the Ring*. He discusses the story but specifically notes the way that Tolkien founded some elements in English life. "Hobbits, who may be only three feet high, have hairy feet and prefer to live in underground houses, but in their thinking and sensibility resemble very closely those arcadian rustics who inhabit so many British detective stories" ("The Hero is a Hobbit"). Auden implies a possible connection with detective stories, which may not be accurate; however, he acknowledges Tolkien's use of English influences, which proves that this element of Tolkien is crucial to understanding the text as a whole.

Auden also notices the influences of northern sagas in Tolkien's writing: "Landscape, climate and atmosphere are northern, reminiscent of the Icelandic sagas" ("The Hero is a Hobbit"). This passage shows how influential mythology was to Tolkien's writing. The Volsung saga is one of the texts that most inspired Tolkien when he was writing *The Lord of the Rings*. This passage also highlights the relationship between Tolkien and Auden because thirteen years

after this review is written, Tolkien sends Auden an excerpt of a translation that he had worked on of the Volsungs saga. “I hope to send you..a thing I did many years ago when trying to learn the art of writing alliterative poetry: an attempt to unify the lays about the volsungs from the Elder Edda, written in the old eight-line fornyroislag stanza” (*Collected Letters* 379). This text was published postmortem by Tolkien’s son Christopher Tolkien. It is called *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrún* and was published in 2009 by HarperCollins.

Auden continues and expresses how successful Tolkien was with making the world believable. “Of any imaginary world the reader demands that it seem real...Mr. Tolkien is fortunate in possessing an amazing gift for naming and a wonderfully exact eye for description; by the time one has finished his book one knows the histories of hobbits, elves, dwarves and the landscape they inhabit as well as one knows one's own childhood” (“The Hero is a Hobbit”). The concept of literature that seems real is represented in the concept of verisimilitude, which encapsulates the idea of something seeming like truth. The implied connection between “real” and meticulous that Auden acknowledges emphasizes the aspect of fantasy that Tolkien practically created. The vast historical significance, languages and other aspects of the culture were exhaustively established and worked through before Tolkien even began to write about Frodo and Bilbo. It seems as though the story of the texts was born from this extensive research. This level of detail had not been accomplished by fantasy writers before, but now Tolkien has set the standard for future writers of High Fantasy in particular.

In another review, Orville Prescott writes admiringly about the language, world and marvels but he criticizes the work as a whole. “This is a remarkable book, but it is far from a completely successful one. It grows tedious” (“Book of the Times”). The criticism that Prescott

gives is that the book as a whole drags. He believes that the characters do not have enough to sustain the rest of the text. One of his biggest criticisms is that of Frodo who is "painfully unheroic".

In addition, Prescott brings back a theme that was present in both Morris and Lewis's works: allegory. In the last sentence of his introduction, Prescott writes: "It probably is an allegory, also, for it contains plenty of personages and events that can easily be interpreted symbolically" ("Book of the Times"). Morris struggled with a reviewer over this type of accusation. In Morris's mind, if the text is not clearly an allegory then it either is not allegory or the writer has failed. Clearly, Prescott does not feel like Tolkien's work was successful, but that was not because a lack of clear allegory. Therefore, if Morris is right then the text must not be allegory.

Unlike Morris, Tolkien does not reference any reviews in his letters. Most of the letters that were collected were addressed to his son, Christopher. When Tolkien discusses *The Lord of the Rings* in his letters he typically is describing what has recently happened. Tolkien has a tendency to speak about the text and the characters as if he has no control over them. In a letter written to his son Tolkien writes:

> A new character has come on the scene (I am sure I did not invent him, I did not even want him, though I like him, but there he came walking out of the woods of Ithilien): Faramir, the brother of Boromir--and he is holding up the 'catastrophe' by a lot of stuff about the history of Gondor and Rohan (with some very sound reflections no doubt on martial glory and true glory): but if he goes on much more a lot of him will have to be removed to the appendices--where already some

> fascinating material on the hobbit Tobacco industry and the Languages of the West have gone" (79).

