

**A Comparative Study of Magical Divulging and Modern Schema in
C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* and
J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings***

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Abstract

There are many worldwide best-selling fantasy novelists are there, among them C.S. Lewis and John Ronald Reuel Tolkien is the most best-selling fantasy novelists in twentieth-century literature. The paper discusses magical divulging and modern schema in two founding fathers of classic fantasy literature structure: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Both authors are responsible for creating some of the most instantly recognizable and influential works in fantasy literature: C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, respectively. Lewis' narrative and magic in *The Chronicles of Narnia* are highly allegorical of Christ's life, death, and rebirth, as represented by Aslan the Lion. Tolkien's link back to the real world was formed in a post-World War wish for nostalgia, back to the times when the world was not ravaged by war and death. His land of Middle-Earth is in transition, as ancient, magical races begin to fade, and a man comes into their own as a world power. While peace is eventually secured, it comes at a high price: the reign of man ensures the death of magic, and the birth of the industry in the wake of war.

Keywords: *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Lord of the Rings*, Magical, Divulging, Fantasy, Allegorical, and Nostalgia.

The fantasy readers are reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Lord of the Rings*, fantasy stories as a child, the authors' ideas of Christ figures and pre-industrial nostalgia did not cross the mind. The special thing of the study is to deal the wonder and the magic of a new world. Tolkien's character of Gandalf let me experience life as a powerful magician, wise and kind, intelligent and magical. Lewis' story brought children from earth to a new world and permeated them with weapons and wisdom, and magic. Trying to understand magic is something that never crossed my mind when I was a child. It was there to provide a Todorovian sense of wonder, creating the uncertainty of which world lived in. It was a way to distance myself from my own world without losing myself completely. Why it is there, how it works, why some can do it and others cannot; these were just window dressings for me. For the study, magic helped create a sense of wonder, and it is what made fantasy literature.

The magic in fantasy literature has taken on a different meaning. Much like Attebery defines fantasy literature in two ways, both existing simultaneously, so too does the magic of Tolkien and Lewis act. On the one hand, they are devices used to enhance the wonder of a fantasy world and story with hobbits and giant lions, walking trees and powerful witches. But on the other, as much as Tolkien and Lewis celebrated the form of the genre talking animals, wizards, dragons they both had agendas, and issues with the real world that found a home in the mode of the genre, through their narratives and magic. Lewis worked to introduce Christianity to children in a way he never had when he was younger, using the form of the genre to work in his allegory. Tolkien worked to illustrate the death of nostalgia and innocence i.e. magic, to a world still reeling from the horrors and warfare of the World Wars.

The first thing we must look at it how their created worlds link to human creation myths, a crucial step in building a world familiar to their audiences. Lewis strictly ties himself to the Christian experience of world creation, just one monotheistic experience. As Wood says, Lewis' stubbornness "leads him to use the Christian myth as a closure on human existence," (Wood p 7). Lewis' world creation is specifically geared towards this idea of the Christian myth antecedent. According to Hartt, "religion is not only looking backward; it is conformity to a predetermined order . . . (had) no capacity for the genuinely new, no real potency; neither can there be any celebration of other stories. Lewis' world is closed off," (Hartt). Lewis, in his *Chronicles of Narnia*, has recycled the story of creation, and of the Bible; as a storyteller, he limits himself, cutting himself off from any sort of new idea or take on his story. His use of the Christian creation myth creates a narrow break and hinders the reader's ability to connect to the story. They are forced to view the story through a specific lens: a Christian viewpoint and that is all. The link from fantasy to reality is solid but it is not a strong narrative choice.

Lewis himself has no problem admitting his purpose in writing the *Chronicles of Narnia*. Lewis felt the form of the fairy tale could "steal past a certain inhibition which had paralyzed much of my own religion in childhood . . . supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could," (Lewis p 132). Utilizing the form of the fantastic, Lewis was able to tailor his story, so that the frame of the form actually softened the impact of the mode, his Christian allegory, rather than intensify it. By embracing the signifiers of the form talking animals, magic, epic battles Lewis was able to weave his Christian allegorical work into his story underneath the form. Magic creates a break in the border between worlds and usually uses a character or device by which the real-world counterpart can be recognized. Lewis' uses the character of Aslan the Lion, whose role within the magical world of Narnia is both creator and saviour. Aslan is such a powerful conduit of the land's magic that even at the mention of his name, there is an effect felt, as the answering of a prayer. At the mention of Aslan, who is nowhere in sight, "each one of the children felt something jumps in its inside," like when a strange word in a dream has, "some enormous meaning either a terrifying one . . . or else a lovely meaning," (Lewis p 74).

