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Júlia Cadar Cunha

THE NATURAL WORLD AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IN THE

MYTHOPOEIC FANTASY OF *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA*

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Dissertação de Mestrado apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos Literários da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre em Letras – Estudos Literários.

Área de Concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa

Linha de Pesquisa: Literatura, História e Memória Cultural

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Marcel de Lima Santos

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Dissertação intitulada *THE NATURAL WORLD AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IN THE MYTHOPOEIC FANTASY OF THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA*, de autoria da Mestranda JÚLIA CADAR CUNHA, apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras: Estudos Literários da Faculdade de Letras da UFMG, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Mestre em Letras: Estudos Literários.

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"'In our world,' said Eustace, 'a star is a huge ball of flaming gas'.

'Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of.'"

(C.S.Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*)

Abstract

This thesis traces the historical background of the representations of Nature in Western mythology to examine the inherently ecological foundation myths have established for the portrayal of Fantastic or supernatural elements in later genres and movements. It identifies and analyzes how Fantasy, especially the High-Fantasy sub-genre, allows modern readers to access symbolic interpretations of Nature, by reworking mythological aspects and creating a Secondary World. Finally, it aims to highlight the genre's relevance to Ecocritical Studies by proposing that Mythopoeic Fantasies provide a current mythology of our relationship with Nature, which will be exemplified by an in-depth Ecocritical analysis of modern issues, such as war, industrialization, colonialism, deforestation, anthropocentrism and non-human lives in C. S. Lewis's first and last installments of *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Magician's Nephew* and *The Last Battle.*

Key words: the chronicles of Narnia; fantasy literature; ecocriticism; myth.

Resumo

Esta dissertação traça a linhagem histórica das representações da Natureza na mitologia ocidental com o intuito de examinar a essência ecológica que os mitos estabeleceram para a representação de elementos Fantásticos ou sobrenaturais em gêneros e movimentos posteriores. O estudo também identifica e analisa como a Fantasia, especialmente o subgênero da Alta Fantasia, permite que o leitor moderno acesse interpretações simbólicas da Natureza, reelaborando aspectos mitológicos e criando um Mundo Secundário. Por fim, a dissertação pretende destacar a relevância do gênero para os Estudos Ecocríticos ao propor que as Fantasias Mitopoéticas fornecem uma mitologia atual da nossa relação com a Natureza, o que será exemplificado por uma análise Ecocrítica aprofundada de questões modernas, como a guerra, a industrialização, o colonialismo, o desmatamento, o antropocentrismo e as vidas não-humanas no primeiro e último volume de *As Crônicas de Nárnia: O Sobrinho do Mágico* e *A Última Batalha, de C. S. Lewis*.

Palavras-chave: as crônicas de Nárnia; literatura fantástica; ecocrítica; mito.

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Introduction

If Fantasies are simply a fancy of the imagination, easily overcome by scientific verification, then why has their legacy endured for so long? On the same token, if the Fantastic is aimlessly detached from rationality, why can we see our understanding of reality reflected in its tradition? Perhaps the essence of all these questions informs an even more significant one: what is the actual importance of symbolic formulations to society? According to Oscar Muñoz, one "cannot be surprised by the mythic root of most of our concepts and systems of social order, for our symbolic constructions were originated in the vital process that began long before our modern social structures (16)". Therefore, if mythological thought is the primordial basis of collective knowledge, personal identity and social order, then why have our symbolic values been kept apart from our scientific and political stances in the face of the current environmental crisis, which threatens the very survival of mankind?

According to environmental researchers, such as Amitav Gosh, "the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination" (13). Lawrence Buell also agrees that

> for technological breakthroughs, legislative reforms, and paper covenants about environmental welfare to take effect, or even to be generated in the first place, requires a climate of transformed environmental values, perception, and will. To that end, the power of story, image, and artistic performance and the resources of aesthetics, ethics, and cultural theory are crucial" (vi).

If that is the case, then reassessing society's cultural production is vital to the environmental crisis we currently face, and so is the renunciation of old biases, which have kept underappreciated genres, like Fantasy, outside of this conversation, based solely on the assumption that scientific knowledge is the only possible approach to solve ecological issues. Considering that "[a]s a literary genre, Modern   Fantasy is clearly related to the magical stories of myth, legend, fairy tale, and folklore from all over the World (Mathews 1),

and that ancient myths were ways to symbolically "interpret the world in pre-scientific societies" (Leach and Fried 778), then Fantasy becomes a particularly fertile ground to explore our cultural relationship with Nature. In fact, Chris Brawley argues that this is the precise function of the type of Fantasy that creates its own world through mythic patterns: "Mythopoeic Fantasy offers, especially with its functions of subverting normative categories of thought (Jackson) and revising the way reality is perceived (Hume), a valid means whereby environmental perception may be addressed" (23). Similarly, Don D. Elgin suggests that Fantasy novels have "adopted a comic conception of humanity, placing its emphasis upon humanity as a part of a total environment or system and acknowledging the absolute dependence of humanity upon that system" (23), which actively offers "an alternative to the tragic conception which has brought humanity and its environment to the point of imminent destruction" (24).

Therefore, the primary objective of this thesis will be to study the historical background of the representations of Nature in Western mythology, in order to highlight the relevance of High Fantasy to Ecocriticism, through an in-depth analysis of issues such as deforestation, industrialization, colonialism and apocalyptic motifs within Clive Staples Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew and The Last Battle,* the first and last books of *The Chronicles of Narnia.* Published during the 1950s, this saga was one of the first mythopoeic works of Modern Fantasy[1] and it has enjoyed widespread popularity among critics and audiences ever since[2]. The overall story deals with human visitors in a land called Narnia,

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[1] Modernity is widely accepted as a series of transformations "observed in political institutions as well as in the economic and societal transformation of Western societies" (Delanty and Mota 197), expanding from the post-Renaissance period, up until the 1930s. In this study, the term "Modern Fantasy" will be used to express works that were directly affected by the modern notion of rationality, which scholars agree to have been established in the nineteenth century.

[2] Although Lewis has received a number of positive criticisms, he was "initially criticized by conservative Christians" (Callow 2), who believed the merging of pagan mythology and Christianity was blasphemous.

who are entrusted by the Lion-God Aslan to help this world's inhabitants and keep them safe from any type of danger. Because it utilizes a straightforward language and mixes a variety of mythological traditions, C. S. Lewis's work can seem like an overly-didactic plot, created with the intention of making Christian ideologies more palatable and enjoyable for children. And, with its overt analogies to the Bible, it has been employed as an educational tool and an entertaining introduction to English values at large. Amanda Callow goes as far as arguing that Lewis was one of the pioneers in Christian mythology, which "attempts to use the mystical plot elements from Fantasy, with recognizable Christian ideals, and meld them in such a way that they actually reinforce each other. In combining the fairytale, legend, and mythological aspects of Fantasy, Lewis meant to inspire interest in Christianity differently than the way in which he had been exposed to the subject of Christianity and faith in his own childhood development" (2). However, if one is willing to investigate further into what is not explicitly presented, then these books can offer a window into multilayered and oftentimes untold ideologies.

As a matter of fact, the book series, written by C. S. Lewis, who was born in Belfast, Ireland, on the 29th of November of 1898, was heavily influenced by the ideologies of its author. Known for his multifaceted profile and his contributions to the fields of literature, philosophy, theology and criticism, all of his productions, from *The Space Trilogy* (1938-1945), *The Problem of Pain* (1940), *Mere Christianity* (1941-1944)*, Miracles* (1947) *Surprised by Joy* (1955) to *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956), carry his particular point of view on religious and Nature for example. Even though he attended college at Oxford, first as a student and later as a Professor, and served briefly in World War I, perhaps one of the most significant facts about his biography (for this study) was his conversion to Christianity.

Although Lewis considered himself an atheist for quite some time, during his adult life, he later converted to Catholicism, a doctrine which has been extensively proven to be the backbone of the Narnia saga. According to David G. Clark,

> Lewis's conversion was facilitated by the realization (thanks to J. R. R. Tolkien) that Christianity was the story of a God who actually entered history. Myth became fact. We should hardly be surprised, then, if Lewis wanted to move his readers with the power of myth just as he had been. And the power of myth comes through stories that convey truth. Myth became fact and truth became history. And so, the story of Narnia is the myth, not allegory, telling how Aslan, the creator of Narnia, entered his own creation as a lion, just as Jesus came into his creation as a man (57).

For this reason, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a Modern Fantasy novel which is based on the dominant ideology of Christianity and which uses the mythological structure of symbolic language can help unveil Lewis's own environmental vision and illustrate other implicit anxieties of the 1950s.

Through a systematic textual investigation, the first chapter of this thesis will provide a brief outline of the main theoretical fields upon which this research has been developed. The first section will introduce key themes on Comparative Mythology, such as the basic elements of myths, their social function and the nature of the language they employ. To do so, this study will utilize primarily (but not exclusively) the works *Mythopoetics: The Symbolic Construction of Human Identity* by Oscar Muñoz, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology by* Joseph Campbell and *Myth and Reality* by Mircea Eliade. The second subsection will explore the theoretical background of Fantastic Studies. Through the essential works *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* by Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy and Mimesis Responses to Reality in Western Literature* by Kathryn Hume, *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader* by David

Sandner and *Stories about Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth* by Brian Attebery, this thesis will trace the historical background of Fantasy as a literary impulse and as an independent genre. It will also explore some of its possible functions and establish its long tradition of proximity with humanity's understanding of the environment. Finally, the last section of the first chapter will investigate the history of Ecocriticism as an interdisciplinary field, going from its origins in the early twentieth century to its most current undertakings. This will be accomplished with the assistance of works like *Ecocriticism* by Greg Garrard, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* by Lawrence Buell, *Environmentalism: A Global History* by Ramachandra Guha and *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm.

Having established the connection between these three areas with *The Chronicles of Narnia* (and mythopoeic fantasies in general), the second chapter will promote a close reading of the first book of Lewis's saga, entitled *The Magician's Nephew*, in order to go over the Narnian cosmogony and showcase how this type of narrative not only relies on but also shapes a community's relationship with Nature. This will be accomplished with further investigation of the aforementioned scholars and with some additional authors. Through *Nature and the Numinous in Mythopoeic Fantasy Literatur*e by Chris Brawley, *The Comedy of The Fantastic: Ecological Perspectives on the Fantasy Novel* by Don. D. Elgin and "A construção de mundos na literatura não-realista" by Julio Jeha, this study hopes to establish how Fantasy utilizes its mythological heritage to create Secondary Worlds with the capacity to review our relationship with the environment. Furthermore, by analyzing passages from *The Magician's Nephew* under the Ecocritical perspectives raised by Timothy Clark in *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* and *Ecocriticism* by Greg Garrard, the next subchapter will argue on how the anthropocentrism of language and culture

has influenced the way Nature is portrayed in Fantasy, even when it rejects many of the modern attitudes that are harmful to the environment. Finally, the last section of this chapter will deal with how mythopoeic stories like *The Magician's Nephew* encourage a critical comparison between the fictional and the real worlds, through the essential essays "Genesis" and "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism", by Theodore Hiebert and Lynn White, which will establish the connection between the the literary piece and Judeo-Christianity, and through Clare Echterling's "Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Classic Children's Literature, and the Imperial-Environmental Imagination in *The Chronicles of Narnia*", which will highlight the implicit ideologies in Lewis's fictional work.

Finally, the third chapter will explore the apocalyptic tradition within *The Last Battle*. With the assistance of Norman Cohn's "How Time Acquired a Consummation", this study will explore the history of eschatological thought and its major shift, which allowed most Western religions to envision an ultimate end of the World. Moreover, through Frederick James Murphy's *Apocalypticism in the Bible and its World,* this thesis will analyze the use of apocalyptic motifs and language in *The Last Battle'*s apocalypse and investigate how this construction reveals implicit attitudes towards the environment and the way in which Lewis equates ecological destruction with the ultimate death of a world. Lastly, the works *Apocalypse: From Antiquity to the Empire of Modernity*, by John R. Hall and "From Revelation to Revolution: Apocalypticism in Green Politics", by Wallace McNeish, will elucidate how all apocalyptic narratives can unveil aspects of a present tension and, most importantly, how *The Last Battle* can thus relate to the current environmental crisis.

Given the utmost relevance of the environmental challenge modern society is facing, it is important to reassess and reflect on the representations of Nature in Literature to help examine both the ways in which society has viewed and interacted with the non-human, but also the cultural impact these representations have had and can still have in the future. Thus,

this proposed study of a historical investigation of Mythopoeic Fantasies under an Ecocritical perspective, followed by exemplifications of the ways in which such issues present themselves in *The Chronicles of Narnia* is highly pertinent to shed light on the genre's relevance to Ecocritical Studies.

Furthermore, by proposing that Fantasy can provide a current mythology of our relationship with nature, this thesis will be able to investigate ecological problems that have infiltrated narratives, providing revised metaphors for old stories. Additionally, it is important to bring children's literature into academic scholarship, especially in the form of one of today's most popular genres. At risk of neglecting Fantasy's impact on culture and perpetuating an elitist attitude, as it has often been done by conservative scholars, even when the genre gained vast popularity, it is high time that Fantasy and other excluded genres should be embraced by criticism so they can evolve and contribute to the field of Critical Studies at large.

1.   *The Chronicles of Narnia*: a logical intersection between Myth, Fantasy and Ecocriticism

The present work is concerned with establishing the influence of Modern Fantasy's ancestry and the potential of its current versions through an Ecocritical reading of Clive Staples Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956). This thesis will explore the mythological heritage and the representations of environmental attitudes in *The Magician's Nephew (1955)* and *The Last Battle (1956)*, chronologically the first and last installment of the British saga, and by consequence, it will examine the almost inherent proximity between Fantasy, Mythology and Ecocriticism. It is true that many other books could illustrate the intersection between these fields, yet the concentration of some main aspects has led to the choosing of this series to exemplify the arguments of this study.

Firstly, *The Chronicles of Narnia* was written and published in the turbulent aftermath of World War II, when the violence of a genocide and the horrors of an atomic bomb detonation could not be understated, especially by the many men who had served the military like C. S. Lewis had done so in World War I. In addition to that, by the 1950s, when both the author and the human characters of the book were alive, Great Britain (as well as the rest of the world) experienced the culmination of a chain-reaction caused by the Industrial Revolution, which resulted in major changes in the social fabric of society. With the expansion of road paving, steam engines, autocars and great manufacturers assembling their ways into modernity, Britain started to shift from a pastoral lifestyle to a heavily industrial nation. As a consequence of that, pollution levels skyrocketed, particularly in London. Industrial waste was added to an already sewage-filled Thames and events such as The Great Smog of London, in 1952, emphasized the respiratory and environmental toll that the city's reliance on coal had been causing. Given those circumstances, it is no surprise that Fantasy, a genre in which people could create and experience different worlds, blossomed in that period[3].

Although Fantastic elements have always permeated literature with some popularity, as this study will demonstrate, it was only in the twentieth century that Fantasy as an independent genre emerged, as a response to the Realism of the mid-nineteenth century. After

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[3] The twentieth century, in particular, saw the publication and the popularization of many influential works of fantasy and speculative fiction, such as *Peter Pan and Wendy* (1911), by J. M. Barrie; *The Metamorphosis* (1915), by Fanz Kafka; *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926), by A. A. Milne; *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928), by H. P. Lovecraft; *Mary Poppins* (1934), by P. L. Travers; *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* (1940), by Jorge Luis Borges, *Animal Farm* (1948), by Geroge Orwell; *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1955), by C. S. Lewis; *The Lord of The Rings* (1954-1955), by J. R. R. Tolkien; *The Cat in the Hat* (1957), by Dr. Seuss; T*he Haunting of Hill House* (1959), by Shirley Jackson; *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), by Ursula K. Le Guin, *One hundred years of Solitude* (1973), by Gabriel García Marquez; *The Dark Tower* (1982), by Stephen King; *The Color of Magic* (1983), by Terry Pratchett;*The Sandman* (1989-1986), by Neil Gaiman; *The Golden Compass* (1995), by Philip Pullman; *The Song of Fire and Ice* (1996), by George R. R. Martin; and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997).

a sequence of historical transformations, namely the Protestant Reformation, the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, Western society experienced a major shift in what was considered real (and could, thus, be attested by the scientific method) and what was considered unreal and, therefore, belonged to the religious, mythological or Fantastic spheres.

It is true the Romantic and Gothic movements revisited some Fantastic elements during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, tailoring matters which had been largely relinquished to mythology and fairy tales, to the new contexts of their age. However, it was only in the late 1900's, after the emergence of Realism, which then viewed the portrayal of reality as art's "new implicit meaning" (Hume 29), that non-mimetic works were formally (and arbitrarily) separated from mimetic ones, culminating in the inauguration of Modern Fantasy as a genre - understood here as works of Fantasy published after the mid-nineteenth century. In other words, that period marked the formal literary opposition between texts that departed from a possible reality and works that aimed to mimic it. Though there has since emerged a debate[4] about whether a piece of art can be purely mimetic and escape selectivism, this thesis will maintain the use of such terms in later chapters in order to reappropriate a concept that has traditionally been used against Fantastic narratives.

Nonetheless, it was the publication of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the *Lord of the Rings,* by J. R. R. Tolkien, within a few years of each other, which consolidated Fantasy as a genre. In their massive critical and popular success, these sagas established themselves as some of the most essential cornerstones of Modern Fantasy. In *The Lord of The Rings* the reader follows the story of a group of Middle-Earthers who leave on a quest to destroy the one ring, which has the power to restore Sauron and its evil forces. On the other hand, in T*he*

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[4] See: *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*, by Stephen Halliwell; *Theory of Mimesis*, by Arne Melberg; *Mimesis: Culture-Art-Society,* by Gunter Gebauer, Christoph Wulf, Don Reneau; and *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*, by Kathryn Hume.

Chronicles of Narnia, the story narrates the life-span of a fictional land called Narnia[5], its powerful god, Aslan, and the feats of the children who are called to aid it in times of need. Noticeably, neither the adventure-style of these Fantastic narratives, nor the myths they incorporate in their lores are completely novel, but ironically enough, it is the very use of mythological language, structures and motifs that lent a unique air of authority and epic nature to their tales.

In fact, in an article about J. R. R. Tolkien's fusion of real myths and invented worlds, Margaret Hiley argues that "the boundaries between the Primary and Secondary World here become blurred. His use of these fragments is another example of what Barthes calls stolen language: incorporating primary material into his own secondary world, disguising and robbing it of its original identity" (842-843). And the same can be argued about *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The presence of centaurs, dryads and satyrs among the creatures of Narnia, lends some of the classical tradition to the books. Likewise, through parallels with the books of Genesis, Revelations and the figure of a martyr who dies for its people but later resurrects, C. S. Lewis superimposes the Christian tradition to his books as well. In this fashion, Secondary Worlds have their own mythology, which is true within themselves and impregnated with the history, the meaning, the language and the authority of myths.

With the rise of the High Fantasy sub-genre, that is, books of "fantasy set in otherworlds, specifically secondary worlds, and which deal with matters affecting the destiny of those worlds" (Clute and Grant 466), myths acquired new frames of reference with their respective lores and the current reader gained access to a fuller historical, social and cultural background in order to experience those mythical elements. This newfound popularity in

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[5] There are many speculations on the origin of the name "Narnia", but the chief theory is that the word came from Latin literature, which Lewis was well versed in. It appears in a number of writings regarding a region near Rome, which is now called Narni, namely in works by Martial, Pliny the Elder, Pliny the Younger, Tacitus Annals and Livy (Bell 29).

fictional, symbolic worlds represented not only the endurance of the mythological narrative in a certain way, but also a turning point for Modern Fantasy.

Furthermore*, The Chronicles of Narnia* is a great illustration of what this study is trying to argue because in its chronological order of events, the saga tells the story of the comings and goings of regular children to the Fantastic land of Narnia, in order to tell the story of the world itself - not the other way around, as it is often the case in High Fantasy books. In *The Magician's Nephew (1955)*, Polly Plummer and Diggory Kirk, by an accident of fate, witness the creation of Narnia when the god-like Lion, Aslan, sang the world into existence. They end up bringing the first humans and the first evil, in the form of a witch, into that world and they are the ones who start the tradition of the crossings between their world and Narnia. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), the four Pevensie siblings, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy, arrive in Narnia by falling into a wardrobe, in which they discover that it had been long prophesied that, with the help of Aslan, they would defeat the White Witch Jadis's eternal winter and later become kings and queens of the land. *The Horse and his Boy* (1954) tells the tale of an enslaved boy, Shasta, two talking horses, Bree and Hwin, and a fugitive princess, by the name of Arwin, trying to escape from the country of Calormen to the free lands of Narnia. In doing so, they prevent the invasion of Archland and Narnia by Rabadash, Calormen's prince emperor.

In *Prince Caspian* (1951), the Pevensies return to the Narnian world to help establish Caspian as its rightful king and awaken the ancient Narnian magic, responsible for giving speech to the Talking Beasts and life to the spirits of Nature, which had been dormant for centuries due to an oppressive Telmarine occupation. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1953) is set a few years later, when the two youngest Pevensies, Edmund and Lucy, come back to Narnia with their cousin, Eustace Scrubb, through a painting of a ship. In this volume, they sail the Lone Islands of the Narnian sea to find and save seven missing Narnian Lords. Upon

arriving at Aslan's country at the edge of the world, where Edmund and Lucy discover that their mission in Narnia had been fulfilled and that they would not return again. The penultimate book, *The Silver Chair* (1953), features the return of Eustace and a classmate, Jill Pole, after many years of the character having left Narnia for the last time. Here, they embark on a quest to find Caspian's missing son, Rilian, by Aslan's request, to ensure that Narnia would have a worthy king after Caspian's death.