In this section, Faramir seems to have more control over the story than Tolkien has. He seems to be controlling the 'catastrophe', the exact event Tolkien is referencing is unclear. It may be Frodo's entrance into mordor. Faramir is preventing this event with his endless chatter. This gives some insight into how Tolkien was able to come up with so much content and such a detailed history in both the text and the appendix. This also shows that Tolkien is not focused on the plot of the story, in fact when he mentions the plot he has typically begun to veer off topic and is explaining or discussing something that does not relate directly to the plot. This type of writing seems to have added immensely to the meticulous detail of Middle-earth for each new character brings more history with them.

The way that Tolkien discusses his characters is present throughout his letters. In another letter he writes: "On the whole Sam is behaving well, and living up to repute. He treats Gollum rather like Ariel to Caliban" (Tolkien 77). This personification of characters circles back to the innate idea that everything in his text is both ordinary and fantastic. Tolkien discusses his characters like they are alive and he has no control over them, and yet he also discusses how his writing process is going and tells his son what is going to happen next. Tolkien's blending of real and fantastic bleeds from his story into his writing process.

Conclusion

Tolkien's laws of existence are clearly defined in his text and are meticulously detailed. Tolkien spent copious amounts of time working through the history and languages of Middle-earth. There are moments when the rules of the world are directly explained, but most of

the logic of the world is gained through the experiences of the characters and the long historical descriptions of the world's complicated history. The history is told by characters in the story rather than a narrator. This choice, makes the text more focused on the world than the plot. Through this technique and other ways, Tolkien uses the oral nature of fantasy to establish elements of the world.

The way that Tolkien uses imagery seems to be an evolution from both Morris and Lewis. Morris used imagery to establish the inherent worth of marvels and so his imagery stood on its own and did not add to the plot or a grander idea. Lewis's imagery was used as a tool to establish the juxtaposition in the story and created the fantastic through this imagery. Tolkien then used these forms of imagery and melded the human world and the fantastical world into each other. The images in Tolkien's text are a combination of the fantastic and real. In this way, Tolkien uses a different technique to use the real world as his foundation of logic. Instead of placing fireworks in an abnormal setting, like Lewis would, he tweaks the inherent nature of fireworks, making them fantastic.

Because of his scholarly approach, Tolkien seems to use elements of fantasy consciously to establish the world he wants clearly and distinctly. Like Morris, Tolkien is not necessarily focused on the plot of the text, though he succeeds in making it clear. Tolkien is more focused on the world itself. This is evidenced by the amount of appendices that he wrote, which mostly does not directly relate to the specific plot of the trilogy. The goal of Tolkien's text was not to write an entertaining story but to successfully fulfill his sub-creator desires and develop a beautiful and valuable world. This is what Orville Prescott was missing when he read *The Fellowship of the*

Ring, the plot is not perfect because the plot is not the point. The point is the elation that one gets when exercising their imagination.

Conclusion

Modern Fantasy 101: Imagination Unlimited

The purpose of this project is to demonstrate to the academic community that Modern Fantasy is worthy of study and exploration. I became a literature major because I am in love with stories: stories that make you lose reality because of their beauty and determination. Sometimes I can find these stories in the historical or realistic fiction section of the library but mostly they exist in fantasy. However, while these texts are my passion I was not given the opportunity to incorporate them into my learning experience. I took every class I could that approached this topic: Shakespeare, New Directions in Contemporary Fiction, Post Fantasy, Fabulism and the New Gothic etc. The last of which is the closest I came to studying the texts that I love. In all four years at Bard, there was not a single class that investigated the texts that I wished to study. This project was my way to present to the academic community that not only could these texts be added to the academic cannon but they should be. The best way to prove this would be to demonstrate how this type of literature can be taught and understood in an academic setting; therefore, welcome to Modern Fantasy 101: Imagination Unlimited.