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The effect of Aslan's name is indicative of his status within the world. As Kaufmann says, Lewis is showing "that the human heart can recognize all sorts of wonderful things that are somehow present even in their absence. This would be true . . . of high things, of the things above us, supernatural and lordly, kingly, eminent, up and out-of-sight, the implied ideal. Aslan is the king of the beasts . . . a picture of the God who becomes incarnate," (Kaufmann p13). Aslan, as the god incarnate of Narnia, is everywhere and nowhere, and his presence, when written by Lewis, drives home his godly nature. Aslan sings Narnia into being. Invoking Genesis, in the final moments of Narnia's birth, Aslan says, "Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. It is a command given, much like the Christian God, and from then on, the world is alive. From the valley of . . . earth, rock, and water," (Lewis p 119), to the "crumbled earth . . . from each hump there came out an animal," (Lewis p 133), Aslan goes through almost every step of Genesis from the Bible. That is because for Lewis, as Hartt says, "the Christian myth is the key to an antecedent order in the universe . . . all of life is a movement back into this objective basis, an affirmation of order and control," (Hartt). According to Hartt, Lewis felt that all stories must move back to this place of birth, as according to the Christian myth.

The exposing of reality his magic creates is ultimately realized in the death and rebirth of Aslan, in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. Aslan sacrifices himself to save the Pevensie children from the Witch, invoking "a deep magic, according to which one life can be offered for another," (Kauffman p 16). Willingly, he sacrifices himself for man, and so dies. However, after his death, he is reborn in the sunrise. When asked how he survived, Aslan tells the children, "there is a magic deeper still . . . if she could have looked a little further back, into the stillness and the darkness before time dawned . . . she would have known that when a willing victim . . . was killed in the traitor's stead . . . Death itself would start working backward," (Lewis p 178).

Aslan, though he mentions the concept of a deeper magic beyond space and time, is actually fulfilling a sacrifice of himself, to himself. In the same way, Jesus Christ had to die before the gates of Heaven could stand open; Aslan is reborn through his sacrifice. However, it is clear that Lewis is drawing from the Christian myth, and transposing it into his own story, to complete the Christian cycle he has created. Despite being a Christian himself, Tolkien did not evangelize his beliefs through his works. Rather, "Tolkien shared Lewis's conviction that God implanted natural law underlies everything created. . . He wanted his work to stand on its own intrinsic merits, to glorify God as a compelling and convincing story, not for it to be propped up with even so noble a purpose as evangelism." (Wood p 4) Tolkien's world is born of the idea that there are multiple stories, not just one mythos, and each can reveal a different facet of God. This ties into the universal human experience, and already, his narrative is more accessible to others. As Wood states, Tolkien used his world creation, "as an opening up of that (human) existence," (Wood p 5).

Tolkien wanted to tell a story with many possibilities, "in the confidence that a real story is even yet in making within the differentiated being of God," (Hartt). Tolkien was smart to not just

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focus on one mono-myth in the creation of his world and magic, but rather, drew from many different cultures. Tolkien's ideas of nostalgia are the magic that helps expose reality; his magic is born of ancient races and the land itself before it has been torn asunder by war and modern technology. Tolkien though, according to Wood, maintains that because he opted to go for the more well-rounded inspiration of his world, he is able to appeal to, not only more readers but to their sense of story. Tolkien is not forcing his readers to read his story in one angle. He is aware of the broad range of human experiences and moves to embrace that. Magic has a temporal, racial element to it in Tolkien's works. Of the non-human races, elves, and wizards have the most control over magic, being ancient races, of the land. Extremely reminiscent of Earth fairy tales and fairies, those of "Faerie in the West," (Tolkien p 164), were the "Light-elves and the Deep-elves and the Sea-elves," (Tolkien p 164), who "invented their magic and their cunning craft," (Tolkien p 164). These are a people for whom magic is indigenous; it was born with them. They have not lost it, because they do not travel to the "Wide World," (Tolkien p 164), presumably the rest of Middle-Earth as a whole.

Wizards belong to the same cloth as Elves; these peoples both have unique relationships to the earth and the magic therein. Even races that cannot control magic are still bound by its natural laws, as they exist because of magic. When Bilbo and the dwarves are captured by the three trolls in *The Hobbit*, not one of the party bats an eye when coming the dawn, the trolls revert into stone. Because as everyone of this world knows, "trolls . . . must be underground before dawn, or they go back to the stuff of the mountains they are made of," (Tolkien p 52). This magical transformation evokes a cyclical form of nature, much like water will convert to mist and then to rain and over again, there is a natural, magical lifecycle to these beings and this world, reminiscent of our own.