Lastly, *The Last Battle* (1956) depicts the destruction of Narnia by an ape named Shift, who tricks the donkey, Puzzle, into impersonating Aslan to convince Narnians to cut down trees for lumber so Shift could profit from it. Soon, the Calormene join forces with Shift and claim that Puzzle was a combination of Tash, their bloodthirsty god, and Aslan, and begin to murder Narnians and rebels in the name of these gods. Tirian, Narnia's current ruler, tries to fight against the scheme but ends up defeated and dethroned, leaving him no option but to pray for the real Aslan's help, which is then granted in the form of Eustace and Jill coming to his aid. In the end, not even Aslan could undo the harm that was done to the creatures and to the realm of Narnia, so he puts an end to that world, taking all faithful servants, including the children who have gone there in the past, to a "truer", paradise-like, version of Narnia.

It is common that High Fantasy's Secondary Worlds remain as backdrops for the characters' trials and achievements[6]. Although always very important, the history and conservation of these worlds often represent the stakes of the characters' adventures, not the main story itself. The bigger narrative of *The Chronicles of Narnia,* however, is not the tale of a single hero, but the story of the birth and death of Narnia itself. Surely, the children's lives get tangled in it from beginning to end, but they act mostly as instruments to the fulfillment

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[6] In *The Lord of the Rings (1954-1955),* for example, though the future of Middle-Earth is at risk, the heart of the story lies in the journey that Frodo and his fellowship must complete in order to destroy the ring of power.

of Narnia's fate. They watch its creation, they govern the people, they help monarchs carry out justice and they try to preserve its integrity but, in the end, the main concern is the world and not themselves. For this reason, it is possible to see multiple storylines of different characters in different time periods, but whose common component is their mission to somehow help Narnia. The story does not end when the Pevensies stop going to Narnia, it does not end when Polly and Diggory return home or when Eustace comes back to England reformed in character. It ends when Narnia's environment and values are destroyed beyond repair, highlighting both the epic scales lent to Fantasy by mythology and its almost theological nature, which insists on questioning the role of men in relation to the world.

This series of books is not only the legendary tale of a Secondary World, but essentially, a comparison to the real one. For most characters who are thrust into Narnia, the "real world" lay somewhere between pre and post World War II Britain. Although the comings and goings between Narnia and London have no specific year in the books, the prophesied arrival of the Pevensies' siblings, for example, only happens because they, along with many children of that period, were evacuated from London to the countryside because of the frequent German air raids. Due to their reallocation, they end up living in Professor Kirk's country house, where the aged version of Diggory Kirk had had a wardrobe made from a Narnian apple tree he had kept from his adventure there. Though the author does not go into many details about the actual war happening in England, its consequences ripple through the novels and inform its philosophy that all wars are bad, but some are necessary nonetheless. In fact, a common theme of the saga is the honor that lies in a war fought for a nation's values and freedom; much like the ideas of William Faulkner and Homi K. Bhabha, who rejected the view of patriotism as simply obeying officials and defending soil in a war, and pushed instead the notion that one could die for one's country because they believed they could promote

"change by acting to defend egalitarian ideological principles" (Towner 98) and, consequently, defend all that the land symbolizes: their loved ones and their way of life.

Even so, the books do not shy away from the horrors of battle, on the contrary, they repeatedly reinforce that it always has negative consequences to the environment. It is true that C. S. Lewis does not explore the psychological, social or economic effects of a war in depth, perhaps because mid twentieth century adults did not need to be reminded of what they knew for a fact, or perhaps because the books were mainly aimed at young children, but he did focus on the natural devastation of political conflicts in an more allegorical tone. In *Prince Caspian*, for example, the Telmarine occupation, in what can be compared to a colonizing effort, kills most of Talking Beasts of Narnia, bringing many species to the brink of extinction and it drives away the spirits of the forests and rivers due to the defiling of their habitats. It is only when the Pevensies, Kings and Queens of the olden days, return to Narnia, destroy the enemies' army and restore the values of the country that Aslan is able to awaken the mythical forces of Nature again, gathering Talking Beasts, dryads, naiads, Silenus, Bacchus and the maenads again.

Similarly, *The Magician's Nephew,* which will be further explored in the coming chapters*,* depicts another social and environmental anxiety of the 1950s: the nuclear threat of the aftermath of WWII, continued by the Cold War. Before going to Narnia, Polly and Diggory witness the death of the White Witch's world. When they get to Charn, its aristocracy is frozen in time, while all the rest of the living beings have been completely destroyed. They wake Jadis accidentally only to find out that she had been the one to kill her world in an effort to win the war she had started. To do so, she had cast a spell, "the unspeakable word", which was the most powerful weapon to ever exist - one that would grant her the victory but that would leave nothing behind for her to rule.

In the *Last Battle*, when Narnia comes to an end, the apocalyptic events are kicked off when the ape Shift convinces Narnians that Aslan wished they would cut down trees for lumber. It later escalates to greater deforestation in the pursuit of industrialization, more conflicts and, eventually, the real Aslan finishes the destruction of the land, claiming that not even he could undo what had been done. In this sense, the last book of the saga ties in with the first in the notion that wars (especially the modern ones, in which the advancements of technology are comparable to what an ancient society could consider magic) have a destructive power that goes beyond the humans who fight it, they reverberate through the ecosystem and undermine even our most basic survival instincts. By creating worlds that end in the hands of those who depend on them, C. S. Lewis expresses a nostalgia for a pre-industrialization society that remembers the value of Nature for our culture and for our survival. Largely because of Lewis and Tolkien's effort to portray the modern world with ancient tools, Fantasy itself has become, in essence, a response to its times, a symptom of its environment. For these reasons, *The Chronicles of Narnia* bear a significant potential to communicate how the mythological legacy is used to convey both the historical and the conservationist undertones of Fantasy.

Nonetheless, there still are critics who still downplay the cultural impact of Children's Literature and Modern Fantasy. Some argue that children's stories are "academically lightweight" (Meek 9) and attempt to segregate the literary canon; "separate out 'the good stuff' and claim that it is 'not fantasy'" (James and Mendlesohn 10). It is an understandable, although outdated, position to assume, especially after years of academic elitism privileging titles based on the worldview of the people in power, who were often quite homogenous in their whiteness and even more so in their continent of origin, sexual orientation and social class. It has been historically difficult for any sort of authority to reconcile with experiences and struggles that clashed with its personal interests. For this reason, any sort of disruptive

literature has met some resistance. For the adults of academia, trained to search for connection and complexities, the straightforwardness of children's literature's prose can be enough to disregard the whole genre as superficial. Similarly, for the intellectuals of a modern world, mythological tropes can seem obsolete and magic, a cheap shortcut for actual science. And so, Narnia's conservationist tones were largely lost on industrial London and Fantasy's subversive nature overlooked by many readers and institutions that could not see a reason to imagine a world different from the real one.

Moreover, one of the main arguments against Fantasy is that it somehow transcends reality and escapes history. In *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion,* a pivotal work that will be revisited a number of times in this thesis, Rosemary Jackson explores the function of the Fantastic mode, as she puts it, in an attempt to dismiss the notion that it is ahistorical. For her, "literature of the fantastic has been claimed as 'transcending' reality, 'escaping' the human condition and constructing superior alternate, 'secondary' worlds (1)". It can be tempting to see the Fantastic as something other than reality, especially when talking lions are inserted into the conversation, but it would be a disservice to ignore the very real cultural history associated with mythological, anthropomorphic or divide animals[7], for example, and the various other elements connected to the Fantastic that have a long standing-tradition in many cultures. Similar to religious and mythological thought, notions that will be expanded later in this chapter, Fantasy offers a metaphorical interpretation of the world, but it cannot evade the

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[7] Animals have often populated human narratives because they have always been part of our lives, as companions, as food or as an outlet for imagination. In ancient Egypt, for example, many of its deities were part-animal, like the God falcon Horus, the half-jackal Anubis or the cat deity Bastet. In folklore, there are depictions of animals and hybrid monsters, such as werewolves or sirens variations, while fables usually present anthropomorphic animals with a moral lesson, like Aesop's "The Tortoise and the Hare". In fairy tales, the motif of a protagonist or companion in the shape of an animal was also common, and so most Fantastic works deal with this theme. In fact, a large portion of the literary canon fits into the tradition of depicting animals as a central narrative aspect: George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Lewis Carrol's *Alice in Wonderland*, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* and Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* to cite a few.

material conditions in which it has been produced. Thus, the main objective of this thesis is to consider the historical, cultural and, most importantly, the environmental framework in which *The Chronicles of Narnia* was written.

It is arguable, though, that not every Fantastic work has been written as an ecological critique. Many of High Fantasy's adventures rely on the personal journeys of the heroes, the political games of the Secondary World, the forbidden romance of enemies, the dynamics between an apprentice and a wise professor, unlikely friendships forged in unexpected situations or great wars for power. Indeed, environmental activism is usually not the prior concern of the Fantastic plot, though there has been an increasing production and demand for what scholars call Eco Fantasy, a branch in the broader category of Eco Fiction. Likewise, the representations of Nature and humanity's relationship with it are not the main theme of *The Chronicles of Narnia,* which reads primarily as a Christian allegory, in which Aslan acts as the messianic figure of Christ. Nonetheless, Lewis's work aligns very well with Ecocriticism's more recent mission of "recovering the environmental character or orientation of works whose conscious or foregrounded interests lie elsewhere" (Kern 11).

In this sense, a systematic textual investigation of *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Last Battle* under an Ecocritical perspective can offer an insightful viewpoint on environmental attitudes of the twentieth century and a response to those who still believe Fantasy is merely escapist.

1.1. An overview of Comparative Mythology

Considering that "the earliest forms of written fiction that we have from the ancient world are works that we might understand as Fantasy and which have influenced many Modern Fantasy writers" (James and Mendleson 17), if one wants to understand Fantasy as a genre, and how *The Chronicles of Narnia* fits into this tradition, one must explore its

predecessors. According to the Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language, the word 'myth' is derived from the ancient greek word *μῦθος (mythos)*, meaning 'a fable' (Skeat 343). In its broader essence then, a myth is a story or a collection of stories that aim to explain natural phenomena and which has significant cultural and religious relevance for a community. However, the history of this concept goes beyond its etymology and even its many definitions. It is linked to the history of human culture, religion, rationality and it lies in the foundation of Fantastic Literature.

Throughout the years, the ancient tales of humanity's past have been the topic of extensive investigation, leading to the development of Mythology, a rich field of research thereof. In Comparative Mythology, however, the scholars' concerns are not necessarily the investigation of a specific motif or archetype in a particular myth for example, but rather the search for that which most myths have in common. They believe the shared characteristics of these narratives can reveal underlying structures and a collective way to symbolically interpret the world in premodern societies. Maria Leach and Jerome Fried define myth as

> a story, presented as having actually occurred in a previous age, explaining the cosmological and supernatural traditions of a people, their gods, heroes, cultural traits, religious beliefs, etc. The purpose of myth is to explain, and, as Sir G.L. Gomme said, myths explain matters in 'the science of a pre-scientific age'. Thus myths tell of the creation of man, of animals, of landmarks; they tell why a certain animal has its characteristics (e.g. why the bat is blind or flies only at night), why or how certain natural phenomena came to be (e.g. why the rainbow appears or how the constellation Orion got into the sky), how and why rituals and ceremonies began and why they continue (778).

In this sense, myths not only present the common objective of explaining environmental occurrences in pre-scientific societies, but they also display recurring structural aspects that

are often shared by Fantasy, such as the presence of the supernatural as real and its connection to Nature, for instance.

For researchers of Comparative Mythology, it is clear that these narratives, which have always accompanied human consciousness, have a primordial role in social, religious and cultural organization, since "[myths] are the first valuation settings that humans have made about themselves and their environment, and as such, they have conditioned the ones that have come afterwards, both in form and content" (Muñoz 15). In consonance with this idea, Professor Joseph Campbell believes the stories men create about their place on earth, in regard to their surroundings and their gods, represent a kind of driving force that society and individuals cannot escape. Campbell and other scholars agree that "it is a fact that the myths of our several cultures work upon us, whether consciously or unconsciously" (4) and for this reason, the field of Comparative Mythology allows us to investigate (but not solve) the very roots of rationality, religion, and culture. Due to the role myths have played in society throughout history, and especially the significant way it has shaped our view on the supernatural and on Nature, it would be nearly impossible for this thesis to relate both topics without expanding on mythology itself.

Analyzing three authorities on myth, which will be this study's main sources on the subject, it becomes clear that some of the most essential elements to mythology are also relevant to Fantasy and, consequently, to the analysis of *The Chronicles of Narnia* that will be conducted. Oscar Muñoz states that "[i]f we examine the tales about the origins of the main traditional mythologies of the world, we can observe that all of them contain four basic elements: human being, god (or supernatural being), Nature (or world), and chaos (or disorder)" (36). Campbell also argues that the "most vital, most critical function of a mythology, then, is to foster the centering and unfolding of the individual in integrity, in accord with d) himself (the microcosm), c) his culture (the mesocosm), b) the universe (the

macrocosm), and a) that awesome ultimate mystery which is both beyond and within himself and all things" (6). While Mircea Eliade believes that

> myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality - an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution. (...) In short, myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the "supernatural") into the World (5).

In this sense, the authors converge in the notion that myths, when reduced to their most essential elements, have an inner composition that demands not only the supernatural as a means to explain the existence of all things, but also a mandatory emphasis on the relationship between the individual and the outside world, whether it is labeled as universe, cosmos, microcosmos or simply as Nature. The relevance of Compared Mythology, thus, is to lay out the structural influence of mythology in Fantasy, in order to outline a tradition of symbolic formulations.

If we assume myths "narrate a sacred story" (5) as Eliade describes, it becomes relevant to place them within the timeline of religious expressions to understand the historical changes that would transform the very meaning of this concept and later culminate in a "demythologized world, shorn of both divine and demonic" (Hume 43). According to Owen Davies, there are three main aspects shared by the earliest accounts of religious belief: "the notion of the Earth mother, which represents "a universal mother goddess, the worship of deified fertility" (25), "the veneration of the dead and by extrapolation, ancestor worship" (25) and finally, the earliest of them all, animism, which is defined as the "notion that all elements of the material world, animate and inanimate, were imbued with spirits and were therefore sentient in some form. Rocks, rivers, wind, trees, mountains, and stars were all alike in that they could be communicated with, worshiped, and influenced" (25). These beliefs

appear as early as in the Upper Paleolithic Age, but it is only around 2000 BCE, in the Near and Middle Eastern civilizations of Mesopotamia, Babylonia, and Egypt, that we have some of the first written accounts of divinities.

The myths surrounding these and even later forms of polytheistic religious beliefs were later categorized as "paganism" by the Christian Church as a central part of the "process of Christian self-definition" (Davies 18); pagan, then, became a synonym (often pejorative) with pre and/or non-Christian religions. The term paganism, as well as others that will be used in this thesis, such as premodern, prescientific and ancient societies, have a complex history and have been debated at length by specialists. Nonetheless, it is important to somehow name the division that separates the social configurations of the pre and post "paradigmatic shifts in the European's concept of religion" (Tambiah 4). These labels by no means represent hierarchical evaluations of those communities, nor do they aim to erase the frequent overlap between pagan and monotheistic practices during the course of history. It is wrong to assume that the historical changes, which will be explored here represent, as the anthropologist Tambiah puts it, "a tree of evolution and ladder of progress" (42). Still, it remains that much of what is relevant to Modern Fantasy has been relevant to mythology for many years, leading us to believe that, although history has transformed the meaning and the framework of reference of key concepts for both areas, they are part of a long-standing tradition that lends spiritual value to Nature and constructs reality through metaphors.

Chronologically speaking, it is the emergence of the Jewish and Christian monotheist beliefs and its stark contrast to pagan religions that promotes one of the most significant, large-scale and systematic transformations in Western rationality. As Eliade describes in the essential *The Eternal Myth of Return*:

> The chief difference between the man of the archaic and traditional societies
> and the man of the modern societies with their strong imprint of

Judaeo-Christianity lies in the fact that the former feels himself indissolubly connected with the Cosmos and the cosmic rhythms, whereas the latter insists that he is connected only with History. Of course, for the man of the archaic societies, the Cosmos too has a "history," if only because it is the creation of the gods and is held to have been organized by supernatural beings or mythical heroes. But this "history" of the Cosmos and of human society is a "sacred history," preserved and transmitted through myths. More than that, it is a "history" that can be repeated indefinitely, in the sense that the myths serve as models for ceremonies that periodically reactualize the tremendous events that occurred at the beginning of time. The myths preserve and transmit the paradigms, the exemplary models, for all the responsible activities in which men engage (21).

This passage highlights that one of the main differences between pre modern societies and modern ones is how the first views itself inserted in the cycles of nature, which have inspired the cyclical quality of their myths, whereas the latter, under the influence of Judeo-Christianity, understands itself as part of a linear history with a beginning and an end. Hence, the reason for these societies to interact and portray Nature so differently.

In fact, Tambiah points out in his *Magic, science, religion, and the scope of rationality* that the rise of Judaism's monotheism represented a major divide in the way Western societies rationalize the world around them in general.

[T]he distinctive feature of Israelite monotheism was not merely that there was one God, but also that there was no realm, primordial or otherwise, to limit his sovereignty. Such a supreme God therefore cannot be the focus of any mythology. There are no myths - indeed there cannot be any myths - about YHWH's origins or his pedigree. Moreover this monotheistic sovereign God

of Israel created the universe ex nihilo;-there was no pre-existent stuff he used, he simply created it by fiat, and the processes of nature were established by his divine decree. This means that there is no natural bond between God and nature, for nature did not share in any of God's substance or body (that is, nature was not "iconically" connected with God) (6).

This newfound notion of God's power has had profound implications for concepts such as Nature and supernatural, which lie at the heart of both mythological and Fantastic narratives. By acknowledging that "pagan gods do not transcend the universe but are rooted in it and bound by its laws…the Bible accepts the reality and efficacy of pagan magic" (Tambiah 7). And much like Eliade's division between the cyclical nature of myth versus the linear essence of post Judeo-Christianity, Tambiah corroborates that the shift in the narratives surrounding supernatural beings and their connection to the environment have led to serious and mutual revolutions in how society thinks and, consequently, how its literary representations are produced.

Besides monotheism's legacy, scientific thought also helped put Western society on the path of secularization, slowly transforming the value and the scope of religion. The text "On the Sacred Disease", which belongs to the Hippocratic Corpus and deals with the issue of epilepsy, is regarded by many as a landmark because

> it rejected this disease (and certain others) as being the result of divine intervention; in other words, it rejected a certain kind of explanation and action that was labelled "magical" or occult. It proposed as a substitute explanation a naturalistic explanation of disease, which itself was tied to a doctrine of the uniformity of nature and the regularity of causes (Tambiah 9).

Although the development of science cannot be pinpointed to a single document, but rather a series of developments throughout time and territories, these fundamental texts of Western medicine showcase how a separation between natural and supernatural began to bloom as early as the fourth century BCE in Classical Greece. Even so, this proto-science and, in fact, most science produced until the later part of the nineteenth century did not consider scientific knowledge incompatible with religious practices and beliefs[8] and, therefore, still largely maintained the coexistence of both in some shape or another.

The next major development in science that pertains to this study is the relation between the Scientific Revolution and the Protestant Reformation. Once again, the terminology can stir a few objections, granted that

> [m]any historians are now no longer satisfied that there was any singular and discrete event, localized in time and space, that can be pointed to as "the" Scientific Revolution. Such historians now reject even the notion that there was any single coherent cultural entity called "science" in the seventeenth century to undergo revolutionary change. There was, rather, a diverse array of cultural practices aimed at understanding, explaining, and controlling the natural world, each with different characteristics and each experiencing different modes of change (Shapin 3).

Nonetheless, the term Scientific Revolution shall be used here to name the series of scientific achievements that happened in the course of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which lead to "a conceptual revolution, a fundamental reordering of our ways of thinking about the natural" (Shapin 2). The successions of discoveries in Astronomy, Physics,

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[8] In fact, the Scientific Revolution did not erase religious belief. On the contrary, scientific investigation became a way to understand the workings of God through the laws of nature, especially after the Protestant Reformation. According to Stanley Tambiah, the "alliance between Protestant theology and modern science lasted for a century and a half. It represented a major epistemological and ontological agreement regarding the manner in which religion and science both divided and intersected (17).

Chemistry and Biology were important to the extent that science (understood as the amalgamation of many observable and attestable disciplines) eventually became the main paradigm with which most Western societies view the world, effectively replacing Christianity as the moral and cosmological compass. Accordingly, around the nineteenth century, English Literature virtually replaced religion as a translator of the sacred and became "an essential palliative for the failure of religious ideology, and supplie[d] us with various myths which are of relevance to social life" (Eagleton 81). Perhaps, it would be better fitting, then, to claim that while literature fulfilled a more subtle and subjective "ideological task" (Eagleton 22) on the masses, "the forces which were to produce modern secular society - science, democracy, rationalism, economic individualism - were in the ascendant" (Eagleton 33).

Some researchers also believe that the Protestant ethical values of the sizteenth century were one of the central reasons why Europe saw such a concentration of scientific interest, because it actively fomented scientific inquiry. Calvin's insistent absolutist cosmology "accommodated the notion of a God who acted according to regular laws of nature, which were designed by him. Thus, this new conception of regular laws of nature, which could be understood by man in terms of his empirical experience, was integrally and vitally in accord with the scientific spirit of the time" (Tambiah 16). However, this merry union between religion and science "broke down in the latter part of the nineteenth century after the Darwinian theory of evolution demolished the premise that the world was governed by certain and irrevocable laws which gave it an unchanging pattern" (Tambiah 17). In broad lines, this meant that subjective interpretations of the world, be it mythological, religious or Fantastic, became irrevocably removed from the empirical nature of the scientific method. With the accumulation of so many changes, and perhaps with the idea of evolution fresh in one's mind, a great portion of European thinkers of the nineteenth century started to assume

that the verifiable explanations of science were preferable to the symbolic expressions of myth.