Over the duration of the semester we will be reading multiple fantasy works as well as critical essays and other secondary sources. The major texts will include: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, The Well at World's End* by William Morris; *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis; *The Fellowship of the Ring* by J.R.R. Tolkien as well as excerpts from *The Name of the Wind* by Patrick Rothfuss. We will also be reading excerpts from Homer's *Odyssey*, *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser, *Beowulf*, *The Legend of Sigurd and Gudrun*

translated by Tolkien, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* The criticism we will be reading will include, but not limited to, essays from *The Monsters and the Critics: And Other Essays* by J.R.R. Tolkien, *Of Other Worlds* by C.S. Lewis, *Adam Bede* by George Eliot, "Defense of Poetry" by Percy Shelley and others. Over the course of this semester, we will investigate how to analyze a fantastical text, what to look for and the techniques the authors use.

For class today, I had you read "On Fairy Stories" by Tolkien. Tolkien closes with discussing the joy that comes from reading fantasy. He writes "Probably every writer making a secondary world, a fantasy, every sub-creator, wishes in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that he is drawing on reality: hopes that the peculiar quality of this secondary world (if not all the details) are derived from Reality, or are falling into it" (155). He then continues "The peculiar quality of the 'joy' in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth" (155). Does the joy of fantasy come from a glimpse of the non-fantastic? Does the delight of fantasy stem from small uses of the truth? Fantasy may not need reality to exist, but does it need reality to be enjoyed? The answers to these questions are neither yes nor no.

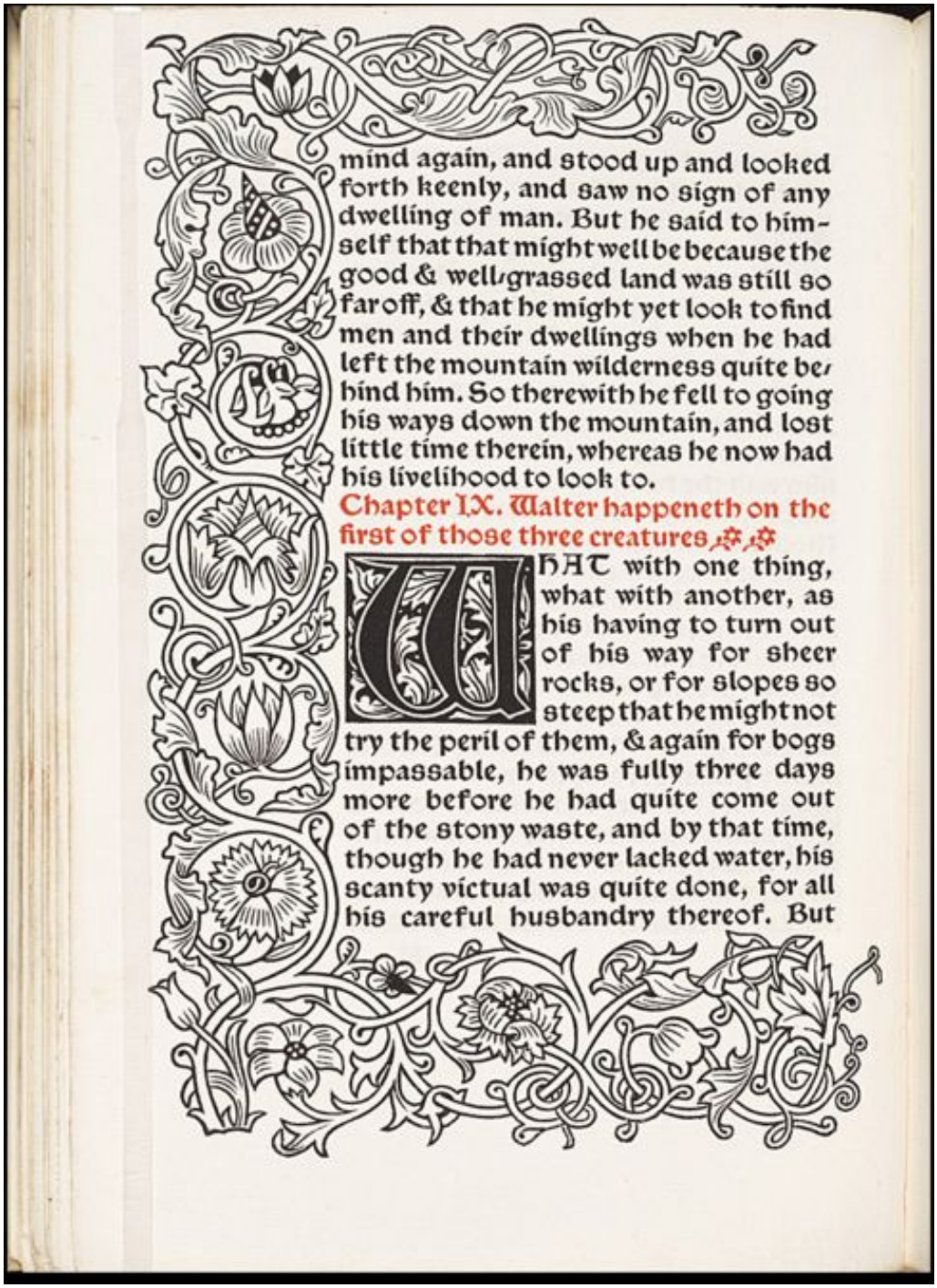
The value of fantasy stems from its use of imagery created by the imagination as Tolkien discusses. Therefore, at its core, fantasy is separate from reality. However, the enjoyment of fantasy may not be separate from reality. Someone can enjoy reading fantasy because it is different than reality or they can enjoy reading fantasy because it presents possibilities that may not exist in reality. Unlike other genres, the beauty of fantasy lies in the image: a lamppost in the middle of a wood. Now, I ask you, does the beauty of this image come from the possibility of the

