‘Just Passing Through’: Liminal Space and Re-enchantment in C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*

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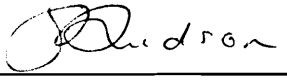
This thesis has been accepted on behalf of the Department of English by their supervisory committee:



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

- C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the use of liminal space in *The Chronicles of Narnia* written by C.S. Lewis. A “liminal space” or “doorway” is used to usher characters from our world into a place where they can be transformed. The definition and application of the term “liminal space” is taken from its use in Anthropology to describe the state of person during a rite of passage. The hope is that not only will the characters be changed due to their time spent within the “liminal space” or “doorway”, but that they also may be re-enchanted, bringing value with them as they re-enter our world. Three of the *Chronicles* are examined here in depth, including *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, *The Magician’s Nephew* and *The Silver Chair*.

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Preface

Working in the children's department of a prominent chain of booksellers afforded me a unique view into the reading habits of the young. One thing I have observed over the last few years is that children rarely choose books in the fantasy genre. Granted, there is the explosion of interest in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series but this has not birthed an overall desire to read fantasy literature in a general sense.

I began to wonder why children read certain fantasy books and not others. For example, there are several other "wizard school" books written by Diana Wynn Jones and Caroline Stevermer, but these do not sell. Fantasy writers Robert Jordan and Anne McCaffrey have also written books for juveniles but they too remain on the shelves year after year.

When Walden Media announced its release date for C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, I was asked by the local Girls Scouts organization, in conjunction with Walden Media and Disney, to be a speaker for a series of events that would promote a reading group for the *Narnia* series. In preparation for these talks, I explored familiar ground by rereading the series. It was then that I realized what fantasy books like the *Chronicles of Narnia*, *Harry Potter*, *The Wizard of OZ*, and *A Wrinkle of Time* all have in common: they provide the characters, and by default, the reader, with a doorway. This doorway allows the reader easy access to the new world he or she will be reading about in the following pages.

It is my belief, however, that there is much more to this "doorway" than it merely serving the purpose of a portal. By using Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* as my example, my intent is to show that Lewis's use of liminal space (the technical term for the "doorway") is

key to his lasting popularity amongst young readers (and readers in general). The anonymous author, "Another Clerk" agrees with this statement even though he does not use the same terminology: "What brings the reader back to the Narnia Tales time and time again is the fact that here is opened for him a door into that other world we are always seeking. It may be called the world of imagination; its proper name is the world of the spirit" (8). Not only does this liminal space signal a change in the story (moving from our world into another), but it jumpstarts the reader's imagination and spirit, hopefully leading to his/her eventual "re-enchantment"; an idea which was very important to Lewis and will be discussed at the conclusion of this paper.

However, before embarking upon the discussion of all things "liminal" within the *Chronicles of Narnia*, the efforts of other Lewis critics must be duly noted. Their work has given readers a better understanding of the stories so many cherish. Also, Lewis's choice of writing style is just as important as what he wrote, therefore, his use of the fairy-tale and the fantasy genre will be discussed with his criticism in the next chapter.

Introduction: The Fantasy Genre and prior Lewis Criticism

To begin our discussion on Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* we must begin by looking at two things: the fantasy genre and the fairy-tale. These two concepts were both extremely important to C.S. Lewis and since they are part of the vehicle on which he delivers his timeless tales of Narnia, they must be examined. Donald Glover points out in *The Art of Enchantment* that Lewis developed a "growing conviction that fantasy could act as a spiritual preparation for young minds" (132). Fantasy, according to Ann Swinfen, is a paradox that relies on both the author's ability to access incredible depths of imagination as well as draw upon his/her knowledge of the rational and empirical world (*In Defence of Fantasy* 3). Swinfen also points out J.R.R. Tolkien's view of fantasy as a "sub-creative art" which determined "such literary creation as the natural outcome of man's own creation in the divine image" (3). Tolkien also makes the stipulation that fantasy must include "a quality of strangeness and wonder in the Expression" (TL 44).