However tempting it may be to categorically exclude mythology from the realm of logical thought, defining it as a completely opposing force to science, it might be more valuable to place myths as the "first science in the anthropological sense, they are a first form of organizing experience and accounting for what we perceive, so we can think about them as some sort of archeological fragments of epistemology" (Muñoz 24). In doing so, we are invited to reject a strong habit of contrasting myth and logic as if they were incompatible, even though that has not always been the case.

> Between the eighth and fourth centuries B.C. a whole series of interrelated conditions caused a multiplicity of differentiations, breaks, and internal tensions within the mental universe of the Greeks that were responsible for distinguishing the domain of myth from other domains: The concept of myth peculiar to classical antiquity thus became clearly defined through the setting up of an opposition between *mythos* and *logos*, henceforth seen as separate and contrasting terms (Vernant 204).

Thus, the dichotomy between myth and logic is a consequence of historical changes that took place many centuries ago and can, therefore, be challenged on two main principles. Firstly, because both modes of thought have long coexisted and, secondly, because the dissolution or even the denial of one of them has led to a systematical undermining of the cultural value of mythological and, by consequence, Fantastic modes of expression.

In Tambiah's investigation of rationality, the author retrieves several previous works in which scientific thought is assumed to be superior to the mythic one to demonstrate how a hierarchy has been placed between the two modes of thinking. An example of such binary

and evolutionist opposition is Lucien Levy-Bruhl's descriptions of 'prelogical' mentality in contrast to modern 'logical mentality':

> By 'prelogical', Levy-Bruh had in mind the notion that primitive thought as a collective representation… did not portray rules similar to those followed in modern logic - such as the laws of contradiction, and the rules of inference and proof. By 'mystical' mentality Levy-Bruhl meant beliefs in supra-sensible forces: since the 'savage', he pointed out, had made no demarcation between a domain of nature as opposed to the supernatural (85).

Even though it was Levy-Bruhl who proposed that it "was not that primitive thought was 'irrational', or had misapplied the laws of thought, but that it had its own characteristic organization, coherence and rationality" (85), which he called the 'law of participation' in opposition to the more scientific 'law of causality', vertical definitions were still common in the nineteenth century. Luckily, alternative views have since emerged, in which mythical and scientific modes are seen as "coexistent mentalities or two coexistent modes of thought and action in mankind" (Tambiah 86). Thus, it is better fitting to regard mythological thought and, by the same token, Fantastical thought as having a cohesive inner structure with a real function in their respective contexts, rather than just a rudimentary precursor of science.

For Fantasy scholar Kathryn Hume, this tendency of regarding mythical thought as less rational dates back to the very foundations of Western philosophy as well. She argues that "Plato - through "Socrates" - was trying to exclude traditional myths from the phenomena which rational inquiry must explain" (16). In the dialogues of *Phaedrus*, the philosopher states that indulging in Fantasy was artificial and useless when compared to the task of questioning more important lines of thought, such as the nature of oneself:

> I find that sort of thing pretty enough, yet consider such interpretations rather an artificial and tedious business, and do not envy him who indulges in it. For

he will necessarily have to account for centaurs and the chimaera, too, and will find himself overwhelmed by a very multitude of such creatures, gorgons and pegasuses and countless other strange monsters. And whoever discredits all these wonderful beings and tackles them with the intention of reducing them each to some probability, will have to devote a great deal of time to this bootless sort of wisdom… So it seems absurd to me that, as long as I am in ignorance of myself, I should concern myself about extraneous matters. (qtd. in Hume xvi).

It does not seem to be an exaggeration to affirm that most, if not all, written accounts of Plato's ideas have had a significant impact in Western thought. For many, ancient Greece was the birthplace of the tradition that opposes myth and rationality, helping pave the way to a stark separation between Fantasy and reality.

Although they diverge on vocabulary, probably because they cater to different disciplines, Tambiah and Hume seem to agree that causality and participation, or mimesis and Fantasy, are complementary rather than rival impulses. In her treaty for equity between mimetic and Fantastic Literature, Hume proposes

a different basic formulation, namely, that literature is the product of two impulses. These are mimesis, felt as the desire to imitate, to describe events, people, situations, and objects with such verisimilitude that others can share your experience; and fantasy, the desire to change givens and alter reality - out of boredom, play, vision, longing for something lacking, or need for metaphoric images that will bypass the audience's verbal defences. We need not try to claim a work as a fantasy any more than we identify a work as a mimesis. Rather, we have many genres and forms, each with a characteristic blend or range of blends of the two impulses (20).

Under this perspective, Fantasy and mimesis have coexisted from the earliest instances of story-telling. In ancient epic tales, for example, gods and monsters have challenged mighty heroes, who probably would not have survived the test of time, had they not shared a real resemblance to what it is like to be human. There could be no Fantasy without mimesis and no pure mimetic work that could fully transcribe reality.

Likewise, mythology, religion, and science have always evolved in consonance with one another, being but different ways of building the world around us. Nonetheless, due to the modern tendency of rejecting the subjective value of the Fantastic[9], there has been a consistent effort to separate the tradition of mythology, which holds academic value, to Modern Fantasy, as if this genre could somehow be either completely detached from its predecessors or merely the result of a fraudulent and arbitrary construction with no historical and/or literary value.

> Whereas myth, epic, legend, romance, and folktale contain most of the elements which are found in modern high fantasy, they are traditional narrative forms from ages in which the distinctions between the mimetic and the fantastic were less formalized than they are now. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the scientific method, with its emphasis on rationalism and experimentation, began to take hold; and the literary world, like the scientific and technological worlds, attempted to ban the fantastic as unsuitable for modern, educated tastes (Hunt 303).

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[9] Though in retrospect, the shift from mythological and symbolic thought to a scientific view of the world can seem like a straightforward path, Romanticism demonstrates how that has not been the case. Even when society was facing radical changes in terms of order, or perhaps because of it, Romanticism turned inward, announcing the "withdrawal from God and the internalization of spirit in the principle of subjectivity" (Pyle 23). Hence, the importance of acknowledging both the endurance of subjectivity in the face of empiricism and the movement's importance for Fantasy studies.

Hence the separation of classics that have Fantastical elements, such as those by Homer, Shakespeare and Mary Shelley, from those produced after the late nineteenth century like *The Chronicles of Narnia* goes beyond genre issues.

Although there have been numerous attempts to segregate Modern Fantasy from the Fantastic tradition and consistent effort to place mimetic and scientific expressions above mythical ones, the longevity of Fantastic expressions indicates that there are characteristics from myth that have been preserved and adapted by Modern Fantasy, which account for some universal impulse to portray the world symbolically. Still, the point to be made here is the utter impossibility of isolating the main pillars of the present work: myth, Nature and religion, in their most broad and essential meanings, are the substance of every Fantastic narrative and an ever-changing language for the environment. From the earliest mythological account to the most modern Fantasy best-seller, it is the tension between what is natural and what, by opposition, is supernatural that divides reality from fiction, profane from sacred and myth from science.

1.2. An overview of Fantasy Studies

Among scholars of Fantasy Literature, there seems to be a consensus that "fantasy as a genre only emerges in response (and contemporaneous to) the emergence of mimesis (or realism) as a genre: only once there is a notion of intentional realism, so the argument goes, can there be a notion of intentional fantasy" (James and Mendleson 17). Nonetheless, it is also highlighted that some of the most characteristic elements of this mode have been consistently displayed since the earliest days of Literature. The difference then between the two stages of the Fantastic tradition is historical as much as it is literary. To define Fantasy is to impose limits to a genre whose very stance is to push the boundaries of imagination.

Rosemary Jackson argues, in her pivotal *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, that most critical definitions of the mode tend to be too exclusive and end up denying its essence:

> literary fantasies have appeared to be 'free' from many of the conventions and restraints of more realistic texts: they have refused to observe unities of time, space and character, doing away with chronology, three dimensionality and with rigid distinctions between animate and inanimate objects, self and other, life and death. Given this resistance of fantasy to narrow categorization and definition, it might seem self-defeating to attempt to produce a critical study which proposes to 'schematize' or 'theorize' about fantasy in literature and thereby to militate against escapism or a simple pleasure principle (1).

Nonetheless, it proves necessary to at least outline some major aspects of this mode, namely that it deals with the tension between real and unreal and that it, consequently, parallels the historical transformations which have changed society's notion of reality.

In this sense, this thesis will work with Jackson's notion of Fantasy's historical properties which state that,

> [l]ike any other text, a literary fantasy is produced within, and determined by, its social context. Though it might struggle against the limits of this context, often being articulated upon that very struggle, it cannot be understood in isolation from it. The forms taken by any particular fantastic text are determined by a number of forces which intersect and interact in different ways in each individual work. Recognition of these forces involves placing authors in relation to historical, social, economic, political and sexual determinants, as well as to a literary tradition of fantasy, and makes it impossible to accept a reading of this kind of literature which places it somehow mysteriously 'outside' time altogether (2).

For this reason, it is important to understand the trajectory of this mode in relation to history and how the supernatural has found expression through literature in each period of time, in order to fulfill one of Fantasy's main functions of tracing "the unsaid and the unseen of culture" (Jackson 2).

In *A Short History of Fantasy*, Farah Mendlesohn and Edward James sketch a thorough but non-exhausting timeline of Fantasy's history with a focus on Western works. They argue that accounts of deities and hero-kings such as the ones seen in ancient civilizations, like the Sumerian poem *Gilgamesh*[10], depict supernatural elements, namely the presence of demigods and mythological creatures for example and, therefore, constitute some of the first cornerstones of the Fantastic tradition. Furthermore, the Greek and Roman epics *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid*, credited to Homer and Virgil respectively, also represent another instance of Fantasy in the literary canon, portraying the trials of righteous heroes in the midst of gods, monsters and legendary wars. These epics were closely related to the theological beliefs of their communities, but their stories endured as literary works long after their religious associations faded, paving the way for later secular Fantasy works.

During the Middle Ages, roughly from the fifth to the fifteenth centuries, the supernatural remained central to the collective imagination. The authors note that "[a]lmost all that remains of the heroic tradition from pre-Norman England is the epic poem Beowulf, with its three-fold story of the hero fighting the monster, the monster's mother, and the dragon" (James and Mendleson 18), but that medieval romance carried the Fantastic legacy

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[10] "The narrative establishes many motifs and archetypes, which recur in the Bible and in the Greek epics. The legendary King Gilgamesh is linked to an unlikely companion in the person of a wild man, Enkidu. Together they face a series of startling adventures, including one with Humbaba, a fire-breathing monster. (...)After Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh quests for immortality, but a serpent robs him of the herb that promises eternal life, and Gilgamesh returns home to die. The wandering hero/king, the unlikely companion, the combination of king and savage, the elemental adventures (Gilgamesh faces challenges of earth, air, fire, and water), the conquest of a fire-breathing monster, and Gilgamesh's thwarted search for immortality-even his downfall through the agency of a serpent -are archetypes repeated so frequently in fantasy that they have become defining characteristics of the genre" (Mathew 7).

onwards. With the influence of local myths, adventure sagas and legendary heroes ensured that stories, such as the Arthurian legends[11], featuring epic quests and magical sidekicks, could thrive in that period. Ironically, although the Middle Ages have a reputation of rejecting magic in the name of the Christian principles that had become the norm in Europe, most people did not deny its existence back then. In fact, the overly religious nature of that period embraced the connection between God and kings and it rejoiced in miracles, while trying to purge Europe from witchcraft. For Tambiah, one of the most prominent and interesting differences between early Christianity and its Reformed strand, is that the former never denied the supernatural capacities of paganism while Protestantism, followed closely by the end of the Middle Ages, denies its efficacy: "...the doctrine of predestination that eliminated the possibility of magic, found it necessary to champion the triumph of miracles" (Tambiah 20). That is to say that even when the notion of magic, as it was then understood, was culturally renounced, the idea of the supernatural still managed to surface, never fully disappearing.

As a matter of fact, even William Shakespeare, undoubtedly the most prominent playwright of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and regarded by many as the greatest writer of all times, displays Fantastic elements in his works. *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* a comedy that depicts the meddling of fairies in the love affairs of young people, was heavily shaped by the Celtic and Irish mythologies, which featured an extensive tradition of fairies and fairy realms. In *Macbeth*, the tragedy of a general consumed by the ambition to become king of Scotland, there are also notable supernatural elements, perhaps most notoriously the presence of the trio of witches who introduced the prophecy responsible for

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[11] It is important to highlight that Arthurian legends were not created during the Middle Ages, but rather revived by British authors, who took advantage of pre-existing Celtic myths to establish a noble ancestor for the English monarchs and a sense of unity under the threat of the Norman Conquest. According to Jean Markale, "Anglo-Norman kings needed to prove the nobility of their descent and relied on Celtic tradition to legalize their claim to the English throne" (55).

the protagonist's descent into madness. Finally, *The Tempest*, perhaps Shakespeare's ultimate depiction of the power of magic, tells the tale of Prospero, a sorcerer who, upon being usurped by his brother, flees to a remote island, where he uses his powers to make Caliban and Ariel his servants. Although not entirely lost during the Middle Ages, but rather adapted so as not to clash with Christian values, tropes of prophecies and characters, such as fairies and witches, would likely not be so well accepted before the Renaissance. This period's main contribution to the supernatural literary continuum then, is its newfound freedom to revisit classical texts that had been largely suppressed by the Catholic church in Europe due to their pagan components.

Around the end of the 1800s, the Romantic movement, and the Gothic works that ensued, famously continued the tradition of Fantastic expression. Reaffirming the effects of secularization in the West, which resulted from an accumulation of revolutions, literature moved "away from an imminent understanding of religion and increasing skepticism about the possibility of supernatural influence in the world (as what was understood as supernatural fell to scientific explanation) opened a space for a playful approach to the fantastic" (James and Mendleson 24). Gothic novels, such as *Frankenstein* for instance*,* represent "a reaction to historical events, particularly to the spread of industrialism and urbanization" (Jackson 57). Shelley's book is unquestionably part of the Fantastic tradition, although it is not considered to be a part of the genre per say (due to the fact that Fantasy had not been recognized as an independent genre by scholars yet). Nonetheless, some of its major plot points are based on the combination of the supernatural spark of the creature's life and the scientific process of its birth. In a sense, the eighteenth and nineteenth century's Gothic movement brought the supernatural closer to the real, blurring the lines between the two. Around the same time, "[p]oets such as John Keats, Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge and Percy Shelley took the sublime landscapes of the Gothic and gave them a lighter and more inspiring

color" (James and Mendleson 26). With their works, Romantic and Gothic writers lent enticing imagery to Fantasy, adapting mythical creatures and tropes to the new contours of society.

What also contributed to the preservation of the supernatural in mainstream literature were the folklore collections compiled famously, but not exclusively, by Charles Perrault, in the seventeenth century, and by the Grimm brothers, in the early nineteenth century. Their portrayals of fairies, although arbitrary at times, preserved some of the popular and oral traditions of European folktales and laid the foundation for an intentional appropriation of some of their tropes and elements to create original stories, which by then were largely recognized to be purely fictitious. According to Mendleson and Farah, "Perrault and Grimm were collectors and revisers, who domesticated the tales for their (respectively) aristocratic and bourgeois readers, but in the nineteenth century we begin to see original fairytales for the modern reader and for modern manners" (20). These compilations also had a fundamental role in children's literature and its association with Fantasy, because "although much of Grimm, Andersen and other early writers is horrific and brutal, fairytale came increasingly to be seen as a genre aimed primarily at children" (22). It was in the wake of their influence that stories, like Lewis Carrol's *Alice in Wonderland,* came into being. Those widely popular and whimsical narratives helped solidify Fantasy's popularity among children and its ability to reach beyond the confines of modernity and Europe's rational materialism.

In the mid-twentieth century, the works of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis projected Fantasy into a new era. Although, by the time of the Second World War - when their most significant contributions, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, were published - Fantasy had already become a distinct genre, these works consolidated a fresh structure of epic proportions. The tropes, themes and the language, which had been majorly influenced by mythology and its descendants, gained new frames of references in these

authors' Secondary Worlds. Evidently, Lewis and Tolkien were not the only ones behind the creation of High Fantasy or the mythopoeic function of Fantasy, which will be further discussed in due time, but their historical circumstances and their popularity certainly left an indelible mark on later works. By creating Secondary Worlds, with complex lores based on ancient mythology and with a clear epic structure for their heroes, these authors propelled Fantasy to a more conscious status of *fictional* mythology.

In the twentieth century and especially around the turn to the twenty-first century, the Fantasy genre saw an unprecedented rise in commercial success, cultural popularity and in the sheer volume and diversity of publication. In fact, some argue that the Fantastic mode has recently dominated the media because of its current relevance to culture. "It is possible that fantasy will continue to dominate in the area of children's books, comics, computer games and blockbuster movies… Popular culture is increasingly permeated with images and ideas drawn from fantasy (and from science fiction)" (James and Mendleson 203). In this regard, some of the most prominent stories of the last few decades are closely linked to the Fantastic tradition: Harry Potter, Game of Thrones and even the multi-movies superhero craze of the Marvel Studios have ensured supernatural elements remain in the mainstream media.

Hopefully, this brief timeline will help exemplify the consistency with which Fantastic production has paralleled our understanding of the world and how "[f]antasy and not realism has been a normal mode for much of the history of Western fiction" (James and Mendlesohn 17). Even though these narratives have managed to continue to be relevant in virtually every period in the history of literature, systematic critical analysis of Fantastic genres still has a lot of room to expand. This came to be for a variety of reasons, but there are a few that stand out, namely a dismissal of non-mimetic modes that can be traced back to Classical Greece, a rejection of children's literature as worth studying and the notion that Fantasy is ahistorical.

The rudimentary origins of a Fantastic criticism started with Greek philosopher Plato, when he referred to mythological creatures with certain disdain in *Phaedrus* - despite using many Fantastical metaphors to make arguments in other instances. That brief passage mentioned in the previous section marked the initial stages of this field's criticism, but then as well, it started a tradition of dismissing Fantasy as an inferior genre. According to Hume, Plato and Aristotle were the "originators of western critical theory" and the reason why "most subsequent critics have assumed mimetic representation to be the essential relationship between text and the real world" (5). She argues that their attitude in assuming literature ought to be mimetic tore "a large and ragged hole in western consciousness"(6) because it denied the selectivity and the limits of mimesis at the same time that it systematically pushed non-mimetic works and impulses to the margins of intellectualism for a long time, alienating the symbolic expressions of mythical and Fantastical expressions and weakening critical work on the subject.

Still, many writers and critics have pondered about the subject, helping pave the way for the development of a self-sufficient field of Fantasy in literary criticism. Joseph Addison, for instance, was one of the first writers to coin a term to describe what he called "the fairy way of writing" in the seventeenth century. In his homonymous essay, the Fantastic began to take shape and attempt a critical vocabulary of its own, but it still remained as a strand of the sublime, rather than an independent tradition (Sandner 21). Sometime afterwards, Romantic and Gothic authors, like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Ann Radcliffe, also touched on the subject, underlining either the effects Fantastic narratives could have on the imagination (Sandner 37) or outlining rules of how to use the supernatural effectively (Sandner 41). Although not very methodical in their approaches, authors of this period often incorporated and adapted mythological elements into their works, emphasizing the value of supernatural tropes as a tool of subversion and atmosphere building.

In the Victorian Age, Charles Dickens, John Ruskin and George MacDonald stand out both as authors and defenders of the Fantastic. In the mid-nineteenth century there was an "emergence of distinct strands of a new kind of fantasy, self-conscious in its homage to Arthurian romance and fairytale" (James and Mendleson 26), as compilations and translations of folktales gained traction. As previously stated, this era of Fantasy contributed to the notion that it was a genre primarily aimed at kids, but it did not discourage those authors because the importance of Fantasy to a child's imagination was the backbone of their critique of the tradition. Although overly sentimental, these writers opposed the notion that because Fantasy had no objective social meaning it had no literary significance. In fact, MacDonald reiterated Fantasy's elusiveness, but considered this consciousness-rousing one of its best qualities for "[t]he greatest forces lie in the region of the uncomprehended" (qtd. in Sandner 68)[12].

It is in the twentieth century, though, that a more systematic criticism of Fantasy starts to take shape. Partly because of the rise in popularity of High Fantasy works and the establishment of Fantasy as a genre and, partly, because of the influence of works such as those by Sigmund Freud, Northrop Frye and Tzvetan Todorov. With the concept of the "uncanny", Freud offered to literary critics a way of articulating one of the many effects which the Fantasy mode and the tradition that precedes it could have on its readers. On the other hand, what Frye and Todorov both did was attempt an efficient categorization of the genre, which was then built upon by other critics, like Farah Mendleson, who more recently categorized the genre in his *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. For Frye, Fantasy would fall within the scope of 'romance', one of the four 'mythoi' that underlies all narratives. In his exploration, he investigates archetypal patterns and images from romance that could be found in the earliest myths and folktales, as well as in more Modern Fantasy, and concludes that "myth

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[12] The essay to which this passage refers to is "The Fantastic Imagination", written by George MacDonald.

and romance both belong in the general category of mythopoeic literature" (Frye 188). In his theory, this was the case because the quest present in all of those stories mirrors the cycles seen in nature, reinforcing Junquera and Moreno's notion that "myths and the literature of nature have been written in acknowledgement and understanding of each other, that they have evolved in parallel, with a common focus on the intervention of human beings in nature (1)".