However, the man begins to thrive, the magic begins to die. In *The Lord of the Rings* especially, as Hinlicky says, "The fulcrum of power in Middle Earth is shifting. It is no longer in the moral certainties and magical assurances of ages past. Now it is in the morally ambiguous governance of men, who shortly will take center stage in the unfolding drama of the planet. The Elves leave for the Grey Havens of their own volition, but the hobbits will be marginalized, the dwarves swallowed up by the earth, and even Tom Bombadil will be seen no more," (Hinlicky). Magic is dying as the age of man arrives; the power of the old races, the Rings of Power, the wizards, the elves, all must make way for modernity, in an effort to destroy the evil of Sauron.

Gandalf the Grey, a wizard, plays the same role of Aslan in *The Lord of the Rings*, as he is reminiscent of a classic figure of our reality. Just like how Aslan played the role of Jesus Christ, so too does Gandalf live the role of Merlin, a major player in Arthurian legend. Gandalf, our agent of magic, must choose when and where he performs his magic too, "deflect attention from wizardry in order to emphasize the importance of working through ordinary human means," (Riga p 104). While he often has many companions, he is our primary glimpse into the magic of Middle-Earth. Gandalf seems to be a great purveyor of manipulating and creating light, and flame. He had "made a special study of bewitchments with fire and light," (Tolkien p 100), and in battle, combats others with "bright blue fire," (Tolkien p 107). Also, as shown in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Gandalf can

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manipulate light in the opposite direction; when confronting Bilbo about letting go of the ring “he seemed to grow taller and menacing; his shadow filled the little room,” (Tolkien p 56). Even in the epic battle against the Balrog, Gandalf cracks the bridge between them with, “a blinding sheet of white flame... before falling to his death at which point the fires went out” (Tolkien p 392).

One aspect of Gandalf’s magic that supports his tether to the natural world is the talent in communicating and understanding different animals. He is a known friend to the Great Eagles and converses with them frequently. Even the “dreadful language of the Wargs,” (Tolkien p 105), Gandalf can understand. Despite his talent with fire and light, Gandalf’s magical abilities still lend themselves to creatures of the world too, reinforcing that connection with more than just the elemental, but also the environment. However, all of this is just a study of Gandalf’s magic, not a look into what he does, or rather what he abstains from. Gandalf cannot use his magic as he would. Because, when the magic goes, human beings will be thrown back on their own natural resources. As a teacher of those who have no magical powers, Gandalf demonstrates in word and deed how to overcome the enemy without magic as “To do otherwise would be to teach them what they cannot possibly learn,” (Riga p 104).

In that light, the magic of Tolkien almost comes to represent the price of progress; when faced with the siege engines of Saruman, and the iron and steel of man, what good can magic do? It is tragic that “Gandalf must renounce magical power in order to free the peoples of Middle-earth and to teach them how to develop their own powers,” (Riga p 103). What good is magic than when the machines of tomorrow can accomplish what can be done through magic? Man, the growing power in *The Lord of the Rings*, will not inherit a world of magic, but rather, build one with their own magic: technology. As stated above, industry and technology were growing as *The Lord of the Rings* ran on, and for Tolkien, who, “regarded much of modern technology precisely because it seeks to put nature under its command . . . as a disguised form of magic,” (Wood p 330), this industry would be the new face of magic; no longer working with nature, but commanding it, and utilizing it as one deemed fit. In the same way, Tolkien is using this to comment on the loss of man’s connection to nature, which one could assume is our form of magic in our reality. Even if it is a tad romanticized, Tolkien laments the birth of machines and technology for it is a separation from man’s natural bond to the earth.

Finally, one cannot mention magic in *The Lord of the Rings*, without exploring the One Ring, the great burden that Frodo must carry across Middle-Earth and destroy. The One Ring’s, power will ultimately corrupt the wearer, so that they “become, in the end, invisible permanently, and walks in the twilight under the dark eye of the dark power that rules the Rings,” (Tolkien p 71). The One Ring embodies the magic of control, of imposing one’s will over others, even as the bearer suffers for it. In this, the break in worlds helps exposes the horror of war, and dictatorial regimes. As Attebery says, in his analysis of *The Lord of the Rings*, “Tolkien conceives of the Ring as a tool with one function: mastery” (Attebery p 33). It is not a device made specifically for great evil, but despite the willingness to do good, the corruption of the Ring would infect even those who are pure. As Attebery

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says, “the same taint affects even those characters we take to be the embodiment of good: . . . Elrond, Galadriel, and Gandalf.” (Attebery p 33)

The One Ring and its magic of domination embody the idealism of war itself. While not an exact allegory like Lewis’ work, Tolkien did see action in World War One and witnessed “the destruction of nature, the deadly application of technology, the abuse and corruption of authority, and the triumph of industrialization.” (Ott p 1) War, no matter what side wins, will always result in destruction and death, just as the Ring, no matter who ends up wearing it, will always corrupt, and destroy. With the One Ring, no matter how good one’s intentions, there is no winning, only death.