For C.S. Lewis, the fantasy genre would have to access all such attributes in order to make his tales effective. *The Chronicles of Narnia* are indeed imaginative but they also include moments of "empirical experience", such as Mr. Tumnus and his afternoon tea with Lucy. The series is a sub-creative art because it is an entire world created unto itself that is governed by its own laws. And finally, Narnia is nothing if it does not communicate that sense of strangeness and wonder so important to Tolkien's definition.

However, Lewis was not drawing solely on the mere definition of fantasy as he created his works. When examining the fantasy genre it is impossible to ignore its roots in the fairy tale. Swinfen points this out early in her study of fantasy literature stating "modern fantasy employs structures, motifs and marvelous elements derived from its predecessors in

myth, legend, fable, folk-tale and romance" (2). Tolkien discusses the term fairy-tale or fairy-story at length in his essay "On Fairy-Stories." But the fairy-story/tale is important to Lewis because it best served his purpose: "I wrote fairy tales because the Fairy Tale seemed the ideal Form for the stuff I had to say" (OOW, 37). Lewis goes on to point out:

> The Fantastic or Mythical is a Mode available at all ages…At all ages, if it is well used by the author and meets the right reader, it has the same power to generalize while remaining concrete, to present in palpable form not concepts or even experiences but whole classes of experience…. But at its best it can do more; it can give us experiences we have never had and thus, instead of 'commenting on life', can add to it (OOW 38).

Swinfen also comments on the fantastic experience by quoting Dante: "To Dante *imaginativa* or *fantasia*, the imaginative faculty, which comprehends the art of prose fantasy, was divinely inspired, offering a dimension of creativity going beyond man's empirical experience" (Swinfen 3). According to Donald Glover, as Lewis began to write the *Chronicles* that is what he endeavored to accomplish, to go beyond empirical experience: "his challenge was to offer something distinctly new, something imaginatively fresh" (*Art of Enchantment* 135). The "freshness" of Lewis' creation has been attributed to his success.

Another aspect of Lewis' work that has been heavily examined is the religious or Christian symbolism present in the *Chronicles of Narnia*. In her book, *A Far Off Country*, Martha Sammons devotes an entire chapter to carefully breaking down just a few of the major symbols in the *Chronicles*. Robert Houston Smith examines how Lewis' faith shaped his many literary creations in *Patches of Godlight* but he does not solely focus on Narnia. Paul Holmer, a professor of Theology, explores a similar vein in *C.S. Lewis: The Shape of His Faith and Thought*. Of course there is also the on-going debate as to whether or not Lewis wrote the *Chronicles* as a religious allegory. This debate has been recently reopened

by the 2005 article written by Robert Bell, “Inside the Wardrobe: Is Narnia a Christian Allegory?”

Many critics do not focus solely on the *Chronicles of Narnia* but take a mass approach to Lewis’s works. Wesley Kort explores ideas and themes such as “Character”, “Pleasure” or “Re-enchantment” connecting several of Lewis’s works together at once in his book *C.S. Lewis: Then and Now*. Peter Lowentrout also touches on the idea of “re-enchantment” in his article “The Rags of Lordship; Science Fiction, Fantasy, and the Re-enchantment of the World.”

There are a few collections of articles on Lewis which are very helpful and cover a wide range of critical views about his works. Peter Schakel, who wrote his own book devoted to Lewis’s works for children, *Reading with the Heart: The Way into Narnia*, has also compiled a helpful collection focused on Lewis’s fiction. *Longing for a Form* contains several interesting pieces but Eliane Tixier’s “Imagination Baptized, or, ‘Holiness’ in the *Chronicles of Narnia*” is especially fascinating. Tixier attempts to answer the question put forth by Chad Walsh as to “whether esthetics can illuminate and perhaps rejuvenate our understanding of religion”(*Longing* qtd in Schakel 136).