Todorov's influential *The Fantastic: a structural approach to a literary genre,* paved the way for the Fantastic to be seen as a more serious and standardized field of literary criticism, but contrary to Frye's wide scope of investigation, Todorov's definitions and classifications were extremely exclusive, which led posterior authors to completely or partially dismiss his categories. Nonetheless, these contributions were of vital importance to the establishment of this genre and subsequent critical theories, such as Rosemary Jackson's.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, myriad of other works have investigated the themes, origins and categories of the Fantastic and the majority of the theoretical basis for the present work has been drawn from these more recent additions (largely because they have been able to condense pre-formulated notions and language, but also because they tend to be less exclusive and categorical). Some of the most relevant works have been conducted by Rosemary Jackson, who deals with the subversive possibilities of the Fantastic mode in the *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*; Katheryn Hume, who focuses on the role mimesis has played in Fantasy's history in her *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*; John Clute, who put together a vast and valuable encyclopedia of this tradition entitled *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*; Mendelson Farah, who has investigated the rhetoric of the genre as well as its history alongside James Edward in *A Short History of Fantasy*; Brian Atteberry, who has explored the deep connections between myth and Modern Fantasy in *Stories about Stories: Fantasy and the Remaking of Myth*; and Chris

Brawley, who examines Fantasy's ability to denote sacredness back into the environment in his *Nature and the Numinous in Mythopoeic Fantasy Literature.*

However different in their approaches, the aforementioned theories have helped build the field's current *status quaestionis* and many of the perspectives that will be used in my study of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Even so, there is one element which seems to be paradoxically present and missing from the vast majority of these theories - Nature. Although representations of the environment have always been present in Fantastic narratives, critics have not often articulated the primary function it has had in the Fantastic tradition. Although there is an ongoing discussion on the best terminology, whether one should refer to Fantasy as a mode, an impulse or a genre, this thesis will largely prefer (but not exclusively use) the term 'tradition' instead, since the genealogy of it is of greater importance for this work than strict definitions.

In *Phaedrus*, Plato says: "numberless other inconceivable and impossible monstrosities and marvels of Nature" (qtd. in Sandner 15), when referring to Fantastical creatures, and concludes that "I want to know not about this, but about myself. Am I indeed a wonder more complicated and swollen with passion than the serpent Typho, or a creature of a gentler and simpler sort, to whom Nature has given a diviner and lowlier destiny?" (qtd in. Sandner 16). Although dismissive of the mythological figure of Typho, he still positions Nature as responsible for both supernatural and human creatures. That is not to say that he believes in the existence of such impossible things, but that in fact, beings - supernatural, sacred, monstrous or even human ones - all fall under the scope of nature.

Similarly, Addison states that the 'fairy way of writing' did not need to be limited to what his time deemed possible and it could, instead, allow the imagination cross the line between natural and supernatural, since "poetry addresses itself to the imagination, as it has

not only the whole circle of nature for its province but makes new worlds of its own" (qtd. in Sandner 23). He went as far as to say that

> [o]ur forefathers looked upon nature with more reverence and horror, before the world was enlightened by learning and philosophy, and loved to astonish themselves with the apprehensions of prodigies, charms and enchantments. There was not a village in England that had not a ghost in it, the churchyards were all haunted, every large common had a circle of fairies belonging to it, and there was scarce a shepherd to be met with who had not seen a spirit (qtd. in Sandner 23).

This passage illustrates how deeply rooted in mythology and folktales the Fantastic tradition really is and, perhaps most importantly, it showcases a certain awareness about the proximity between the way Nature is portrayed in non-mimetic works and the effects that historical changes of the previous centuries had been inflicting on society's relationship with the environment.

In turn, Coleridge proposes that there are two types of poetry, one with "the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination" (Coleridge 207). Whereas MacDonald states that "[t]he best Nature does for us is to work in us such moods in which thoughts of high import arise… Nature is mood-engendering, thought-provoking: such ought the sonata, such ought the fairy tale to be" (qtd. in Sandner 68). Therefore, whatever the distinction between real and impossible is, it lies in nature. This much writers seem to have known for centuries, consistently using Nature as a tool to cross or at least disturb this feeble line.

Todorov, one of the most important critics of the genre, revolutionized the field with his 1970 *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, by proposing a

structuralist approach that attempted to define Fantasy and systematize its critical studies. In his book, he describes the difference between what he classifies as "fantastic", "marvelous" and "uncanny". Although it is not the focus of his work, he decidedly attests to the fact that Fantasy is grounded on our dynamic with the environment, by stating that "the fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (Todorov 25). Frye, on the other hand, goes further into the role of Nature in this opposition between the real world and the Fantastic tradition.

> The conflict, however, takes place in, or at any rate primarily concerns, our world, which is in the middle, and which is characterized by the cyclical movement of nature. Hence the opposite poles of the cycles of nature are assimilated to the opposition of the hero and his enemy. The enemy is associated with winter, darkness, confusion, sterility, moribund life, and old age, and the hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigor, and youth (Frye 187-188).

Not only do his words exemplify how Fantasy is rooted in the mythical tradition of mimicking nature, but it also calls attention to its symbolic essence, namely that in the Fantastic, images of Nature carry more meaning than just the setting of a story.

However, it was only in 1985 that *The Comedy of the Fantastic: Ecological Perspectives in the Fantasy Novel*, one of the first works to point out how Modern Fantasy was systematically connected to people's understanding of nature, that Don D. Elgin argued that "literature, particularly the Fantasy novel offers humanity a way to reintegrate itself into the natural world and in so doing, invites a new relationship between itself, its fellow creatures, and the science and literature that create and mirror that world" (30). For him, the Fantastic novel rejected the assumptions of tragedy that dominate Western culture and, instead, promoted a narrative concerned with life and survival, in which "comic humanity

sees itself as but one part of a system to which it must accommodate itself and whose survival must be a primary concern if it hopes to continue to exist" (16). Since then, a few other works have focused on the connection between Fantasy and environmentalism, namely *Fantasy and Myth in the Anthropocene: Imagining Futures and Dreaming Hope in Literature and Media*, edited by Marek Oziewicz, Brian Attebery and Tereza Dědinová; *Environmentalism in the Realm of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature*, edited by Chris Baratta; and *Nature and the Numinous in Mythopoeic Fantasy Literature,* written by Chris Brawley.

All of these examples showcase how Nature is at the very core of the Fantasy tradition and how criticism has not fully ignored its role. Even so, there can still be more emphasis on the investigation of Fantasy with tools provided by environmental criticism. In reviewing the representations of Nature in this tradition, it is possible to explore that which a secularized society, one that has brought itself to the brink of environmental collapse, has lost: a sense of sacredness that had once existed in Nature and a mythology that demands environmental conservation.

In fact, Brian Attebery defends that Fantasy is not merely a descendant of mythology but a current way of mythmaking, "fantasy 'makes' myth only in the sense that a traditional oral performer makes the story she tells: not inventing but recreating that which has always existed only in performance, in the present" (Attebery 15). For him, because Fantasy recontextualizes elements of the mythological lore, it "appropriates from, engages with, travesties, and reconstitutes the myth" (Attebery 14), making not reality, but symbolic interpretations of it with effects analogous to myths, legends and folktales. Chris Brawley goes as far as saying that this is the very role of mythopoeic fantasies, or High Fantasies in which Secondary Worlds are fabricated: "the mythopoeic author undertakes two tasks: to instill awareness of the transcendent, and to turn that awareness back to the mundane world" (Brawley 17). Therefore, not only allegations of Fantasy's being ahistorical are unfounded,

but it is also safe to say that methodical examination of this genre holds great potential, especially when associated with compared mythology and Ecocriticism. Through their metaphorical representations of the natural world and the intangible value they assign to the environment, Fantasies can bypass the secularized mindset of the West by the infusion of the numinous back into nature.

1.3. An overview of Ecocriticism

Only recently have critics begun to denote to Nature a more central role in literary studies with the emergence of Ecocriticism, from a strictly literary perspective. Here, what I mean by Nature is not simply the location where a story takes place, in the Aristolelian sense "that defined 'setting' as one of literature's four basic building blocks other than language itself – 'plot', 'character', and, 'theme' being the others" (Buell 4), but a more in depth approach about the ways in which a specific society or period perception of its environment has shaped cultural representation and vice-versa.

The prefix 'eco' comes from the Greek *oikos*, meaning 'house' or 'household'. Ecocriticism is, thus, the field that studies the relationship between the world we call home and its representations in literature. However, the terminology is up for debate since some have adopted the term 'Environmental Criticism' instead, under the guise that it portrays more aptly the interdisciplinary nature of this area.

> '[E]nvironmental' approximates better than 'eco' the hybridity of the subject at issue – all 'environments' in practice involving fusions of 'natural' and 'constructed' elements – as well as the movement's increasingly heterogeneous foci, especially its increasing engagements with metropolitan and/or toxified landscapes and with issues of environmental equity that challenge early ecocriticism's concentration on the literatures of nature and preservationist environmentalism (Buell viii).

Nonetheless, there are many people who still maintain the nomenclature 'Ecocriticism' on the basis that it is "analogous to the science of ecology" (Glotfelty xx) and, contrary to the prefix 'environ', it "implies interdependent communities, integrated systems, and strong connections among constituent parts" (Glotfelty xx). This thesis will use both terms interchangeably because it understands that the works produced under both names represent the same agenda, falling under the wider scope of the socio-political movement known as Environmentalism.

Even before its consolidation as an area of research with a "neat paradigm or unified methodology" (Johnson 8), scattered investigations had already been previously conducted under no specific name. For Ramachandra Guha, cultural productions have always portrayed the environment in some way or another, but it was not until the First Industrial Revolution that the landscapes were drastically transformed and the very function of Nature changed, becoming then a "source of cheap raw material as well as a sink for dumping the unwanted residue of economic growth" (4). Therefore, while Ecocriticism is a "political mode of analysis" (Garrad 3), the broader category of Environmentalism represents a social movement that has recently emerged in response to modern treatment of non-human lives:

> As a dynamic social response to the Industrial Revolution, environmentalism bears comparison with three other movements of the modern world-democracy, socialism, and feminism… [T]he environmental movement has expanded human understandings of 'rights' and 'justice', calling for greater attention to the rights of nature as well as for sustainable lifestyles (Guha 5).

In this sense, Ecocriticism's background is one that universally seeks to advocate for a less anthropocentric relationship with the planet and that acknowledges the harmful and enduring effects that the Industrial Revolution has favored in the West.

Not coincidentally, Romantic poet William Wordsworth is often credited to have been one of the first authors to oppose the inconsequential industrialism that fell upon London particularly hard. In its early stages, Ecocriticism expressed itself through a nostalgia of England's rural past: "[u]nderlying Wordsworth's poetry and philosophy was a defense of the organic union with nature of the peasant and shepherd, a way of life that the deadly combination of industrialization and market farming wished to obliterate" (11). Writer John Ruskin was also an advocate against the destruction of the environment in favor of industrial profit, so much so that, in his works, it is possible to see the broader social conjuncture of the eighteenth century and how it mirrored the shift in European values. He wrote:

> Whereas the medieval never painted a cloud, but with the purpose of placing an angel in it; and a Greek never entered a wood without expecting to meet a god in it; we should think the appearance of an angel in the cloud wholly unnatural, and should be seriously surprised by meeting a god anywhere. Our chief ideas about the wood are connected with poaching. We have no belief that the clouds contain more than so many inches of rain or hail, and from our ponds and ditches expect nothing more divine than ducks and watercresses (qtd. in Guha 13).

Through his environmental activism, Ruskin was able to articulate much of the cultural change that had desacralized Nature in order to exploit it and parallel the historical changes that exiled the symbolic interpretations of myth and religion to the realm of Fantasy.

Most scholars agree that the term 'Ecocriticism' emerged around the 1970s with William Rueckert's essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism", in which he proposed that researchers developed a more unified and systematic approach to apply "ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology (as a science, as a discipline, as the basis for a human vision) has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the

world" (Rueckert 107). However, the most notable precursor of modern environmentalism was Rachel Carson, who in her 1962 book *Silent Spring,* wrote about an idyllic scenario, in which human communities seemingly coexisted in harmony with nature, but which was later on destroyed in an apocalyptic event led by human action, as the text eventually showed. In the section "A Fable of Tomorrow", the author was able to articulate both in literary and scientific aspects the effects of modern anthropocentrism on the environment, even before the formulation of a word to describe this type of production.

When Ecocriticism began to take shape in the late twentieth century, researchers often referred to 'nature writings' as the scope of their studies. In this initial stage, also called first-wave, Ecocriticism still acknowledged a separation between the natural world and men, which meant scholars would focus on works that highlighted notions of landscape and environmental activism. According to William Howarth, "the paradigmatic first-wave ecocritic appraised the effects of culture upon nature, with a view toward celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action" (69). However, this vision soon became too restrictive for several critics, who argued that such division between the environment and human beings strengthened some humanist arrogance, which accepted that people were something apart from the rest of the Earth's ecosystem. In contrast, for second-wave Ecocriticism, there could be no text, as there could be no men, untouched by the material and cultural influence of Nature.

Under this perspective, the Ecocritical objective expanded to an all-encompassing project of pursuing the environmental attitudes imbued in any text. Some even argue that environmental criticism must be paired with social, political and scientific stances in order to fulfill its conservationist purpose. Although concrete action is undeniably important, we must firstly acknowledge that our posture in relation to Nature is culturally produced and historically imposed in the same measure that it is scientifically verifiable. According to Greg

Garrard, there are two dimensions that pertain to Environmentalism which play on this duality:

> 'Problems in ecology', he maintains, are properly scientific issues, to be resolved by the formulation and testing of hypotheses in ecological experiments, while 'ecological problems' are 'features of our society, arising out of our dealings with nature, from which we should like to free ourselves, and which we do not regard as inevitable consequences of what is good in that society (6).

Therefore, the latter category is where Ecocritics and other cultural researchers can investigate and appraise the systemic social and historical roots of our relationship with nature. However, it is also important to emphasize that dealing with 'ecological problems', like the current environmental crisis for example, can result in real action by means of challenging practices or ideologies that may be undermining environmental efforts to solve these 'problems in ecology'.

Even in this new era of Ecocriticism, there are still various competing positions in the field, filled both with persuasive and disputable arguments, such as cornucopia, environmentalism, deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology and eco-marxism to name a few. But, for the sake of the work which will be conducted in this thesis, the concept of 'deep ecology' will be further developed. Among other things,

> [m]any deep ecologists see the first point as distinguishing their position from environmentalism; whereas 'shallow' approaches take an instrumental approach to nature, arguing for preservation of natural resources only for the sake of humans, deep ecology demands recognition of intrinsic value in nature. It identifies the dualistic separation of humans from nature promoted by Western philosophy and culture as the origin of environmental crisis, and

demands a return to a monistic, primal identification of humans and the ecosphere (Garrard 24).

Although reasonable on paper, many scholars believe that deep ecology has a radical stance in its advocacy for a nature-centered society, because it would have to dissolve most of Western values, both politically and religiously, in order to be achieved. However far-fetched this project may be, it is still relevant to analyze how our culture became so human-centered, to the point where society has precipitated environmental collapse for the sake of "progress" and profit.

According to Professor Greg Garrad, Ecocritics must keep in mind the "reciprocal 'shaping' networks of nature and culture" (10) and work to conciliate literal truths, such as the real threats of environmental crisis and the political activism necessary to mitigate it, and the cultural construction of the rhetoric used to understand and express nature, which are inseparable to historical and social contexts. In agreement, Lynn White argues that "[i]n addition to the clever technologies, wily policies and ethical revaluations that we shall need to respond to environmental crisis, we shall need better, less anthropocentric, metaphors. That is the project, and the promise, of ecocriticism" (205).

Indeed, in the polemic yet poignant essay "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis", White argues that every major social, technological or religious transformation Western society has been through has resulted in environmental consequences both in the unconscious and material level. In the author's perspective, the present ecological crisis is a result of the West's gradual change in values, which is owed largely to the shift from pagan animism to a hierarchical Judeo-Christianity and its subsequent alliance with scientific and technological advancements.

While many of the world's mythologies provide stories of creation, Greco-Roman mythology was singularly incoherent in this respect. Like

Aristotle, the intellectuals of the ancient West denied that the visible world had had a beginning. Indeed, the idea of a beginning was impossible in the framework of their cyclical notion of time. In sharp contrast, Christianity inherited from Judaism not only a concept of time as nonrepetitive and linear but also a striking story of creation. By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image (White 9).

Armed with the notion that Nature was but a resource to manipulate and void of the ancient animism which championed the presence of a *genius loci*[13] for every tree, river or stone, Western society's anthropocentrism allowed men to disregard nature's intrinsic value and exploit it instead.

Although controversial to some, Lynn White's conclusion is one that this thesis can partially agree with[14]. "What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-Nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one" (12). Certainly, Christianity has played a huge role in environmental decline, even if it has not been the sole villain. Nonetheless, White's harsh words can be interpreted as a call to reevaluate our culture

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[13] According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, *genius loci* is "the presiding god or spirit of a particular place" (208).
[14] Though this study does not believe a single religion could be responsible for the present environmental crisis, it does aim to inspect Christianity as any other historical phenomenon, thus, taking into consideration all its detectable repercussions for society.

as a whole, reassess religion and science's relationship with the environment and retrieve Nature's central role in our own consciousness, and whether we call that conservationism or spirituality is merely terminology.

Thus, what is truly relevant is that Ecocriticism can offer a path of cultural revision and a reminder of the "natural basis of all culture" (Garrard 11). By analyzing how culturally relevant texts have portrayed the dynamics between men and Nature we can begin to comprehend their implications and perhaps even resignify them. Hence why Fantasy, a genre deeply rooted in the mythological tradition of interpreting the environment symbolically, and particularly *The Chronicles of Narnia,* which deliberately echoes the narrative of the Christian Bible, are able to provide a powerful insight into humanity's notion of their environment.

Furthermore, Fantastic narratives are even more important for Ecocriticism when we regard Eliade's argument that "[i]n the last analysis, the world reveals itself as language. [...] The Moon has its mythical history, but so have the Sun and the Waters, plants and animals. Every significant cosmic object has a 'history' (*Myth and Reality* 142)". For this reason, Fantastic language is especially rich for Ecocriticism's revisionism, because it can trace back this mythical history of natural elements and investigate the transformations it has endured. Thus, we can hope to unveil a cycle in which tangible and cultural changes shape each other, and more specifically, study the effects of modernity in the representations of Nature, going as far as studying the impact of the current environmental crisis through Modern Fantasy.

2. *The Magician's Nephew:* A Narnian Cosmogony

In order to fulfill this goal, this thesis will analyze the dynamic between *The Magician's Nephew* and its representation of the environment. The first book of *The Chronicles of Narnia* in its chronological order, starts with Diggory moving from the

countryside to London to live with his Uncle Andrew since his mother was bed-ridden with some unknown sickness. There, he meets and befriends Polly, with whom he starts to explore the houses of the neighborhood through their connected attics. When confronted about his tears by Polly, on the occasion of their first encounter, Diggory states that he regretted leaving the countryside to live in urban London. Thus, *The Magician's Nephew* starts much in the same tone as early British nature-writers like Wordsworth and Ruskin: with a nostalgia for the country and a resentment for modernity.

Diggory and Polly decide to play on the slim corridors that connect the neighborhood's houses and accidentally end up in Uncle Andrew's attic where they find out he is carrying out experiments on some rings left to him by his godmother. He had previously used guinea-pigs for his research, but since the animals could not report their findings, Uncle Andrew tricks Polly into touching one of the rings, knowing it would transport her somewhere. He then convinces Diggory to go after his friend with a second ring to save her and, thus, the boy finds both himself and Polly in the Woods Between the Worlds, a peaceful place filled with trees and small ponds. Understanding that each pool would lead them to a different world, they decide to explore a little before returning home.

Through one of the ponds they arrive at a desolate world with a dying sun, where a room full of aristocrats had been frozen in time. In the middle of this ruin, there was a hammer and a bell, which Diggory's curiosity urged him to sound. At the first ring, a gigantic woman named Jadis awakens and tells them how the world of Charn had been so utterly destroyed. She explained that there had been a war many years prior and that she had decided to use 'The Despicable Word', an all-consuming spell, to win the fight, but that as a result of that, she had killed every living thing in Charn. Realizing she was evil, Diggory and Polly try to go back to Uncle Andrew's attic in London through their rings, but end up taking the witch with them.

Once in their world, Jadis notices that, despite her superhuman strength, she had no other powers in England and enslaves Uncle Andrew, believing him to be a wizard (even if a weak one), with the goal of conquering that world as well. Loose in the streets of London, she robs a jewelry shop and rides a cab as if it was a carriage, causing the police to chase after her. In an attempt to fight the officers, the evil witch tears off a lamp post to use it as a spear against her enemies, but Diggory and Polly, realizing the danger they had been putting others into, use their rings to remove her from their world and, hopefully, take her back to Charn. However, in the chaos of the situation, they end up taking the cab driver, Frank, his horse, Strawberry, and Uncle Andrew to the Woods Between the Worlds as well.

There, Strawberry, the horse, bowing down to drink some water out of one of the ponds, took all of them to another world, since they were all still touching each other. Initially, they thought the world they had arrived at was a ruin like Charn, but the Empress Jadis knew that it was, in fact, an empty world, not yet created. It was then that they saw the lion Aslan start to sing a song, one which disturbed Jadis immensely, although it sounded magnificent to the others. This song made trees grow, animals appear and rivers flow where there had been nothing before. The group witnessed the creation of Narnia and saw Aslan grant speech to some of the animals, while the witch, knowing the lion's power, tried to kill it with the lamp post she had taken from London. Missing her target and seeing the piece of metal stick to the ground and grow like a tree, she flees to the woods away from Aslan.

Finally acknowledging the presence of the accidental intruders, Aslan calls for a meeting between the group and the recently created Narnians (animals, naiads, satyrs, etc). He crowns Frank the Cabby as Narnia's first King, due to his humble and kind nature, and questions Diggory about his responsibility in bringing evil, in the form of the White Witch Jadis, into those lands. He entrusts the boy with the task of venturing far into Narnia and bringing back a special apple, which would grant protection from evil to the other Narnians

for many years to come. In the garden where Diggory finds the apple, he meets Jadis once again and she, having bitten the fruit and become immortal, tempts him to eat the apple as well, instead of fulfilling Aslan's quest. If he did so he would get his heart's desire, which was to cure his mother's illness.