Tolkien through his magic creates many breaks in the border between worlds, in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. At one moment, magic represents the nostalgia of a bygone time, celebrating the connection between man and nature, as represented by ancient races. And yet at the same time, magic is seen as a dying concept, something that must make way for a new age. And the One Ring especially is a device to represent the horrors of war, and the corruption of power, no matter the wearer. With the end of *The Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf, and the Elves will leave, because they cannot exist in a world without the Rings, without magic, where the industry is blossoming. They cannot sustain themselves in a world of encroaching modernity. Gandalf does his best to train and prepare mankind for a world without them, by using his magic sparingly. When he does use it, it is representative of a time gone by a nostalgic era of natural power from the earth. Fire and light, shadow and earth, magic come from the world. But as the world is reborn, through the industry, it is not reborn with the magic of its better days, making it all the more tragic.

A comparison between the two works does bring to light one interesting observation: in both works, the main purveyor of magic has to die, or rather, sacrifice himself, so that the heroes may live. Just as Aslan has himself die for the Pevnensie children, so too does Gandalf sacrifice himself to the Balrog, so that Frodo and his companions may live, to finish their journey. If there was one commonality between the magic of these two works, it is, despite their differences in agendas, in both worlds, magic is ultimately used to protect, and must be sacrificed so that the heroes may live.

J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis used their fantasy narratives to not only shape great fantastical journeys, complete with the raiment of fantasy as form but also used their narratives to not only expose real world agendas but to also comment on their reality itself. Through the magic of Tolkien, we see that reality has lost its innocence, something that the inhabitant of Middle-Earth was only just experiencing. For Lewis, the reality is a godless place, with the holy, religious figure and the land of Narnia offering salvation for all.

Candle is a story which sits comfortably in the niche of urban fantasy, a branch of fantasy where not one, but two worlds exist: our own and another. This second world is filled with fantastic beings, usually inspired by myth, folklore fairy tales, etc. The inspiration for *Candle*’s secondary world comes from fairy tales, where the people of Earth and the creatures of the Fae meet. *Candle*

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operates in both realms of Attebery's term 'Schrodingeresque' take on fantasy. At one glance, it is the story of a young man, learning about a world-ending crisis, that he must stop through the use of cunning, magic, and courage. And at the same time, it is a piece that examines the struggle for identity, the sins of fathers, the nature of magic, the price one pays for a vision, and the question of violence.

Lewis and Tolkien each offer a perspective on my creative piece. By this analysis alone, it's clear that these authors had a clear intent for their magic. Lewis's magic is a natural extension of his religious figure, while Tolkien's is indicative of the price of tyranny and the price of progress. Each author had a motivation that drew upon real-world images and concerns loss of faith, religious propaganda, post-World War thought thereby solidifying the relationship between their world and the real one.

The magic of *Candle* has a 'Tolkienesque' quality to it. The Fae occupy a realm where the land itself has energy, a constant feedback loop of power between itself and its inhabitants. It is also reminiscent of Tolkien's magic belonging to certain races. Those born in the realm of Faerie, with the blood of a Fae within them, can tap into this feedback loop between fae and earth. However, there arises a problem with this notion, as the very identity of Faerie can be questioned due to its already been written on by numerous authors. Gaiman and Butcher address the same problems of working inreal-world tales. But for now, assume that this realm is Faerie, and if you are fae, you can tap into its latent energies. With this in mind, I have to ask myself: do I have an agenda as Tolkien and Lewis did? Is this magic going to be aware of it? Will the idea of immigration, blood ties, familial allegiance, and other issues be worked into this magic system? Or does the magic simply exist to tell a good story? Do I fall back into the form of the genre rather than the mode?

With these concerns in mind, I would have to say that the magic of *Candle* relies on identity, and how its influence can either strengthen the image of one's own identity or fracture it. John Candle, the titular character, is himself, a bastard. He is half-human/half-fae, and his father left him at birth. Taken in by the Broker, Candle grows up harnessing what latent power his half-breed blood has, but it is not enough. He has the potential for trickery, but because of his half-human blood, he is not able to access the power of Faerie. As you will see in the creative piece, Candle grows to understand the exact nature of Faerie, as the Broker opens a Gate for him, to travel to the Homeland and claim a secret treasure that will unlock his Faerie gifts. As the Gate is opened, he must combat desperate fae on Earth, who wish to go back. In this, Candle learns of the power that magic has the power to not only shape a mind and soul, but also an identity, and how when he gets his first taste of Faerie magic, he feels whole for the first time in his life. The thread of identity may be the key to understanding the magic of *Candle*. This search for identity and the pursuit of self through magic may just be the crux for Candle's character.

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