Other collections of critical essays include *Taste of the Pineapple* edited by Bruce Edwards and another by Schakel and Charles Huttar, *Word and Story in C.S. Lewis*. In *Word and Story*, Michael Murrin examines the “The Multiple Worlds of Narnia” in his article of the same name. Here Murrin discusses the various ways the reader enters the story. Even though he expertly examines how the doorway helps to distinguish Lewis’s fantasy from a mere fairy tale, Murrin never touches on the concept of liminal space or liminality by name.

There are a few articles that treat books of the *Narnia* series individually such as Manlove's "The Birth of a Fantastic World: C.S. Lewis's The Magician's Nephew" or Marvin Hinton's "Old Narnia is True: Allusions in Prince Caspian", but many treat several books at once, drawing upon similarities of theme and imagery.

Several articles were helpful in indicating what critics believe to be the reason readers return to Lewis time and again. Donald Glover points out that his students enjoy Lewis's work because of his "skill at telling a good story" even though "they may reject the Christian message or overlook its presence in favor of the sheer delight of following Lewis into another tale"("The Magician's Book" 217). Glover then goes on to examine how Lewis utilized "story as more than a mere tool to convey plot and action" arguing "it is symbolic of creative power and control over destiny and fate" ("The Magician's Book" 218).

The variety of approaches to Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, whether story-specific or all encompassing, philosophic or technical, not one of the works that I have discussed here or included in my reading touch upon Lewis's use of liminal space nor did the articles go into serious analysis of how the doorway is a vehicle for Lewis's success with readers time after time.

Chapter 1: Liminal Space

"Not what we were or what we are about to become"

The technical term for Lewis's "doorway" is *liminal space*, a concept derived from the Latin term *limen* meaning "threshold." A liminal space offers a point of transition from one world to another, but in truth it is much more than that. A liminal space is a place where character transformation can occur.

The importance of the liminal space in Lewis's writings has been overlooked by many critics. Critics are constantly asking the question why these books continue to speak to people time and time again. I believe that by providing an accessible space of transition (i.e. the "doorway") and a landscape with enough connection to our own, readers realize levels of truth and experience far beyond what is available to them in this world. For example, I will be discussing how the liminal space for the Pevensies is not only the wardrobe but their entire experience inside the world of Narnia. Because of the "doorway", the reader has an easier time of tagging along with the children and, as a result, is able to experience revelation to a greater extent than if he or she had to manufacture a "bridge" in their own imagination.

The focus of this paper is to deal with the term *liminal space* and how it relates to C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The term "liminal" was originally created by folklorist Arnold Van Gennep and appropriated by anthropologist Victor Turner to help describe the different stages in a culture's rites of passage or transition. Van Gennep and his contemporaries in ethnographic studies wished to "provide a rational explanation of religious behavior" and agreed upon a "general abandonment of supernaturalism" (Gennep vi). He was adamant about the fact "ceremonies needed to be examined in their entirety and in the social setting in which they were found" (vi-vii). It is interesting to note that Van Gennep was well

versed in the writings of Andrew Lang (as was Lewis and Tolkien) who happened to be an anthropologist himself. Though doing masterful research in anthropology, Lang is best known for the creation of a superb collection of fairy-tales: The "Coloured" Fairy Books.

The term "liminal space" therefore sits precariously on the edge of two worlds: the rational or empirical and the religious or fantastic. Because of such a position, the concept of liminal space is ideal to help understand the powerful impact transition and change can have upon a person, whether it is experienced through religion, cultural rites, or literary works. To do Van Gennep's term justice, the liminal experience will be looked at on the whole in each of the works examined in the following chapters so as to keep in line with his notion of examining rites of passage *within* the culture's context.

As stated above, the term "liminal" was originally created to help describe the different stages in a culture's rites of passage or transition. These rites, according to Victor Turner, are "separation, margin (or limen), and re-aggregation" (36). The part I am most interested in, as was Turner, is the middle phase, or liminal phase. Van Gennep, in his book *Rites of Passage*, describes the person's movement through the doorway or liminal space:

> [T]he rite of passing between the parts of an object that has
> Been halved, or between two branches, or under something,
> is one which must, in a certain number of cases, be interpreted
> as a direct rite of passage by means of which a person leaves
> one world behind him and enters a new world (19).