Still, Diggory did not cave and was able to take the apple so that Aslan could plant it and banish the witch to the far north of Narnia. As a reward for Diggory's righteous behavior, the lion allows him to take an apple from the tree to England in order to save his dying mother. After returning to London and living many years taking care of his family and remaining Polly's friend, Diggory plants the seed of that apple and, when it later falls down due to a thunderstorm, he turns the wood from it into a wardrobe.

As this brief summary of the plot is able to convey, the first book of C. S. Lewis's saga deals directly with Muñoz's[15] basic elements of the traditional mythological narratives of the world: human beings (Diggory, Polly, Uncle Andrew and Frank the cabbie), a god-like Supernatural Being (Aslan), Nature or world (Narnia's landscapes and animals), and chaos (the void before creation). Furthermore, *The Magician's Nephew,* presents three different worlds, namely the real one, depicting industrial England; Charn, a world destroyed by a magical war; and Narnia in the sacred moment of its creation. And through the contrast between them, the book invites readers to observe these places with an almost anthropological perspective, taking into consideration the different paradigms, values and environmental attitudes applied to each culture.

Nonetheless, it is with Narnia's cosmogony, or the story of its mythological origin, that the story fully commits to the mythopoeic function of mythmaking. According to Chris Braweley's *Nature and the Numinous in Mythopoeic Fantasy Literature*, loosely translated from the Greek ('mythos', meaning 'story' and 'poenin' meaning 'recreate'), mythopoeic

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[15] Eliade, Campbell and Muñoz converge in their notion of the basic elements of myth, but Muñoz's nomenclatures will be the ones mainly used in the thesis.

narratives are an attempt to create a new mythology, so that 'Mythopoeic Fantasy' refers to those whose authors employ "fantasy as a subversive mode of literature to revise our perceptions of the natural world; and, the distinguishing feature of these authors is going to be an inculcation of a certain religious or mystical 'feeling' of the numinous in the reader" (9). However, this definition has been debated, especially because of competing notions about the character of Fantasy itself. For Hume, for example, because "there is no universally accepted mythology or religion, Fantasy offers a secular form of what was once the domain of the religious" (Brawley 9). For her, Fantasy is a substitute for the effect previously accomplished by religion, while Brawley argues that Fantasy is responsible for inducing a religious awe back into its original domain, which was nature.

For this thesis, the divergence of both definitions is less important than their intersection. Indeed, Hume argues that fantasies fabricate mythologies based on reality, whereas Brawley defends that Fantasy transcends it in a spiritual way, but both acknowledge that the genre adopts mythological structures in a society that has virtually lost its connection to the culturally symbolic properties of the environment. For this very reason, the other worlds of High Fantasy, like Narnia, are so relevant to the issue. While ancient cultures believed in the connection of Supernatural Beings and their lived realities, and medieval folks accepted the existence of a realm of fairies within their own forests for example, modern men can no longer house mythopoeic thought in their actual lives, banishing it to Secondary Worlds of wonder, where most of such tradition is kept.

Clearly not all Fantasy, or mythic thought for that matter, has been excluded from modernity, but there is a stark separation between scientific fact and symbolic values that had not always existed, which clearly parallels humanity's divorce from the rest of the natural world. Hence the reason Fantasy's return to, or rather its insistence in, mythmaking as a way to articulate historical existence is so closely related to deep ecology's defense of our primal

identification with Nature. According to Mircea Eliade, "'Nature' at once unveils and 'camouflages' the 'supernatural'; and this, for archaic man, constitutes the basic and unfathomable mystery of the World" (Myth and Reality 142). Heir to this legacy, Modern Mythopoetic Fantasies cannot exclude Nature from its texts, for whatever we call supernatural, magical, mythical or miraculous it is but an expression of Nature.

2.1 Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake: The Fantastic Structure of Myths

According to Eliade, the moment of initial creation by a Supernatural Being is a pivotal aspect of mythology because it represents the foundation of a community's social order and the paradigm upon which it relates to the environment:

> Myths… narrate not only the origin of the World, of animals, of plants, and of man, but also all the primordial events in consequence of which man became what he is today - mortal, sexed, organized in a society, obliged to work in order to live, and working in accordance with certain rules. If the World exists, if man exists, it is because Supernatural Beings exercised creative powers in the "beginning"(11).

Therefore, by analyzing Narnia's cosmogony in *The Magician's Nephew,* this thesis will articulate some of the mythological elements employed in the text and reveal certain values of said Secondary World.

Narnia's cosmogonic myth, in consonance to Muñoz's ideas of the basic mythical elements (chaos, nature, Supernatural Beings and humans), begin by portraying an initial "state of chaos" (Eliade 84): "[I]t was uncommonly like Nothing. There were no stars. It was so dark that they couldn't see one another at all and it made no difference whether you kept your eyes shut or opened. Under their feet there was a cool, flat something which might have been earth, and was certainly not grass or wood. The air was cold and dry and there was no

wind" (Lewis 60). The moment that precedes the primordial creation of the cosmos is often described as 'apeiron'[16] and the Narnian tale does not distance itself from that notion. Jadis describes the void in which they had arrived as "an empty world" (60) because nothing had been created to fill it yet.

In sequence to their arrival, Aslan, the god-like lion, creates the cosmos shortly after the Witch's observation. He first sings the stars into existence: "[o]ne moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out—single stars, constellations, and planets, brighter and bigger than any in our world…" (61). Then, he calls upon the sun: "[t]he eastern sky changed from white to pink and from pink to gold. The Voice rose and rose, till all the air was shaking with it. And just as it swelled to the mightiest and most glorious sound it had yet produced, the sun arose" (62). With its light, the children were able to see the mountains and rivers Aslan had created to shape that earth: "[a]nd as its beams shot across the land the travelers could see for the first time what sort of place they were in. It was a valley through which a broad, swift river wound its way, flowing eastward toward the sun. Southward there were mountains, northward there were lower hills" (62). The Lion then creates the vegetation: "[t]hey stood on cool, green grass, sprinkled with daisies and buttercups. A little way off, along the river bank, willows were growing. On the other side tangles of flowering currant, lilac, wild rose, and rhododendron closed them in" (65). And finally, Aslan gives life to the creatures of Narnia: "the humps moved and swelled till they burst, and the crumbled earth poured out of them, and from each hump there came out an animal" (65).

Therefore, in the fictitious cosmogony of Narnia, as well as in real traditional mythologies, the state of primordial non-being and the creative power of a Supernatural Being is intimately connected because chaos and creation are "a variation of the intuitive

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[16]Apeiron (ἄπειρον) is a Greek word, from ἀ (a) which means 'without' and πεῖραρ (peirar), meaning 'end, limit; boundary'. Muñoz describes it as "the unformed… the unthinkable and indefinite" (47-48).

opposition between life and death (Muñoz 47)". Not only that, but it is also a moment of transformation, which realizes "the passage from the nonmanifest to the manifest" (The Myth of the Eternal Return 35). In other words, narratives of the primordial creation inaugurate the cyclic rhythm of nature, which incorporates the duality between life and death, day and night, chaos and order, and represent an early conceptualization of one's environment and origins. This process of symbolization is not just a story about what happened in *illo tempore*[17], but the foundations for the way a community thinks and behaves.

In fact, for Eliade, "[t]he cosmogony is the exemplary model for every kind of 'doing': not only because the Cosmos is at once the ideal archetype of every creative situation and of every creation but also because the Cosmos is a divine work; hence it is sanctified even in its structure" (Myth and Reality 32). Due to the sacred essence of this initial myth, which explains the creation of the creatures and the environment, intrinsic value tends to be associated with Nature in archaic communities. However, because Judeo-Christianity broke away from a tradition of deities who were bound by natural laws and, instead, began to believe that the "God of Israel created the universe *ex nihilo*"[18] (Tambiah 6), a dilemma, currently more environmental than religious, flourished in Western culture.

In his *Reflections of the Psalms,* C. S. Lewis devotes a chapter to the treatment of Nature in the Christian Bible. He argues that because "God created Nature, while it brings God and Nature into relation, [it] also separates them. What makes and what is made must be two, not one. Thus, the doctrine of Creation in one sense empties Nature of divinity" (qtd. in Giblett 80). For this reason, it is safe to say that, although Nature can be a symbol of the

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[17] Latin for "in that time" or "in those days", used by Mircea Eliade in *The Myth of the Eternal Return* to describe the mythical time of the beginnings (36).

[18] Latin for "out of nothing". Tambiah writes that for believers of this faith, there was nothing before the God of Israel "simply created it by fiat, and the processes of nature were established by his divine decree" (6) and there was nothing before that.

divine, it has no innate value in the Christian culture and, in general, seems to be but an instrument for God's manifestations. For Arthur Walker-Jones, "the separation of God from nature intrinsic to much Western theology has facilitated the colonization of women, indigenous people and earth" (qtd. in Giblett 85). Hence why, edged between Christian and pagan traditions and written in a post-industrialized world, *The Magician's Nephew* paints a convoluted picture of Nature: not completely subservient or devoid of spiritual meaning, but still marred by the West's sense of entitlement.

Although Nature performs a central role in the stories of Narnia, its representations are often ambiguous, in the sense that the books reimagine some pivotal aspects of Christian mythology, while remaining unable to completely erase its influence. When Aslan calls the world to life he orders: "Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters" (70). It is true that this passage invokes a clear sense of natural sacredness, which stands closer to the animistic properties of paganism than the all-encompassing monotheism of Judeo-Christianity, but still some observations can be made in regards to the environmental attitudes of this Secondary World.

First and foremost, the language used to convey Aslan's elemental command (specifically the use of the word "awake"), entails that Narnia is an entity and a character in itself. For Muñoz, "Nature is a 'Thou', in a Buberian sense, and not an It -something different to the human being and alien to his experience - and this happens even in the most theologized mythologies. Mythological ontology tends to transform everything into a "Thou" with which to establish a profound emotional relationship" (57). According to scholars, such as Roland Barthes and Claude Lévis-Strauss[19], myths are a specific form of language. In fact, Barthes argues that myths are "constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a second-order semiological system" (113). In this sense, the way something is

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[19]See "The Structural Study of the Myth", by Claude Lévis-Strauss, and *Mythologies*, by Roland Barthes.

articulated linguistically is of vital importance both for mythology and for Ecocriticism because it offers an insight into the inescapable filter through which people conceive all types of meaning.

Thus, by characterizing the world of Narnia as a natural and divine entity, the book becomes at odds with the Christian tradition it echoes: "[t]he personification of life-giving earth as a female deity is a powerful and emotive symbol that contrasts with the male-dominated and human preoccupation of the major monotheisms" (Davies 129). Not only that but establishing the world as a living and sacred being, turns any act of environmental defilement into sacrilege. According to Davies,

> a global Pagan perspective, and one which has huge contemporary resonance, is respect for the environment as a spiritual entity. The term 'earth-centred religions' is used to express this. We have seen how the early Church associated paganism with nature worship, and that this was a fairly accurate attribution. Gods were worshiped as natural features, such as trees, rocks, or springs, or all of nature was imbued with animistic properties. The destruction of the environment, the cutting down of trees and groves, the polluting of water, were acts of desecration.

Through the juxtaposition of different cultural systems, Narnia "describes the conflict between two modeling subsystems: christianity [sic] and paganism" (Jeha, my trans. 148). Thus, proposing an approach to Nature that discourages the utilitarian connotation of modern society and reclaims a certain proximity to the environment.

Furthermore, by instructing the trees to be "walking trees", granting speech to animals and denoting holiness to the water sources of Narnia, Aslan imposes a mythology that is not obviously human-centered (since there is no mention of the lion-god creating humans), which establishes intrinsic and spiritual value to non-human elements. The belief that "all elements

of the material world, animate and inanimate, were imbued with spirits and were therefore sentient in some form" (Davies 26) is present in pagan religions, indigenous traditions, Greco-Roman mythology and in the cosmogony of Narnia. And the assumption that animistic cultures, as opposed to the Christian tradition, are perfectly sustainable communities has endured throughout history, to the point in which it has been equated to conservationism.

However, critics like Garrard suggest that on its own, animism does not necessarily "correspond to ecological understanding and responsibility in a modern sense" (143). This is the case because, more often than not, people tend to think of animistic cultures as if they lived in total harmony with a stable environmental system unless they are disturbed by colonizers for example, to cite the Native Americans. However, this narrative has been proven to be in fact a stereotype, because "[i]n a balanced, harmonious, steady-state nature, indigenous people reproduced balance and harmony. In an open nature in which balance and climax are questionable, they become, like all people, dynamic forces whose impact, subtle or not, cannot be assumed" (Krech 23). In reality, "'a very strict concept of a highly structured, ordered, and regulated, steady-state ecological system' is now known to be 'wrong'" (Botkin 9), meaning that *only* religious beliefs or respect for the non-human elements of Nature is not enough to maintain a balanced environment. It is necessary for all members of society to seek an active and profound understanding of ecology and the issues it faces.

For this reason, Narnia's mythopoesis can seem like an embrace of Europe's pagan history and a symbolic amendment of Christianity's role in the rupture between man and Nature. However, this perspective might be too shallow an interpretation, especially when combined with the linguistic debate within Ecocriticism scholars, which argues that human language and "its currently dominant forms can rightly be called an environmental problem" (Clark 46). Just as Barthes argued that mythical language is charged with previous and

alternative meanings, some authors have pointed out that representing Nature in texts is a particularly challenging task, because human languages are founded in their own history of anthropocentrism and, thus, tend to place human beings as the center of reference for virtually everything.

For Lawrence Buell, for example, the key to this problem would be to form "a 'realist' or mimetic aesthetic against the overwhelming tendency among critics to read references in literature to the natural world solely as a matter of cultural politics between human beings" (qtd. in Clark 47). He favored a strong extrospection in order to realistically portray the environment, but critics of his argument point out that "the term realism may carry an unacknowledged bias towards predominantly western, post-enlightenment [sic] secular conceptions of what the real 'literally' or 'objectively' is (Clark 47). As for scholar David Abram, "the sources of language lie in a realm in which the distinction of human and non-human does not apply (qtd. in Clark 48)". The author believes that 'meaning' goes beyond the conventional human system of signs and was present in other animals as well. What he labeled "bodily sentience" is a capacity for signification shared by all living creatures and, therefore, rejected the separation between men and animals on the basis of language.

Similarly, according to Gary Snyder,

> "[l]anguage – oral or written – is 'wild' in the sense of being a self-regulating system or entity, with properties still opaque to human understanding and certainly not a matter of instrumental control. Meaning', 'order', 'significance', as Snyder argues, should not be understood as cultural qualities projected upon things, or 'constructing' our perceptions of them; they are integral to the activities of all living things. In even the simplest example of following a track made by sheep or goats in the hills, signification is written

into the world to be read and, literally, followed. The natural world is full of indicators, signs and communications, associated with diverse and (to us) mostly opaque modes of intentionality and reference (Clark 53).

In this sense, what becomes clear from the author's ideas is that many Ecocritics believe that language has been vital to the maintenance of an *arbitrary* division between the natural and cultural worlds.

Recognizing the implicit anthropocentrism of language and, consequently, of myths is vital to the study conducted in this thesis. Although there is a greater focus on the creation of non-human lives in Lewis's cosmogony, which undoubtedly encourages a different (if not better) approach to the environment, the treatment of these creatures is often portrayed from a human-centered perspective. After creating the animals, Aslan chooses some of them to grant the gift of speech and summon all creatures to an initial counsel with the intention to establish the principles of that society:

> 'Creatures, I give you yourselves,' said the strong, happy voice of Aslan. 'I give to you forever this land of Narnia. I give you the woods, the fruits, the rivers. I give you the stars and I give you myself. The Dumb Beasts whom I have not chosen are yours also. Treat them gently and cherish them but do not go back to their ways lest you cease to be Talking Beasts. For out of them you were taken and into them you can return. Do not so' (71).

In this passage, it is visible that the Talking Beasts of Narnia have more agency in that society, partly escaping the biblical fate of being under the dominion of men - although the rivers and trees would remain as resources for the animals. This approach does not place humans as the center, but human-like characteristics. By employing pre-existing notions,

such as a resemblance to God's words in Genesis[20] and the use of some mythological creatures, the book still maintains an anthropocentric mindset.

The best way to exemplify this argument is to analyze the three main categories of animals that can be found in Narnia. The first creatures are the ones clearly derived from Greek mythology: "Out of the trees wild people stepped forth, gods and goddesses of the wood; with them came Fauns and Satyrs and Dwarfs. Out of the river rose the river god with his Naiad daughters (71)". The creatures Lewis brings into Narnia are part of a larger anthropocentric motif in Greek mythology and rationality in general. Beyond the more obvious aspects, such as the hybrid nature of fauns and satyrs, which were half-man and half-animals, the divinities of this tradition were also usually personified. According to Zelinová and Škvrnda, this motif was recurrent in the language, religion and tradition of Ancient Greece. In the epics of Homer and Hesiod, some of the pillars of Greek culture, the principle of personification "is wide-ranging – it includes inanimate objects, such as spears and shields that literally desire to kill; natural phenomena, such as the wind, heavens or sea with human traits such as, fate, death and sleep; all these phenomena have human traits and can be directly identified in the gods" (175). For this reason, though Lewis establishes a less human-centered mythology for Narnia, giving agency and social emphasis to some of the animals, the tradition used in the book cannot fully escape filtering the world through the human perspective.

If Narnian mythology retrieved the ideas of 'earth-centered religions' and created a Secondary World at fault only of employing the anthropomorphic bias of language, perhaps the overall reverence for Nature displayed in *The Magician's Nephew* could overshadow its

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[20] "Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food'" (NIV Bible, Gen. 1.29 - 1.30).

trail of human entitlement and stand as a reassessment of Christianity's environmental legacy. However, the contrast of the other two categories of Narnian creatures showcase how it is still necessary to highlight the human-centered tendencies of the story. When Aslan divides the animals between "dumb" and "talking", he creates a hierarchy based on the same principle as most of Western tradition - language as an indicator of superior consciousness. Although there is a preoccupation with the conservation and respect for all elements of Nature, speech and rationality (in the way humans have defined it) are used as a source of entitlement, either of dominion or stewardship, over the non-speaking creatures.

Nonetheless, it does no good to disregard the positive approaches *The Magician Nephew* does display in its portrayal of Nature. According to Chris Brawley, mythopoeic fantasies in general have the ability to infuse a sense of sacredness back into nature, despite the western cultural rupture with the environment:

> The only way to recover our sense of sacredness in nature is to revise our attitudes regarding the human and non- human. Along with most indigenous religions, fantasy has the ability to do this. It offers the reader an animistic way of perceiving the natural world and by "departing from reality," it takes us into new realms that, while not denying reason, certainly give us a sense of awe towards the created world, a fresh way of viewing reality anew, and a way of recovering what was lost (23).

It is undeniable that High Fantasies tend to deny modern attitudes towards the environment and, instead, choose to advocate for its importance through a spiritual and metaphorical approximation between man and nature. However, this can still communicate a human-centered approach to the environment in which spiritual connection becomes the only reason to preserve nature.

For scholars such as Timothy Morton, some artistic and critical approaches to the representation of Nature can actually reinforce a counterproductive idea that humankind and the rest of the environment should be seen as independent beings, instead of mere constituents of an interconnected ecosystem:

> [E]cocriticism too often endorses modes of regressive fantasy in its commitment to an underexamined notion of 'nature' as that which is sacred, pure, untouchable and overendowed with an aura of moral authority and wisdom (...) some ecocriticism, in projecting such an image of pure nature as a source of authentic experience, forms a kind of spiritual consumerism, one whose terms perpetuate strict divisions between the human and nature that a more genuinely ecological insight would refute (qtd. in Clark 69-70).[21]

Therefore, Narnian mythology indeed invites a rebuttal of the current treatment of Nature in the West, which had transformed the environment into a subject for Christian rule and a resource for profit. However, it still upholds a propensity for anthropocentrism in the traditions it explores, in the language it adopts and especially in the role it assigns to humans.

Out of the four basic aspects of myths, which Muñoz proposes, the only element that has not been dealt with yet is humanity. However, that is the case because Aslan does not create a race of humans to inhabit early Narnia. The people who populate the posterior ages of Narnia are descendants of those accidental visitors who had come from England and become the first rulers. Frank the cabbie is chosen to be the King for his humble and kind nature and, although Aslan requests that he should protect and respect the animals, Narnian society still places human-like characteristics as superior to other forms of life and uses this as a justification to exert authority over them. Aslan asks Frank in his coronation ceremony: "Can you rule these creatures kindly and fairly, remembering that they are not slaves like the

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[21] See *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* by Timothy Morton.

dumb beasts of the world you were born in, but Talking Beasts and free subjects?" (82). This goes to show that indeed the role of humanity is different in the Narnian mythology, when compared to the Christian one, although it is still not completely satisfactory[22].

In conclusion, there are a few things that could be affirmed both about *The Chronicles of Narnia* and about mythopoeic fantasies as a whole. Firstly, they often express a nostalgia for a pre-industrialized and pastoral lifestyle and frequently revive animistic values. For this reason, they can serve to restore some level of identification between men and nature, which modern culture has made obsolete. In addition to that, the excerpts of *The Magician's Nephew* help illustrate how a lot of the systems that make up Fantastic Literature (and all literature for that matter), specifically the use of language and myths, can perpetuate anthropocentric perspectives. The issues raised do not erase the importance of such Fantastic tradition. On the contrary, it offers an opportunity for reflection through the comparison of reality and Secondary Worlds like Narnia.