world in which this exists or does it come from the joy of seeing two images that you are familiar with placed together in a way you have never seen before?

In this class we will analyze different techniques used to create fantastical worlds. We will discuss Modern Fantasy's relationship with the oral tradition. We will analyze the author's use of images in their texts and we will compile a list of qualities necessary to make a fantastical world successful. After acknowledging the beauty inherent in these fantastical texts and understanding the mastery needed to successfully create one of these stories, one question keeps rising to the surface. Throughout the semester, we will strive to answer this question: is fantasy enjoyable because it is an alternative to reality or because through fantasy we glimpse "the underlying reality or truth" of the world we live in?

Figures Referenced

Figure 1: Wood Print: front-piece of *The Wood Beyond the World* by William Morris. Image designed by Morris and printed at Kelmscott press in 1894.



mind again, and stood up and looked forth keenly, and saw no sign of any dwelling of man. But he said to himself that that might well be because the good & well-grassed land was still so far off, & that he might yet look to find men and their dwellings when he had left the mountain wilderness quite behind him. So therewith he fell to going his ways down the mountain, and lost little time therein, whereas he now had his livelihood to look to.

Chapter IX. Walter happeneth on the first of those three creatures

WHAT with one thing, what with another, as his having to turn out of his way for sheer rocks, or for slopes so steep that he might not try the peril of them, & again for bogs impassable, he was fully three days more before he had quite come out of the stony waste, and by that time, though he had never lacked water, his scanty victual was quite done, for all his careful husbandry thereof. But

Figure 2: Wood Print. Chapter 9 pg. 52 of *The Wood Beyond the World* by William Morris. Image designed by Morris and printed by the Kelmscott Press 1894.