2.2 The Nature of Secondary Worlds

Having established that the connection between Secondary Worlds and mythology goes beyond a shared history, but in fact represents a series of deeper structural and linguistic parallels, an investigation of *The Magician's Nephew* can help trace the role of Fantasy in environmental discourse. As mentioned before, there are a few concurrent theories of what Modern Fantasy actually is and how it works. For Hume, it is an artistic expression of the world in a non-mimetic fashion, which she defends is just as natural of an impulse as all other types of mimetic art. According to Jackson's arguments, Fantasy is one of the ways in which the unsaid and unseen of culture manifest themselves and comment on that which is absent in society. On the other hand, Attebery argues that Fantasy is a way to reframe myths,

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[22] The contrast between them will be further explored in the next section.

appropriating their ancient motifs and elements to consider the issues of modernity. As for Brawley, mythopoetic fantasies fulfill the role previously played by religion and infuse the numinous back into nature, reclaiming a sense of sacredness that is no longer present in the West. And finally, Elgin claims the Fantastic novel offers a rich opportunity to reflect about the current ecological crisis because the genre tends to revoke within itself the very factors[23] that have resulted in the harmful separation between man and nature.

Although the theories differ in their approaches, their fusion, rather than a strict selection, seems to be the most cohesive path to conduct the present analysis and to focus on *how* Fantasies are able to accomplish their potential in environmental advocacy. If understood as a tradition that leans on the value of non-mimetic expressions of history and on its proximity to myth and religion, then mythopoeic fantasies, like C. S. Lewis's, can reinsert humans into the idea of Nature as a whole. And in order to do that, one of the most powerful mechanisms available is *comparison*. The cosmogony of Narnia for example, emphasizes just how much Secondary Worlds rely on descriptions of Nature to establish their basic characteristics. It is through the similarities and differences with the actual World that *The Magician's Nephew* is able to comment on the reality of its time.

The importance of reality as a parameter for Fantasy is not a novel concept. As a matter of fact, Julio Jeha resorts to semiology to consider the processes utilized to create meaning in fiction and to construct new worlds of Fantasy. According to his work,

> [t]he internal field of reference is modeled after the external one: our
>
> knowledge of the world allows us to find meanings in a work of fiction, build

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[23] "Though the reasons for the current ecological crisis are usually attributed to our ideas of land use, resource management, and energy availability, in fact they have much deeper roots, roots that emerge inevitably from the basic philosophic and religious attitudes which it has been the central province of literature to examine, present, and often to create. And, although the possible number of such roots is indeed large, it is convenient to group them into three major attitudes: those attitudes growing out of religion, particularly western Christianity; those attitudes growing out of the movement from a hunter-gatherer to an agricultural civilization; and those attitudes growing out of the French and Industrial Revolutions" (4).

frames of reference from published material, fill gaps and create constructions.

In turn, the internal field of reference represents external fields: certain behaviors, scenes, constructions of complex meaning are understood as "typical" (or "atypical") when compared with history, human nature, urban society or any other generalized reference field (75; my trans.).

In other words, it would be impossible for Modern Fantasy to create something totally alien to the experienced reality of the author or the reader. Therefore, places like Eden, Valhalla or Narnia must be meaningfully comparable to the real world in order to achieve the Fantastic balance between strangeness and familiarity.

As a matter of fact, the author argues that this phenomenon is not specific to Fantasy and occurs in every type of fiction:

All writers create secondary worlds out of the primary world, whether they write realistic or fantastic literature, the realistic author's text will tend to mimesis: the fictional world (sign) will approach the *Lebenswelt* (object) accordingly with the intentions and capabilities of its creator. On the contrary, the fantasy author will distance the fictional world from the objective world in order to create an immeasurable ontology with the one he experiences here and now. In both cases, the primary world (extratextual) will always serve as a basic reference for the secondary (textual) world (102; my trans.).

In this sense, Jeha's ideas reinforce the notion that literary works navigate in a spectrum that goes from mimetic to non-mimetic, without ever being able to fully commit to one extreme. Not only do Secondary Worlds[24] depend on the external fields of reference to convey

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[24]The nomenclature of Jeha's work diverges from this thesis regarding the use of the term "Secondary World". According to the author, the primary world is the extratextual one; the secondary world is a textual representation of the primary one; and lastly, what he calls a tertiary world represents the worlds of Fantasy, which break away from possible reality through a fictitious text.

meaning, but their very ability to sever the connection between fiction and reality demands an awareness of one's concrete circumstances.

Hence, this section of the study will compare a few aspects of *The Magician's Nephew*, which highlight the comparison between the real and fictitious worlds of the book (Charn and Narnia), as well as the environmental implications within their divergences. In the first book, as well as in the rest of Lewis's saga, there is a great emphasis in the forests and overall landscapes of Narnia.

> The lion was pacing to and fro about that empty land and singing his new song. It was softer and more lilting than the song by which he had called up the stars and the sun; a gentle, rippling music. And as he walked and sang the valley grew green with grass. It spread out from the Lion like a pool. It ran up the sides of the little hills like a wave. In a few minutes it was creeping up the lower slopes of the distant mountains, making that young world every moment softer. The light wind could now be heard ruffling the grass. Soon there were other things besides grass. The higher slopes grew dark with heather. Patches of rougher and more bristling green appeared in the valley. Digory did not know what they were until one began coming up quite close to him. It was a little, spiky thing that threw out dozens of arms and covered these arms with green and grew larger at the rate of about an inch every two seconds. There were dozens of these things all round him now. When they were nearly as tall as himself he saw what they were. "Trees!" he exclaimed (64).

For Robert Harrinson, in *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, the woods have had both sacred and profane connotations during history, but that as of today it represents perhaps most importantly an opposition to modern cities. In fact, having had strong cultural influence in collective imagination, the wilderness in general, contrasts much of what modern society

stands for, because "the governing institutions of the West -religion, law, family, city- originally established themselves in opposition to the forests, which in this respect have been, from the beginning, the first and last victims of civic expansion" (ix).

It is common for High Fantasy to reject some of the modern assumptions and embrace Nature with a different posture. In *The Magician's Nephew*, Narnia's wilderness, its untouched forests and its Talking Beasts represent an opposition to industrialized London, home of the main characters, and even more so to the wastelands of Charn. When asked about moving to London, Diggory declares the reason for his distress: "if you'd lived all your life in the country and had a pony, and a river at the bottom of the garden, and then been brought to live in a beastly Hole like this" (12). This passage reinforces London as a symbol of England's ever-growing distance from Nature and its former pastoral lifestyle. Furthermore, in contrast to the lands of Narnia, the widespread urbanization of London and, in fact, the increasing industrialization of England suggests a gradual banishing of the "traditional value and symbolic resonance" (Garrad 70) of the wilderness, since the Industrial Revolution turned it into a source of raw materials for profit and civilization moved further and further from the mysteries of forests.

Moreover, Charn works as a sort of cautionary tale, depicting the apocalyptic narrative of the Witch's world. Charn, the city of the Kings of Kings, is described as the ruins of a great and ancient civilization, where nothing had survived the war which had taken place in the past:

> Low down and near the horizon hung a great, red sun, far bigger than our sun. Digory felt at once that it was also older than ours: a sun near the end of its life, weary of looking down upon that world. To the left of the sun, and higher up, there was a single star, big and bright. Those were the only two things to be seen in the dark sky; they made a dismal group. And on the earth, in every

direction, as far as the eye could reach, there spread a vast city in which there was no living thing to be seen. And all the temples, towers, palaces, pyramids, and bridges cast long, disastrous-looking shadows in the light of that withered sun. Once a great river had flowed through the city, but the water had long since vanished, and there was now only a wide ditch of gray dust (40).

Considering the evidence that Charn was a heavily urbanized world, which had succumbed to a massive war, its similarities with post World War II England become increasingly clear, especially when we compare Jadis's powerful spell to the atomic bomb. "It had long been known to the great kings of our race that there was a word which, if spoken with the proper ceremonies, would destroy all living things except the one who spoke it… Then I spoke the Deplorable Word. A moment later I was the only living thing beneath the sun" (41). Thus, not only does this event shed light on the attitudes towards Charn's non-human lives, but it also draws a parallel between the power of both Magic and Science as forces of destruction.

The book's very name attests to the analogy between these two different paradigms. While Uncle Andrew is the 'magician' the title alludes to, he conducts his affairs as a scientific experiment. He was told that the rings, which he had gotten from his godmother, had magical properties, but in the hopes of avoiding danger, he ran experiments on others to assess what the rings could actually accomplish. "I wanted two children. You see, I'm in the middle of a great experiment. I've tried it on a guinea-pig and it seemed to work. But then a guinea-pig can't tell you anything. And you can't explain to it how to come back" (16). Nonetheless, the book often blurs the lines of what it means to be a magician and a scientist, setting a picture in which this distinction is not so much irrelevant, but muddled in a way reminiscing to periods of history in which "magic and science had originally advanced side by side" (Tambiah 21). In fact, at one point the character acknowledges his duality: "I am the great scholar, the magician, the adept, who is doing the experiment" (22). In ways such as

this, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and other Fantasy books retrieve something society has mostly left in its past and bridge the gap between mythological structure and a demythologized world.

In Elgin's *The comedy of the Fantastic: Ecological Perspectives on the Fantastic Novel*, the author explores the three main cultural movements that are believed to have caused the cultural separation between humanity and the environment, namely the advance of Christianity, the Industrial Revolution and the development of agriculture - all of which will be explored in this thesis in due time. Much like it is done in Lewis's book, Elgin explores the issue of industrialization through its negative impact on the environment, to the point where it is even possible to draw a comparison between technology and magic as agents of dominance over nature. For Ian Barbour and Bateson:

> with the growth of technology - whose goal is to control nature rather than to understand it more exploitative and utilitarian motives predominated. The economic interests of the rising middle class, the competitiveness and rugged individualism of the capitalist ethos, the goals of economic productivity and efficiency-aided, no doubt, by the "Protestant ethic" of frugality, hard work and dominion over the earth-all these ese encouraged a lessness and arrogance toward nature unknown in earlier centuries (qtd. in Elgin 9).

For adepts of this theory, which encompasses the boost in subjectivity due to the French Revolution and continued by Romantic idealism, the heaviest burdens imposed by the Industrialization of the West were the favoring of individual profit in detriment of collective interest and the belief that science and technology were the preferable mechanism to subjugate Nature in this pursuit.

However, what seems to be put in Lewis's book is not the nature of destruction, whether it is called science or magic, but rather the ethics of power itself. Much like the Deplorable Word, an atomic detonation, or any war for that matter, has an environmental impact that goes far beyond the human lives it reaps. The way the book portrays the destruction of an entire world because of the erosion of the intrinsic value of life and Nature for the sake of imperialist or personal profit, makes it so that *The Magician's Nephew* is as much a story about beginnings as it is about endings. In the narrative, Narnia is a clean slate, Charn is a wasteland and England lies somewhere in-between this journey, leaning dangerously towards the Empress' morals.

This is shown particularly in the character of Uncle Andrew, who represents the values of British imperialism. When witnessing the creation of Narnia, he states:

> I have discovered a world where everything is bursting with life and growth. Columbus, now, they talk about Columbus. But what was America to this? The commercial possibilities of this country are unbounded. Bring a few old bits of scrap iron here, bury 'em, and up they come as brand new railway engines, battleships, anything you please. They'll cost nothing, and I can sell 'em at full prices in England. I shall be a millionaire. And then the climate! I feel years younger already. I can run it as a health resort. A good sanatorium here might be worth twenty thousand a year. Of course I shall have to let a few people into the secret. The first thing is to get that brute shot (67-68).

The lands of Nania are a "New World" both in the sense of Fantasy and in the historical sense of the European "discovery" of other continents. For wilderness studies, there is a difference between the concept of the wild in the Old and New Worlds. "Wilderness narratives share the motif of escape and return with the typical pastoral narrative, but the construction of nature they propose and reinforce is fundamentally different" (Garrard 67). For the

hunter-and-gatherer, for example, there is no wilderness because there is no opposition to bound nature; for the Old World, the wild is defined by the limits of agriculture and human settlements; but in the New World, it is the mystified idea of a place untouched by human influence. For Uncle Andrew, who lived in a world that had normalized colonization, Narnia's natural resources had no intrinsic value, they represented only a source of raw materials he could profit from and an exotic oasis from the modern world.

Another point of contact between Lewis's worlds is their connection to the biblical narrative. Narnia represents the utopian idea of the Garden of Eden, in which the idyllic environment contributes to the portrayal of a harmonic co-existence between all creatures and their maker. On the other hand, England is a post-fall environment, in which sin has already corrupted humanity, hence the presence of things such as conflict and disease. And, finally, Charn represents the post-apocalyptic vision of a destroyed world, in which Nature has been devastated in all levels by a large-scale war led by the "superior" race of that environment. Considering these comparisons and the fact that *The Magician's Nephew* is strongly connected to the "Book of Genesis", it becomes relevant to find the intertextuality between them and investigate how they relate to environmental attitudes.

Besides the overall theme of creation, there are passages from Lewis's work that draw a much closer resemblance to the first book of the Judeo-Christian sacred text. After the creation of Narnia, Aslan says "that before the new, clean world I gave you is seven hours old, a force of evil has already entered it; waked and brought hither by this Son of Adam". This passage not only parallels the idea that God created the world in seven days, but also it establishes the corruption of Eden by the hands of humanity. Although Diggory is not made in the image of Aslan, like Adam was the image of God, the book still highlights how the child was an ancestor of the first sinners, maintaining the author's pattern of adding an element of estrangement to a recognizable tradition.

Furthermore, the issue of humanity's temptation is more explicitly portrayed by Aslan's mission to Diggory and Polly. In order to atone for bringing the Evil Witch into Narnia, the children are trusted to go into a gated garden and pluck an apple from a special tree. The said apple should be able to temporarily protect Narnia, but upon arriving there, Diggory is met by Jadis, who much like Eve has taken a bite from the apple:

> You have plucked fruit in the garden yonder. You have it in your pocket now. And you are going to carry it back, untasted, to the Lion; for him to eat, for him to use. You simpleton! Do you know what that fruit is? I will tell you. It is the apple of youth, the apple of life. I know, for I have tasted it; and I feel already such changes in myself that I know I shall never grow old or die. Eat it, Boy, eat it; and you and I will both live forever and be king and queen of this whole world—or of your world, if we decide to go back there (93),

She tempts Diggory to bite the apple and become immortal or take it to his dying mother, but contrary to the "Book of Genesis" the child denies the apple and establishes one of the major differences among the worlds: the fall of humanity. While Charn represents a world in which the witch's people had fallen from grace, going as far as metaphorically repeating the initial sin without regrets; Narnia represents a utopian land in which men have not succumbed to the temptation and remained obedient to god (Aslan)[25].

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[25] There are authors, such as Clare Echtiling, Ms. K. Priscilla Harshini and Dr. M. Nagalakshmi, who argue that Diggory was in fact corrupted by temptation when he struck the bell that awakened Jadis in Charn: "Queen Jadis, or the White Witch, enters into the dominion of Aslan. This can be compared to the Bible where Satan, full of evilness disguised as a serpent, tries to deceive Eve so that she and Adam can disobey God by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. According to the Bible, Eve is the one who has been deceived by the serpent, while in this novel, Diggory, the young boy, struck the cursed bell with a hammer out of rage, and through that, evil enters. He awakened Queen Jadis, or the White Witch, from her curse. This causes damage and confusion in the world of Narnia" (Harshini and Nagalakshmi 149). Nonetheless, by refusing to sin again with the apple, Diggory distances the world of Narnia from Charn.

In addition to these parallels, there is another important passage in which the Bible and *The Magician's Nephew* converge, but which simultaneously hold significant differences.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground. Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so (NIV Bible. Gen. 1.26 -1.30).

Perhaps no other passage from Judeo-Christianity's tradition has had such a lasting impact on the West's environmental values than God's command for man to rule over all other creations.

Elgin reminds the reader of Lynn White's polemic essay, in which he argues about Christianity's responsibility for the environmental crisis, with a prudent amount of skepticism but still maintains that "[w]hether we draw the examples from the story of the Garden of Adam's being granted dominion over the earth and all its creatures or whether we note Psalmist's amazed but ultimately affirming question concerning humanity's being raised above the earth and all its creatures, the position of humankind in regard to nature has been very clear in orthodox Christian thought" (5). And aside from Elgin and White, other authors

also agree on the role Christianity has played in the severance of humans from their environment. In *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Gregory Bateson argues that:

> [i]f you put God outside and set him vis-à-vis his creation and if you have the idea that you are created in his image, you will logically and naturally see yourself as outside and against the things around you. And as you arrogate all mind to yourself, you will see the world around you as mindless and therefore not entitled to moral or ethical consideration. The environment will seem to be yours to exploit (468).

Nonetheless, Theodore Hiebert tackles the repercussions of the "Book of Genesis" under a different perspective. For him, it was not so much its content that has had an undesirable effect on the West's understanding of nature, but the dualism "based in the seventeenth-century Cartesian split between spirit and matter" (81) that has led society to center men in later interpretations of the Old-Testament. The first consideration of the author is the importance of understanding the difference between Yahwist and Priestly narratives. Each strand establishes a slightly different translation and tradition for the Old Testament, which becomes very relevant in regard to environmental discussion.

> In the Yahwist's account of beginnings, God creates the first human not in God's image, as in Gen 1:1–2:4a. Rather, God creates the first human from the earth, in particular, from its fertile soil, 'ădāmâ (Gen 2:7; Hiebert 1996, 30–38). Fertile soil, 'ădāmâ, is the Yahwist's technical term for the land on which Israel's farmers cultivated the grains, vines, and tree crops, which were the basis of their agrarian economy…The Yahwist's link between the human and fertile soil, together with the agrarian perspective that lies behind it, is further developed by the role God gives the first human in his environment:

'The LORD God took the human and settled him in the garden to farm ('ābad)

it and to take care of it' (82).

For Hiebert, then, the Yahwist perspective does not remove man from his place within nature. On the contrary, it portrays humankind as another one of God's creations that have sprung from the soil and appoints humanity as agrarian people by design.

On the other hand, from the Priestly perspective, which has largely dominated Western conversations, "God created the human being not out of the earth's fertile soil, as in the Yahwist's view, but in God's image (1:26–27). Priestly traditions, unlike the Yahwist's ones, thus separate humans from other life, since no other life is created in God's image, thereby giving humans a unique place in the world closely associated with the deity" (56). Not only that, but in this strand of the narrative "[t]he special role assigned the human in Priestly thought is to rule (rādâ), take charge of, or be responsible for other life" (56). In this sense, one of Hiebert's main ideas is that, by focusing only on the Priestly narrative, society has neglected the less anthropocentric perspective of the Yahwist narrative and opted to maintain the very dualistic view many have criticized. Still, the idea of humankind as nature's stewards cannot be fully detached from the overwhelming presence of the Priestly tradition and neither can *The Magician's Nephew*.

Although Aslan's words differ from the ones in the Old Testament, as it has been shown, it becomes clear that their outcome is very similar. The daughters of Eve and the sons of Adam, as the humans are called in Narnia, are encouraged to treat the animals and the land of Narnia with great respect and even endeavor to have a harmonious co-existence with them, but still the notion of a hierarchy lingers on Lewis's text and the traces of Christian superiority is evident in the way humans are portrayed as more autonomous, even though the writer was strongly against animal cruelty. During Uncle Andrew's experiments with the magical rings, his wickedness is shown through the way he treats non-human lives:

"I knew," he went on, "that if only you could get it into the right form, that dust would draw you back to the place it had come from. But the difficulty was to get it into the right form. My earlier experiments were all failures. I tried them on guinea-pigs. Some of them only died. Some exploded like little bombs—" "It was a jolly cruel thing to do," said Digory, who had once had a guinea-pig of his own. "How you do keep getting off the point!" said Uncle Andrew. "That's what the creatures were for. I'd bought them myself (21).

However, for scholars, such Clare Echterling, Lewis's ideologies regarding the environment were strongly influenced by his position in the world as a British and Christian man and, ultimately, portrayed the care of the environment with such biases:

Lewis believed humans should venerate, cultivate, and protect nature as God's creation and because he bestowed us with the responsibility to hold dominion over it until we are freed from the material world into heaven. Clearly, Narnia, the alternative world portrayed in the series, is 'built on the same account of human superiority and responsible stewardship model depicted in Genesis' (Carretero-González 97). In fact, Carretero-González argues that Lewis fully adhered to the 'dogma that humans had been appointed by God to be the center of the universe' and that, as such, had the right to name and control every other aspect of it, including all nonhuman animals and geographical locations, and this implies a patronizing responsibility to, and patience with, those who are 'lesser' than humans (4-5).

Hence the way animals are treated with a respect comparable to the one reserved for children in *The Chronicles of Narnia.* They are seen as worthy of protection, because they are part of the responsibility of the Christian man in this world, not because they are an equally important part of the ecosystem with their own rights to exist free from man's interference.

Although Lewis's books depict Narnia as an idyllic land, in which man and Nature live in relative harmony, and despite the story's didactic tone, many implicit ideologies denounce a very anthropocentric attitude towards nature:

> Those who adhere to Christian standards are entitled to the land and the lesser subjects who reside on it, so long as the hero of the stewardship model remains humble, patient, and abides by an imperially inflected understanding of Christian environmental stewardship. The pastoral qualities allow these messages to masquerade as universal. Through his pastoral children's stories, Lewis implies that the only rightful environmental stewards are those sons of Adam and daughters of Eve who seek to find God through nature, serve him, and ultimately transcend the material world for heaven (Echterling 37-38).

Therefore, despite *The Magician's Nephew* criticism of the modern treatment of Nature in a post-industrialization world, one must look for the internalized values that are perpetuated by the author.

In this sense, another prominent theme in the book, which seems harmless at first, is the reiteration of a nostalgia for pastoral England. For Don. D. Elgin, this issue presents a dangerous trap for environmental progress since there are many authors who believe the widespread employment of agriculture is one of the fundamental causes for the environmental crisis. In King Frank's coronation, in order to assert the man could rule Narnia according to Aslan's values, the Lion asks, among other things: "can you use a spade and a plow and raise food out of the earth?" (82). Therefore, in one of the most consequential moments in the establishment of Narnia's society, it is possible to observe that, perhaps because the book conveys London's industrialization as a negative thing, there is a strong sense of nostalgia for England's pastoral past. Even though the lands of Narnia invite a much more conservationist outlook than a 1950s city, Elgin alerts to the dangers of romanticizing

the pastoral lifestyle, since "Rene Dubos, Paul Shepard, and Bateson, among others, argue that the movement from a hunter-gatherer culture to an agricultural one had had more effect on the ecological crisis than any other single historical or cultural event" (6).

For Dubos, for example, "[t]he primitive hunter necessarily so himself as part of his natural surroundings and usually placed the community decision above his own self-interest. In contrast, the primitive farmer functioned in an environment which he manipulated; his lifestyle put a premium on competition, savings, and ownership, class structures and hierarchies" (qtd. in Elgin 6). On the other hand, Shepard argues that the triumph of agriculture could only be considered a success if one believed the exponential increase of human population is also a positive thing. He goes as far as to argue that the expansion of agricultural civilizations is responsible for the "biocide" of wild species and that the solution for our crisis would be a "rejection of the myths of agriculture, particularly of pastoralism" (6). As for Bateson, from a biological standpoint, he notices that "hunter- gatherers took clues from nature and applied them in a metaphoric way" (7). Though these writers do not deny the impact of the West's adherence to Christianity as a religion and industrialization as the path to progress, they defend that it was this pivotal shift from hunter-gatherer to agriculture that started the chain reaction, which has led to the current environmental catastrophe.

In conclusion, as illustrated by an in-depth analysis of the ways in which Nature is portrayed in *The Magician's Nephew*, mythopoeic fantasies can reveal much about environmental attitudes and harmful tendencies implicit in our cultural production. The Secondary World of Narnia showcases how the use of mythological and religious language has helped cultivate an anthropocentric tradition both for society's order and later Fantastic representations. Nonetheless, it becomes increasingly clear that it is in this same realm that we must reassess our dynamics with the environment. Furthermore, through the comparison between the worlds within Lewis's work, and especially through a comparison with our

experienced reality, it is possible to see that *The Chronicles of Narnia* are, in fact, images of the many ways we interact with the world around us and how the values preserved, almost unchallenged, by the West have been leading us towards a path of self-destruction.

3. The Last Battle: Night Falls on Narnia

While *The Magician's Nephew* depicted the cosmogony of Narnia, *The Last Battle* closes the saga with an eschatological tale. The seventh and last book of C. S. Lewis's saga begins with an allusion to the famous Aesop's fable "The Ass in the Lion's Skin"[26]. When Shift, the ape, finds a lion skin floating on a river, he is able to convince Puzzle, the donkey, to put it on and impersonate Aslan. Through Shift's machinations, many Narnians are convinced the donkey is the real god-lion and, thus, accept Shift's orders to cut down trees for lumber. The neighboring nation of Calormen eventually joins forces with the ape in the hopes of profiting.

In order to keep suspicions at bay, the deceivers keep Puzzle in a stable and claim he is "Taslan", the combination of Aslan and the violent Calormen god, Tash. At the first signs of questioning, the non-believers are sent to the stable, where a soldier murders them so Shift can claim they have been taken by Tashlan as a sacrifice. Meanwhile, Tirian, the rightful King of Narnia and direct descendent of Caspian, discovers something is afoot upon hearing the cries of a dryad who claims the sentient trees of Narnia had been destroyed. With the centaurs' warning and with the unicorn Jewel's company, Tirian sets out to confront the wrong-doers. However, he ends up killing a couple of Calormen warriors in a fit of rage and

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[26] Although there are variants of this famous fable, according to the Perry Index, the most similar version to the one assimilated into Lewis's story ,"The Fox, the Donkey, and the Lion Skin" (Perry 188), in Laura Gibbs translation. It tells the story of a donkey who "put on the skin of a lion and went around frightening all the animals. The donkey saw a fox and tried to frighten her too, but she had heard his voice first" (228). According to the translation, the moral is that "there are certain ignorant people whose outward affectations give them an air of importance, but their true identity comes out as soon as they open their big mouths" (228).

decides to turn himself over to Aslan's judgment: "I who was King of Narnia and am now a dishonored knight give myself up to the justice of Aslan. Bring me before him" (682).

Shift then sees an opportunity to imprison the one person who could dismantle his farce and orders the soldiers to tie up Tirian to a tree to await his turn as a sacrifice to Tashlan. It is only then that the King becomes certain that Aslan has no part in those schemes and prays for the real Lion to send him some sort of aid:

> "Oh Aslan, Aslan," he whispered. "If you will not come yourself, at least send me the helpers from beyond the world. Or let me call them. Let my voice carry beyond the world." Then, hardly knowing that he was doing it, he suddenly cried out in a great voice: "Children! Children! Friends of Narnia! Quick. Come to me. Across the worlds I call you; I, Tirian, King of Narnia, Lord of Cair Paravel, and Emperor of the Lone Islands!" (691).

In that moment, Tirian sees a glimpse of "the friends of Narnia", the humans who had helped Narnia, just before Jill Pole and Eustaque Scrubb arrive to assist him.

After rescuing Tirian, the group discovers that the actions of Shift had inadvertently summoned the real Tash and that the army Tirian had tried to raise had been defeated by the Calormen in Cair Paravel. They try to expose the truth to the rest of the Narnians gathered around the stables, but a widespread conflict with the Calormens resulted in many being sacrificed to Tash. In the heat of the fight, the soldiers were able to draw Tirian close to the Stable doors to kill him, but as a last effort the king pulled in Calormen's captain, Tarkaan, with himself.

Inside those doors, Tash himself was waiting for Tirian and Tarkaan. After capturing the Captain who had been partly responsible for his summoning, Tash is driven away by the old Kings and Queens of Narnia. All the previous "friends of Narnia", Peter, Edmund, Lucy,

Jill, Eustace, Polly and Diggory, as well as Tirian and the dwarves who had been thrown into the stables with him, were surrounded by a beautiful green land. They eventually come to the realization that everyone who had been killed in the war had arrived at that place, but those who were not faithful to Aslan could only see darkness, instead of a paradise.

The god-lion then arrives and, through the doorway they had crossed, shows them the darkness that had befallen Narnia. He awakens Father Time and calls down the stars from the sky. Great lizards and dragons destroy the trees and the ocean rises to swallow the earth. Time stretches his hand and crushes the Sun, putting a definite end to Narnia. Although the group was sad for Narnia's doom, they soon learn the paradise-like place they had arrived in was, in fact, a truer and purer version of that world.

As this brief summary of the seventh book is able to show, *The Last Battle* has strong religious and apocalyptic motifs. It emphasizes Eliade's assumption that mythological narratives tend to reinforce cyclic patterns of beginnings and endings. Moreover, Lewis's affinity for biblical analogies encourages the reader to seek parallels with the "Book of Revelation"*,* in which a series of prophetic visions culminate in the second coming of Christ. Not only is *The Last Battle* a prime example of the effects of Christianity in Fantastic thought, but it also reveals an even longer and more ancient tradition of apocalyptic narratives in the history of Literature.

Through an investigation of the Narnia apocalypse, it shall be possible to study the cultural heritage of this type of narrative; how it relates to the Fantastic tradition; and, more importantly, how it impacts environmental discourse. As it will be further illustrated, Narnia's doom was a result of the erosion of cultural values and the irreversible annihilation of Nature. The end starts with deforestation and the process parallels many of the current issues in society, such as imperialism and industrialization, for example. In the symbolic actions of Aslan, during the last moments of Narnia, we see recurrent motifs in apocalyptic literature

and in the environmental apocalypse rhetoric. The destruction of forests and the rise of the sea, for example, can be meaningfully compared to mass extinction events. In this sense, whether it is in the figurative language of literature, myth and religion or in the objective discourse of science, the downfall of Nature is represented as the very ruin of humans and the world itself.

3.1 A Tradition of Eschatology

The word "eschatology", derived from the Greek word "eschatos", meaning "last", is a complex concept. Being "the study of the final end of things, the ultimate resolution of the entire creation" (Walls 23), it represents, then, a temporal, theological and philosophical issue. According to Eliade, however, myths concerning the End were part of primitive societies' notion of cyclical time and eternal renewal. Cataclysmic events, like widespread fires and floods which could wipe out the world, did not represent a definite end. On the contrary, they reinforced the primordial myth in which Chaos was promptly followed by Creation. The death and rebirth of life was not necessarily some future event to fear, but a pattern of life, which had likely already happened in their mythic past [27].

The idea of such a deeply transformative rupture would in fact clash with the view of a static world which most, if not all, ancient societies cultivated. As Norman Cohn explains in "How Time Acquired a Consummation":

> Much as they differed on other matters, Egyptians, Sumerians, Babylonians, Indo-Iranians and the rest were all agreed that the world had been established and set in order by the gods, and was still watched over by the gods, and would always remain more or less as it now was. Not that the ordered world was undisturbed. There were chaotic forces, restless and threatening: every

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[27] See "Eschatology and Cosmogony" In: *Myth and Reality* by Mircea Eliade.

ancient world-view showed an awareness of the instability of things. Nevertheless, though it was constantly threatened, the ordered world would never be either destroyed or transformed (21).

Thus, the everlasting battles of Supernatural Beings against their antagonistic forces were precisely what allowed the continuation of life and not the other way around.

The major posterior revolution in eschatology was made possible by a prophet called Zoroaster, who is regarded as "the first person to break out of this static view of the world and to tell of a coming consummation, when the present, imperfect, unstable world will be replaced by a new, perfect and unthreatened world" (Cohn 21). It is speculated that he lived around 1400 and 1000 BCE, in a mostly pastoral region of modern Iran. The influence of his ideas cannot be overstated, neither for the general history of eschatology, nor for the posterior Judeo-Christian apocalyptic vision.

Inaugurated by this Iranian prophet, a new conception of Time emerged, in which God would finally defeat Evil once and for all and actualize a perfect existence. This key promise, which eventually became a pillar for many modern religions, like Judaism, Islam and Christianity, also granted an unprecedented kind of power to a sole God. "It was Zoroaster who gave him [Ahura Mazda] a position more exalted than any deity in the ancient world had ever occupied. For Zoroaster proclaimed that in the beginning Ahura Mazda, the wholly wise, just and good, had been the one and only divine being" (Cohn 24). In opposition to the benevolent power of Ahura Mazda, Zoroaster's ideas advanced the figure of Angra Mainyu, the spirit of destruction who embodied evil, thus initiating a sense of dualism that has endured to present days.

Another relevant aspect of Zoroastrian's novelty was human protagonism. While other cultures understood the world to be more or less stable, believers of that new religion had an active role in "preparing the way for that final consummation" (Cohn 28). Therefore,

certain principles and behaviors were expected to be performed in expectation for the consummation of Time, which by then would have no longer marched in circles, but straight ahead towards its own end. According to the prophet, a great transformation would ensure a perfect existence after the Final Judgment:

> [T]he righteous will be not only saved but transformed: their bodies will become not only immortal but eternally young… [T]he order intended by the supreme god will prevail against everything that would negate it. Asha will triumph totally over *druj*[28], and Angra Mainyu will be destroyed. The very appearance of the world will change. The earth will be flattened by the fiery flood, so that its surface will be a single level plain: the snow-covered mountains of Iran - first thrown up by Angra Mainyu - will be no more. In this perfect environment the surviving human beings will live in the most perfect harmony with one another. Husbands and wives and children, including of course the resurrected dead, will be reunited and will live together as they do in this present world…(Cohn 29).

The similarities between this early millenarian[29] tradition and other apocalyptic depictions, like those in *The Last Battle,* are no coincidence. Brawley explains that Lewis's last book in the Narnian saga is "a carefully constructed apocalyptic vision based on the "Book of Revelation" (79), in which the author "employs his own mythopoeic constructions of such

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[28] "[A] principle that was the very negation of *asha* - a principle of falsehood or distortion, a force of disorder, incessantly at work in the world. They called it *druj*, meaning 'falseness', 'the Lie'" (Cohn 28).

[29] "Millennialism, also called millenarianism, is the hope that this imperfect world will pass away and that a new, perfect world will replace it…The word "millennium" comes from Rev. 20:1–21:5. The passage says that after Satan is bound, those beheaded will reign on earth with Christ for a thousand years (chilia etē). In the Latin translation of the Bible, that becomes mille annis. The Latin word for "thousand" is mille and for "year," annos. From that comes the noun "millennium," which means "a thousand years." And from that we derive "millenarianism" and "millennialism," which refer to literal belief in the thousand-year reign of Christ envisioned in Rev. 20" (Murphy 23).

themes as false prophets, final judgment, the destruction of the world, and the creation of a paradisal new world" (79).

Nonetheless, an issue remains: how did ancient eschatological perspectives morphed into the apocalyptic ideas observed in Christianity and, later, in Lewis's works? As Cohn suggests in his essay, it is very likely that Zoroaster's eschatological vision stemmed from real-life tensions. While the pastoral society the prophet had known to be the norm for centuries had no weapons systems, a new social configuration arose in conflict with the former, which was basically "being replaced by a society of a new kind - more warlike and better equipped for war" (26). Likewise, according to Frederick J. Murphy, the emergence of Jewish apocalyptic narratives also paralleled Israel's own struggles:

> The earliest extant Jewish apocalypses are two sections of 1 Enoch—the Book
> of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1–36) and the Astronomical Book (1 Enoch 72–82),
> both written sometime in the third century BCE, shortly after the imposition
> of Hellenistic imperial rule. The book of Daniel, the only apocalypse in the
> Jewish Bible, was written in the following century (165 BCE). It was written
> in response to the attempts of the Hellenistic king Antiochus IV to impose
> Hellenism and annihilate Judaism (3).

Therefore, both Ahura Mazda's triumph over those who did not abide by his peaceful and pastoral teachings and the apocalyptic passages from the Old Testament represent a search for hope in the turbulent times of their own communities.

Murphy also points out that the "Book of Revelation", the main apocalyptic passage in the Bible's New Testament, represents an attempt to spark some optimism into Christian believers, who at the time were being relentlessly persecuted by the Roman Empire and its imperial cults. For him, "Revelation's author pretends to write about the Babylonians of the sixth century BCE, although the book really was written under and concerns the Romans at

the end of the first century CE" (93). Thus, considering the historical contexts of these writings, John R. Hall's conclusion is a logical one:

> within religion, an apocalyptic text may be something other than an eschatology that describes the final and absolute end of the world. Such texts usually are not about the End, but about the Present Crisis… [T]heologies – and actions – become more centrally apocalyptic when the present historical moment is experienced as the ending of the old order and the passage to a new beginning in a post-apocalyptic era (2).

And it is precisely this aspect that is most relevant for this thesis, because it allows us to investigate the literary text from *The Last Battle* in search for signs of the crisis it implies.

At this point, though, it becomes essential to differentiate eschatological thought and apocalyptic literature. While the former is concerned with the ultimate end of things, apocalypses deal with prophetic revelations regarding a profound transformation. Donald D. Thompson explains it as a "literary genre called apocalypse, from the Greek Apo-calyptein, meaning 'to un-veil'. Apocalyptic literature takes the form of a revelation of the end of history. Violent and grotesque images are juxtaposed with glimpses of a world transformed; the underlying theme is usually a titanic struggle between good and evil" (qtd. in Garrad 94). With this characterization in mind, *The Last Battle* presents many of these themes and motifs, whose employment can unveil cultural and environmental implications for its historical moment.

Hence, considering Narnia's proximity with the New Testament[30], it is only sensible to focus on the apocalyptic narrative created by Lewis. As Brawley argues,

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[30] "Christianity began as an apocalyptic sect within Judaism. When the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE, Judaism redefined itself with the Torah at its core, and apocalyptic beliefs became less important for Jews. Christianity's identity was tied up with apocalypticism, so as it emerged as a religion separate from Judaism, it preserved its apocalyptic foundations and has done so to the present day" (Murphy 4).

The Last Battle fulfills all the characteristics of apocalyptic literature: it provides a narrative framework; it is revelatory in that it reveals an end (the destruction of the old Narnia); it is mediated by an otherworldly being (Aslan) to a human recipient (in this case those who are within the stable); and, it discloses a transcendent reality which is both temporal (the eschatological end of the old Narnia) and spatial (the supernatural world of the new Narnia, which is "more real" than the old). Not only does the text fulfill these generic characteristics of apocalyptic literature, it also has, not coincidentally, close parallels with the biblical text Revelation (82).

Since Lewis's book adopts some of the most essential motifs and aspects of Christian apocalypse, this thesis will attempt to explore some of them, namely the period of tribulation followed by a final battle between good and evil; the coming of an antichrist figure; the final judgment of human beings; cosmical and environmental disaster; a new unseen and paradise-like world; and the employment of apocalyptic language.

3.2 The End of Narnia

First and foremost, as it has been stated before, Narnia's decline begins with a display of deforestation, which is then followed by other harmful events. King Tirian becomes aware something wrong was happening in the land because of a warning by a Dryad:

'Woe for my brothers and sisters! Woe for the holy trees! The woods are laid waste. The axe is loosed against us. We are being felled. Great trees are falling, falling, falling'… 'Justice, Lord King!' she cried. 'Come to our aid. Protect your people. They are felling us in Lantern Waste. Forty great trunks of my brothers and sisters are already on the ground'. 'What, Lady! Felling Lantern Waste? Murdering the talking trees?'(677).

Forests have had different valuation over the centuries, spanning from their mythical origins in ancient times to their current systematic elimination. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that after the fourteen, fifteen and sixteenth century, which Harrison calls the "human age" (92), they have been increasingly crushed by the humanist ideology that "thoroughly divorced the human from the animal species and considered the earth as a whole the former's natural inheritance" (92).

Although wood has been used by humans ever since we have learnt how to make complex tools, forests were decisively subjugated by man's domain after the period of successive transformation that stretched from the Renaissance to sometime after the Industrial Revolution. However, even before that, due to the post-Christian nostalgia[31] that longed for a remote and pure past and the Romantic imagination, which reestablished "symbolic connections to memory, custom, national character, and ageless forms of popular wisdom" (Harrison 182) to forests, the material environmental role of trees has been largely neglected. The destruction of the sacred trees of Narnia illustrates how the death of trees[32] (and wastelands in general) are usually associated with apocalyptic annihilation, while their cultivation is connected to life.

An example of this is the contrast between the Tree of Protection in *The Magician's Nephew* and in *The Last Battle.* In the first book, Aslan tells Narnians: "let it be your first care to guard this Tree, for it is your Shield (99)". The primary function of the tree was to

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[31] If it is true that the Post-Christian era detaches itself from the past, frees itself to some extent from the inertia of tradition, "comes of age" under the auspices of reason, it is also true that it experiences its freedom as a deprivation as well as a gain… The countercurrent of Enlightenment's drive to inherit the future is nostalgia. As the ancestors fall silent in their graves; as the age-old traditions and landscapes of the past recede into vanishing horizons; and as the sense of historical detachment begins to doubt its original optimism-nostalgia becomes an irrevocable emotion of the post-Christian era" (Harrison 155).

[32] It is important to emphasize the book's implicit bias, which marks a difference between the talking trees and non-talking trees, implying that one had more spiritual, and therefore general, value than the other.

keep the Witch away, but it also strongly resembles the Tree of Life from the *Book of Genesis*, in the sense that as long as it was left alone, Adam and Eve could live peacefully in Paradise. In *The Last Battle*, however, the Tree is destructed by the Calormenes: "Right through the middle of that ancient forest—that forest where the trees of gold and of silver had once grown and where a child from our world had once planted the Tree of Protection—a broad lane had already been opened. It was a hideous lane like a raw gash in the land, full of muddy ruts where felled trees had been dragged down to the river" (679). Not only does its felling symbolize the beginning of Narnia's spiritual end, but it also conveys a powerful conservationist message, which reminds us of the consequences of spoiling our own means of survival for the illusion of progress.

Deforestation, however, is not the only twentieth century relevant theme employed by Lewis. The author also describes a Calormen's occupation, in which the foreigners enslave the native Narnians (men and animals alike) and cut down the forests for lumber.

> There was a great crowd of people at work, and a cracking of whips, and horses tugging and straining as they dragged at the logs. The first thing that struck the King and the Unicorn was that about half the people in the crowd were not Talking Beasts but Men. The next thing was that these men were not the fair-haired men of Narnia: they were dark, bearded men from Calormen, that great and cruel country that lies beyond Archenland across the desert to the south. There was no reason, of course, why one should not meet a Calormen or two in Narnia—a merchant or an ambassador—for there was peace between Narnia and Calormen in those days. But Tirian could not understand why there were so many of them: nor why they were cutting down a Narnian forest…Up till now Tirian had taken it for granted that the horses which the Calormenes were driving were their own horses; dumb, witless

animals like the horses of our own world. And though he hated to see even a dumb horse overdriven, he was of course thinking more about the murder of the Trees. It had never crossed his mind that anyone would dare to harness one of the free Talking Horses of Narnia, much less to use a whip on it (679-680).

Even though Lewis is clearly critical of Calormen's actions, the book seems to ignore England's own role as a colonizer and as a precursor of the Industrialization process that has allowed Nature to be so thoroughly exploited. Though Lewis affirms his stance on colonialism and slave labor as undoubtedly negative things, the author still presents the Calormen people as the dark-skinned and barbaric stereotype, even when it is Narnia which resembles the values of England, the biggest imperialist nation of that time. As Echterling points out "The Chronicles of Narnia provide subtle, occasional critiques of colonialism and particularly colonial exploitation of nature" (113), nonetheless, the ecological values it portrays are still "consistent with persistent, lingering imperial ideas about nature and environmental stewardship" (113). The point here is not to attack Lewis's personal perspectives on the environmental and social issues of the twentieth century, but rather point out how certain biases were implicitly entrenched in the dominant culture of the West.

Furthermore, the book also fails to address its blatantly racist ideology. According to Clare Echterlin, "[d]espite the critiques of racism and colonialism Lewis extended in his writing, *The Chronicles of Narnia* ultimately present a parochial environmental vision grounded in imperial ideologies and Christian theology" (93). By dividing Narnians and foreigners between "fair-skinned" and "dark-skinned" and implying a hierarchy of morals amongst them, Lewis neglects Britain's own imperial culture. He paints a simplistic dualism that is only reinforced by the apocalyptic language he adopts.