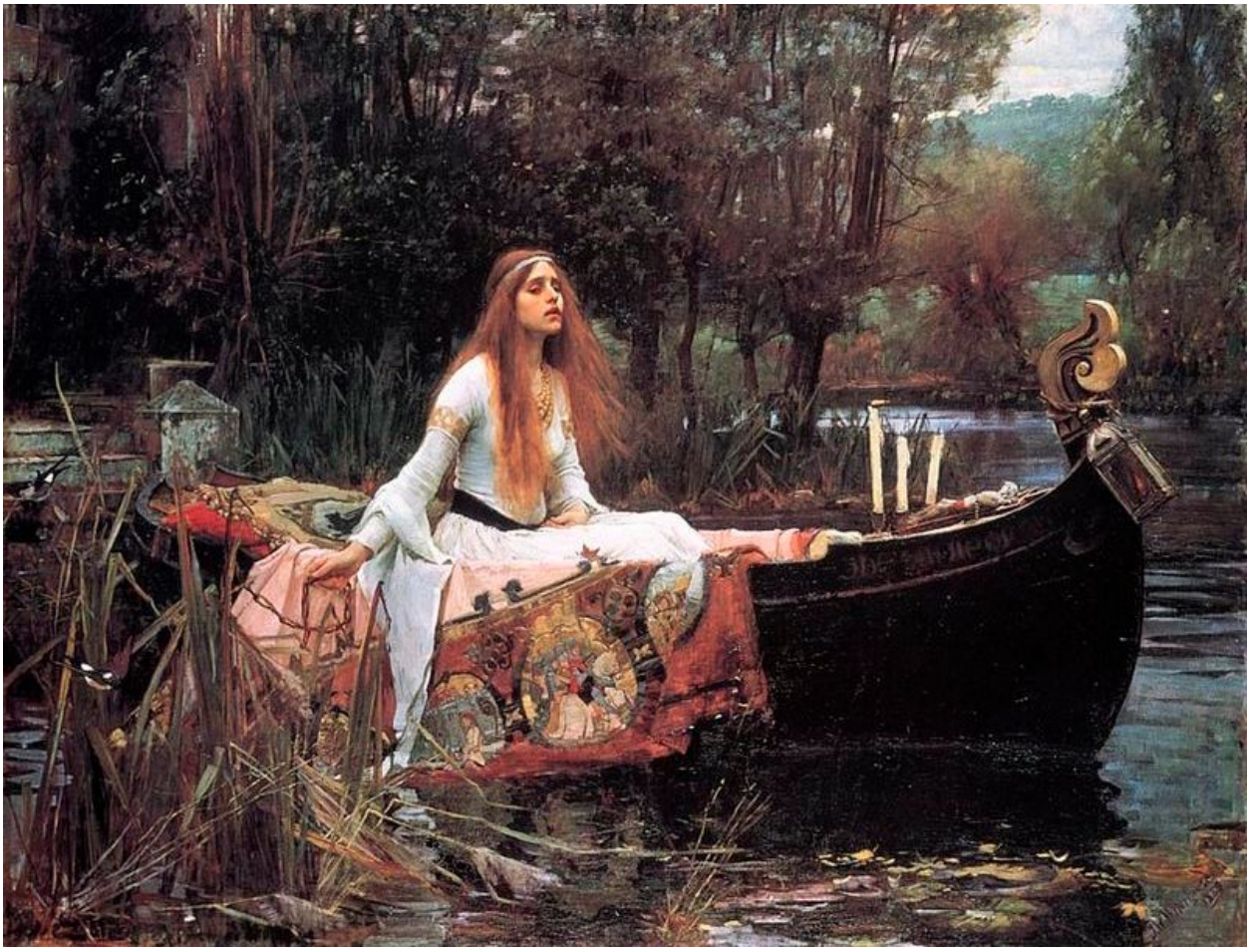


Figure 3: Oil on Canvas. *Ophelia* by John William Waterhouse 1910.

Figure 4: Illustration. *Edmund meets the Witch* by Pauline Baynes 1950.

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