The Last Battle follows a similar biblical model of opposition between Good and Evil. In the context of an apocalyptic narrative, "dualism" means there is only one fair God, whom

believers should obey; and his devilish antagonist, whose supporters will be eventually condemned (Murphy 9). In the book, this cosmic conflict is represented by the opposition between Aslan and Tash, in addition to the fight between believers and non-believers, which results in the Final Judgment and the restoration of Paradise. However, as it is the case for all apocalyptic texts, the narrative conveys "the extreme moral dualism that divides the world sharply into friend and enemy; the emphasis upon the 'unveiling' of trans-historical truth and the corresponding role of believers as the ones to whom, and for whom, the veil of history is rent" (Garrard 94). In this sense, considering the negative biases that have been exposed within Lewis's text, it is only logical that they would also be translated into the apocalyptic vision he created.

In the final moments of Narnia, the faithful servants of Aslan are deemed worthy of eternal salvation, while the Calormen, who mostly followed Tash, did not have the same privilege. The stable doors, where Puzzle impersonated Aslan and the Calomane army slayed questioning Narnians, functions as a tool for the Final Judgment and for the revelation of the character's divine fate: "He closed the door behind him. Only a few moments passed—but it seemed longer—before the door opened again. A figure in Calormen armor reeled out, fell on its back, and lay still: the door closed behind it (729). In contrast, when Tirian walked in, for example, he was led to Paradise: "he would have thought if he had time to think at all—that they were inside a little thatched stable, about twelve feet long and six feet wide. In reality they stood on grass, the deep blue sky was overhead, and the air which blew gently on their faces was that of a day in early summer" (742). In summary, Lewis's version of the Final Judgment divides "the world neatly into the saved, who are almost entirely white, and the damned, who are primarily black" (Echterling 111), revealing his own internal biases.

Moreover, Shift, the trickster ape who embodies the opposite principles of Aslan, plays the role of an Antichrist[33] figure. Not only does he rebel against the "real God", but he actively usurps authority and destroys the original order of Aslan's creations. Although there is room to argue who exactly Shift parallels in the Bible[34], the most important inference is that "Shift symbolically represents the forces of chaos and sterility which, both in *The Last Battle* and in the "Book of Revelation", are equated with evil. In a similar manner, the nature of the evil act is specifically directed at environmental destruction" (Brawley 83). Even so, there are scholars who point out that portraying the antagonist as an ape "relies on and rehearses insidious racist, imperial ideas about the 'nature' of black people that encourage the reader to easily understand that Shift is a villain" (Echterling 110). The idea of Shift being represented as an ape for racist reasons is by no means incoherent, but perhaps incomplete.

Shift is an animal who wants to have power without social responsibility in an overt satirical representation of modern human beings. He states: "I'm a Man: you're only a fat, stupid old Bear. What do you know about freedom? You think freedom means doing what you like. Well, you're wrong. That isn't true freedom. True freedom means doing what I tell you" (684). By dressing in certain clothes and placing himself above the rest of the animals and plants, he establishes a new social order, in which all resources and labor are for the benefit of his own vision of an evolved country. "We'll be able, with the money you earn, to

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[33] According to Brawley, "[o]ne of the signs of the apocalypse in the book of Revelation is the coming of false prophets. In chapter twelve of Revelation, there appears a great Dragon who is revealed as Satan or the Devil. In this chapter, the Dragon attempts to destroy a child waiting to be born of the Heavenly Mother. After a failed attempt, the child is rescued by God, and a battle ensues whereby Michael defeats the Dragon and throws him down to the surface of the earth. Revelation 12:17 states that after the Dragon reached earth, it 'went to make war on the rest of her children.' According to Adela Collins, this Dragon represents the negative force in the world which opposes justice and order; it is the primal sea monster which is the embodiment of chaos itself, and it is continually threatening the rule of the divine king" (82).

[34] Brawley himself refers to him as "the apocalyptic equivalent to Satan" (84) and "the power of both beasts in Revelation, but is particularly close to the beast of the earth who, in Revelation 13:14, "deceives the inhabitants of the earth" and forces them to worship an image of the first beast" (84).

make Narnia a country worth living in. There'll be oranges and bananas pouring in—and roads and big cities and schools and offices and whips and muzzles and saddles and cages and kennels and prisons"(685). Essentially, Shift's values (and the order he wants to implement) are the same as those of a twentieth century industrialized nation.

The seemingly contradictory arguments above, which cannot reach a clear conclusion on whether Lewis's implicit ideas about Nature are ultimately negative or positive, only reinforce the point of this thesis: the advancement of an environmental agenda can and often do coexist with discriminatory rhetoric, which is why the study of the implied values within a literary work must be so careful. This is more easily observed in the characterization of the Narnian paradise. When Professor Diggory arrives in the Narnian version of paradise, he concludes:

> But that was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia which has always been here and always will be here: just as our own world, England and all, is only a shadow or copy of something in Aslan's real world. You need not mourn over Narnia, Lucy. All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream (759).

Thus, not only does *The Last Battle* adheres to the Christian apocalypse discourse, in which the world is supposed to suffer a profound transformation when the Last Judgment arrives, but it also demonstrates how Lewis's example of Paradise echoes England's particular values. According to Echterling's studies on the subject, in Narnia, "heaven is a reflection of the imperial-environmental imagination unfolded throughout the series: Edenic and pastoral, perfectly ordered, and free of the nonbelievers who are by and large non-white" (111). At the

same time ecologic harmony is equated to a world transformed for the better, it also places Lewis's personal views as the ideal of Nature and religion.

One last relevant aspect of apocalyptic literature that is portrayed in *The last Battle* is cosmic destruction. Similarly to ancient narratives, which employed the imagery of great floods and fires, Narnia's eschatology also utilizes the motif of environmental destruction to portray the ultimate end of things. Inspired by the "Book of Revelation"[35], the author writes about a "downpour of stars" (750), which leaves the skies empty, and about beasts that consume the landscapes of the world:

> The Dragons and Giant Lizards now had Narnia to themselves. They went to and fro tearing up the trees by the roots and crunching them up as if they were sticks of rhubarb. Minute by minute the forests disappeared. The whole country became bare and you could see all sorts of things about its shape—all the little humps and hollows—which you had never noticed before. The grass died. Soon Tirian found that he was looking at a world of bare rock and earth. You could hardly believe that anything had ever lived there. The monsters themselves grew old and lay down and died (752).

As Brawley argues, "[t]he two beasts in chapter thirteen of Revelation… are both Anti-Christ figures and are further echoes of the threat of chaos and sterility towards the order of the world" (83). In a similar fashion, *The Last Battle* maintains this same symbolism of Nature's annihilation as the ultimate death.

Moreover, the author describes how all living animals rushed forward towards the Doorway into True Narnia and, by looking into Aslan's eyes, they were granted salvation or disappeared forever. Afterwards, the seas rise and engulf Narnia whole:

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[35] "Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads. Its tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth" (NIV Bible, Rev 12.3-4).

The sea was rising. In that tree-less world you could see it very well. You could see all the rivers getting wider and the lakes getting larger, and separate lakes joining into one, and valleys turning into new lakes, and hills turning into islands, and then those islands vanishing. And the high moors to their left and the higher mountains to their right crumbled and slipped down with a roar and a splash into the mounting water; and the water came swirling up to the very threshold of the Doorway (752).

According to Eliade's *Myth and Reality*, "if we examine the myths that announce the impending Flood, we find that one of its chief causes is the sins of mankind together with the decrepitude of the World. The Flood opened the way at once to a re-creation of the World and to a regeneration of humanity" (55). Therefore, though the significance of the Narnian flood in Narnia follows this tradition and symbolizes the cleansing of evil, modern readers should also be able to see the resemblance with our current environmental crisis.

For this reason, if we consider the many crises of the twentieth century, which have endured into the twenty-first century as well, and how all of them are reflected in the way humans imagine and interact with the environment, *The Last Battle* can become a prime example of apocalyptic rhetoric applied to environmental discourse. It illustrates how apocalyptic vision has extrapolated the religious sphere and has been infiltrated by modern issues such as enslavement, colonialism, industrialization, large-scale war and deforestation. The "Final Judgment" is no longer a mere carrying out of divine justice, but a consequence of the systematic exploitation of Nature.

3.3 Apocalyptic Metaphors in Environmental Discourse

According to Murphy, apocalyptic language "draws heavily on mythology; [it] is both literal and metaphorical; has allegorical features and concrete referents; evokes deep

emotions; brings the reader into an unseen world; and relates to social groups and movements" (13). Similarly to mythopoeic fantasies, like *The Last Battle*, the language employed in apocalyptic stories grants them the ability to roam between the literal and the figurative, because they relate to "real places, creatures, and events, but not always in a simple one-to-one, referential way"(12). Without the ambition to portray the world accurately, but incapable of fully escaping reality, stories such as *The Chronicles of Narnia*, do not confine themselves to the illusion of mimesis. They invite the reader into the world of mythological and apocalyptic thought, in which they are able to assimilate authentic emotions, threats and ideologies through symbolic discourse.

In *Apocalypse: from Antiquity to the Empire of Modernity*, John R. Halls argues that apocalyptic visions are usually connected to some sort of rupture in society. For him, they

> mark a collective crisis so striking that it undermines normal perceptions of reality for those involved, thereby leading people to act in unprecedented ways, outside their everyday routines. Sociologically, then, the time of the apocalypse encompasses more than the religious end time of God's final judgment, or some absolute and final battle of Armageddon. Rather than the actual end of the world, the apocalypse is typically 'the end of the world as we know it,' an extreme social and cultural disjuncture in which dramatic events reshape the relations of many individuals at once to history (Hall 3).

Thus, the rise of any apocalyptic story is an indicator of the present. It expresses how people imagine the collective future and, to some extent, dictate how society deals with its current threats.

In the case of The *Last Battle,* this can be illustrated by a thorough analysis of its historical framework. Although Narnia's apocalypse is purely fictional and not a community's actual eschatological vision, it also presupposes a social crisis. Traces of the

effects of World Wars I and II can be seen in the way Lewis seems to glorify the act of war when fought for a nation's values, which is marked in the book by the stark opposition between Good versus Evil, the Christian-like, civilized Narnians versus the barbaric outsiders of Calormen. Not only does "the last battle" represent an ideological conflict (in opposition to a territorial one, for example), but it also indicates a moment of rupture. Just like Narnia came to an end, preventing its inhabitants from returning to their normal lives after the battle was over, so did the world as people knew it before World War I. If an apocalypse is a transformative event that leads to the destruction of the old order and inaugurates a new structure, then no modern event was so apocalyptic as the Great Wars of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, the social and economic changes caused by the consolidation of imperial and industrial efforts can also be identified in text, by the recurrence of these issues in the fictional narrative[36]. Even though Lewis presents strong reproaches against the processes of colonization and industrialization of Narnia, the manner in which they are portrayed also demonstrates a relevant point for this period: the imbalance between power and self-criticism, which allowed nations like England to reshape the fabric of society. By transiting between literal connections with its time and the symbolic use of mythological and apocalyptic language, *The Last Battle* paints a complex and faithful picture of the way Nature was perceived in the western world: sacred enough to inspire nostalgia, but exceptionally valuable to be exempt from human beings' cultural and material domain.

Historically speaking, the same tide that has gradually shifted society's symbolic interpretations of reality to more scientific views of ourselves and our environment has also informed apocalyptic narratives. While eschatological thought was transformed from cyclical

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[36] A few examples of these issues in *The Chronicles of Narnia* are Uncle Andrew's desire to exploit Narnia in *The Magician's Nephew* and the Calormen occupation, which happen respectively in *Prince Caspian* and again in *The Last Battle*.

to linear with the advancement of monotheistic religions, representations of the end of the world also changed from violent ruptures into a perfect existence to the current notion of global warming causing mass extinction: "[i]n our own time the apocalyptic end is primarily a natural one, or one predicted or explicable by science, and is defined simply as a catastrophe or violent destruction" (Shaffer 139). According to scholars, such as Greg Garrard, "[e]schatological themes and language in fact escaped the discipline of theology long before the twentieth century...Wordsworth, Percy Shelley (1792–1822) and William Blake (1757–1827) appropriated apocalyptic rhetoric for secular, often politically revolutionary aims, as did modernists of the early twentieth century… (97). Even so, it is safe to say that "[a]pocalypticism is a recurrent mythic narrative that has been employed by successive generations to create symbolic meanings about their experience of the world and their place in it (McNish 7). Even its secular and more recent form, which has largely abandoned religious undertones and opted for a scientific view of the current environmental crisis, has the power to express present tensions and shape collective assumptions.

Thus, although ecology was not Lewis's primary concern when writing *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the potential of apocalyptic rhetoric in mythopoeic stories was not lost on him. The Irish author recognized "that every historical era has operated under some concept of myth" (Elgin 61) and that the modern one was "divorced completely from its original source" (Elgin61). Therefore, *The Last Battle* can be seen as an estranged image of a familiar narrative and an attempt to override the "inorganic, lifeless and mechanistic" (Elgin 61) approach of the twentieth century or, in other words, a downright rejection of most modern ideals. Stories like Narnia's become relevant in this context then, not because they solve the problems they present, but because they open our implicit ideologies to debate. According to Wallace McNish,

> [c]ontemporary society is wracked by an unending sense of crisis – economic, political, social, medical, moral and environmental – which is circulated via global media, and reinforced by cultural products that speculate endlessly about the end of the world. Moreover, fundamentalist strains of religion with developed apocalyptic narratives, and populist political movements that employ apocalyptic rhetoric, have gained significant ground across the globe…The horrors of 20th century history, from the two World Wars, the gulags and the Holocaust, through nuclear warfare and the failure of communism, coupled with seemingly intractable crises, mean that dystopia has replaced utopia as the dominant mode of speculative cultural imagination (1043).

In this sense, mythopoeic fantasies that deal with apocalyptic rhetoric can revitalize this type of narrative and instill a sense of urgency, which has been practically unattainable in the last couple of centuries.

If we combine Lawrence Buell's argument from *The Environmental Imagination*, which states that "[a]pocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal" (285), and Wallace McNish's claim that "apocalyptic discourse is a major mediating frame through which publics have come to engage with the issue of climate change" (3), one can affirm that literary works dealing with this subject matter have a lot to contribute to the environmental discourse. In fact, McNish argues that "the original meaning of apocalypse as revelation needs to be reclaimed and fused with radical green critiques of the Present Ecological Crisis which offer inspirational utopian narratives, if the popular meaning of apocalypse as the end of human civilisation is to be avoided both in figurative and literal terms" (5). In other words, society needs to reassess its apocalyptic narratives in order to break free from its inertia and be able

to imagine a sustainable path into the future. Although the current environmental crisis needs concrete action in order to be solved or at least mitigated, Lawrence Buell reminds us that the path to sustainability is also a project of imagination, "for the rhetoric of apocalypticism implies that the fate of the world hinges on the arousal of the imagination to a sense of crisis" (285). An example of literature's strength in this context is Carson's *Silent Spring*, which was able to captain a whole interdisciplinary movement that continues to bear positive fruits to this day, namely Environmentalism[37].

Nonetheless, there are some who believe the employment of apocalyptic rhetoric, even in its most secular form, can bring a sense of doomed pessimism instead of urgent action. For Ecocritic Grega Garrad, "[e]schatological narrative, then, brings with it philosophical and political problems that seriously compromise its usefulness, especially in its radical, tragic form. It tends to polarise responses, prodding skeptics towards scoffing dismissal and potentially inciting believers to confrontation and even violence, a pattern familiar from conflicts between liberal society and apocalyptic cults" (114). Still the potential of apocalyptic rhetoric cannot be neglected. Like mythopoeic fantasies, it can hijack symbols and myths to create meanings, which has very real consequences in the world.

Conclusion

As it has been pointed out during the course of this thesis, most (if not all) supernatural manifestations in Literature have originated from a combination of symbolic language and people's perception of their environments. Ancient myths, religious beliefs and Modern Fantasy - however different they may be - all corroborate Kathryn Hume's argument*,*

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[37] "It is generally agreed that modern environmentalism begins with 'A Fable for Tomorrow', in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962)...the founding text of modern environmentalism not only begins with a decidedly poetic parable, but also relies on the literary genres of pastoral and apocalypse, pre-existing ways of imagining the place of humans in nature that may be traced back to such sources as Genesis and Revelation, the first and last books of the Bible" (Garrard 1-2).

which states that both mimetic and non-mimetic impulses are prevalent and valid manifestations of human creativity. Fantasy, as well as Realism, is a way to articulate the material reality of Nature, since "all our vaunted cultural constructions are, in a sense, natural constructions" (Garrard 11). As myths have shaped a community's identity, social order and dynamic with their environment, so do the way we currently portray Nature. For this reason, it is important that literary critics acknowledge the relevance of mythological expression for culture and, consequently, the importance of symbolism in humanity's relationship with Nature.

In this sense, mythopoetic fantasies, such as *The Chronicles of Narnia,* remind secular society that the function of symbolic language is to articulate reality, not escape it. Despite allegations that non-mimetic narratives are completely ahistorical, what their traditions show is the exact opposite. From the earliest instances, they have helped shape rationality and formulate the distinction between what is natural and, by consequence, supernatural. Fantasy as a genre, being a direct descendent from myth, is thus rooted in humanity's dynamic with Nature and, therefore, can unveil implicit or unchallenged attitudes towards the environment - especially when paired with apocalyptic motifs.

Moreover, by analyzing the background of Modern Fantasy and the context in which *The Chronicles of Narnia* was written, we can see that they can showcase just how much historical changes are reflected in Fantastic productions. *The Magician's Nephew*, for example, is able to illustrate how the great transformations of the last centuries, which have led to the secularization of Western's society, have affected cultural representations of the environment. While traditional cosmogonic myths were inserted in a cyclical notion of time and Nature, C. S. Lewis creates Narnia upon the basis of Judeo-Christianity's conception of history as a linear and finite endeavor, indicating from the very beginning the story's historical placement. Because of the issues that are approached in the first volume of the

series and the way in which England, Narnia and Charn are portrayed, it is also possible to see the author's perspective on his time. Considering *The Magician's Nephew* release date, in the late 1950s, it comes as no surprise that themes related to warfare, annihilation dread, industrialization, scientific knowledge, pastoral nostalgia and Christian dogmas are so recurrent in the narrative.

Furthermore, Narnia's cosmogony, especially when compared to the "Book of Genesis", which represents one of the major paradigms of modern western values, asserts the power of mythological formulations in regard to social and environmental values. The contrast between the past, the present and the future of England, Narnia and Charn illustrates how Secondary Worlds can function as a type of distorting mirror. They present an image of society and of Nature that is both familiar and distorted at the same time, in a balance so precise as to allow the readers to intimately relate and freshly critique what is being shown to them. It is with this essential characteristic of Mythopoeic Fantasy that *The Chronicles of Narnia* is able to either accept or deny the ideologies of the twentieth century.

In addition, *The Last Battle* reiterates Lewis's commitment to the story of a world instead of a single character. It emphasizes the theme of beginnings and endings, by applying apocalyptic elements to the narrative. Its metaphors, although clearly based on Christianity, reveal a broader environmental anxiety, which cannot be limited purely to theological concerns. The last volume of the Narnian tale uses apocalyptic language to reinterpret the "present crisis" of our world and portray the destruction of Nature, both symbolically and objectively, as the ultimate death. Lewis's eschatology reappraises modern issues, such as anthropocentrism, colonization, racism and deforestation (whether consciously or not), into the traditional motifs of Christian apocalypse, revealing both how the author viewed the issues of his generation and his own implicit biases.

Apocalyptic language, akin to the ones employed in myths and fantasies, can reach an "intensified sense of the present which spurs different types of social, religious or political action depending upon the contents of the apocalyptic revelation" (McNeish 8). These types of stories are both dangerous and potent to talk about the environmental crisis, which was harshly aggravated in the twentieth century and has become virtually unsustainable after the turn of the millennium, because

> [m]yths have a symbiotic relationship with ideologies… ideologies often utilize mythic narratives to explain, challenge or legitimize power, while myths operate as a form of ideology in narrative form (Lincoln 2002). Social movement organizations often employ mythic narratives as forms of rhetoric and propaganda that are used to frame issues in a manner resonant with target publics, and thereby facilitate mobilization. However, as Levitas (1990, p. 82), shows, 'mobilizing myths' are not unproblematic in that their appeals to passion can potentially be fused with any political ideology of left or right (McNeish 7).

Due to the proximity of symbolic narratives and social action, *The Chronicles of Narnia,* and mythopoeic fantasies as a whole, have the potential of addressing the cultural issues which have led to our current ecological problems and produce a revised mythology of society's dynamics with Nature.

The study conducted about *The Last Battle* has thus shown that society has largely migrated to a secular vision of the end, one that encompasses the scientific data regarding melting ice caps that have been raising the level and the temperature of the sea, increasing deforestation areas, biodiversity losses and worrying Carbon Dioxide emissions. Still, symbolic manifestations of this crisis have progressively incorporated socio-ecological

problems within the mythical, religious and Fantastic traditions, indicating the colossal cultural impact of destroying the natural source of meaning.

Nevertheless, it is also in the symbolic formulations of Fantasy that we can deposit some of the hopes of imagining a better relationship with the environment, since stories "can be far more powerful vehicles for shaping how people act than mere facts" (Dickerson and O'Hara 6). Therefore, it is of vital importance that scholars continue to investigate how Fantasy systematically and historically relates to our perception of the environment and how representations of Nature can shape culture and political action and vice-versa. It is important to keep in mind that, due to its popularity and ability to tap into mythological symbolism, Fantasies, especially mythopoeic ones, can be powerful allies in facing the most pressing crisis humanity has ever experienced.

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