Victor Turner states something similar in *The Ritual Process*: "During the intervening 'liminal' period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (94).

The Chronicles of Narnia is based on the idea of translating characters from one world, or rather "cultural realm," into another. In most of the stories, the transition is from our own world into Narnia. The only exception is found in *A Horse and His Boy*. However, even in this work there is the transition Shasta makes from living in Calormen to Archenland. But this transition is much more subtle, dealing with psychological issues of identity. Lewis's employment of liminal space (which will also be referred to as the "doorway") in *A Horse and His Boy* is not as marked as other instances of liminal passage in the *Chronicles of Narnia*.

Lewis's repeated use of the "doorway" motif in his writing is part of the reason his works are so accessible to readers of all ages and backgrounds. The ease at which the reader can move from beginning the tale to investing themselves in the story is remarkable. But this smooth transition was part of Lewis's goal all along. He states in *Of Other Worlds* that he wanted to "steal past those watchful dragons" and lead us all beyond the doorway (37).

This quote, however, has a greater context than merely relating to the passage from our world into Narnia. Lewis was writing about his feelings, or lack thereof, toward the Christian notions about God or Christ. He believed that he was not alone in being unable to feel the way he ought to feel about Christ and His sacrifice. Lewis writes that "the whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical" (OOW 37). Due to the negative ideas associated with Christianity, Lewis decided to "strip them of their stained glass windows and Sunday school associations" (OOW 37). After such a purge, Lewis would be able to toss the essence of Christianity, or rather *Mere Christianity*, into an imaginary world where it could "for the first time appear in [its] real potency" (OOW 37). By doing all of this, Lewis bypassed the "watchful dragons" (who guarded the "doorway")

and created a clear path to the threshold by which pilgrims, seekers and those who were lost could enter.

Lewis was no doubt fully aware of the literary connotations of his term "watchful dragons." His vast knowledge of mythology and classical literature could produce references very easily. For example, there is the sphinx in *Oedipus Rex* who guards the doorway of knowledge and the future. Or even his friend, J.R.R. Tolkien's creation of Smaug, who guards a treasure inside the home of the dwarves in *The Hobbit*. These guardians, whatever their form, also have an anthropological significance that is reflected in the research of Van Gennep in regards to thresholds and liminal spaces. Van Gennep points out:

> [W]hen 'guardians of the threshold' take on monumental proportions… they push the door and the threshold into the background; prayers and sacrifices are addressed to the guardians alone. A rite of spatial passage has become a rite of spiritual passage. The act of passing no longer accomplishes the passage (22-23).

What Lewis has achieved in his writing is the reconnection of the person to the passage - to the doorway. In essence, Lewis is breaking down all of the fierce, intimidating figures that have been blocking the way and cleans out the entrance so that we can once again enter a sacred place where a person can be transformed. Without access there can be no transition. If there is no transition there is no encounter. And without an encounter, there can be no transformation. So I shall begin at Lewis's first "doorway" and search for the final transformation.

Chapter 2: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

Lewis begins the Narnia series by cleaning out a fictional space for his "doorway" in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The house of Professor Kirke is full of doorways that lead into various rooms. Some are spare bedrooms ("as everyone had expected"), others open onto "a series of rooms that led into each other and were lined with books", and finally "a room that was quite empty except for one big wardrobe; the sort that has a looking glass in the door" (LWW 4-5). Lewis makes a point to emphasize the emptiness of the room by repeating himself in the following sentence: "There was nothing else in the room at all except a dead blue-bottle on the window-sill" (LWW 5). The reason for such emphasis is to show what Lewis has done to the "watchful dragons" – he has slain them and they lie dead like the blue-bottle. Now Lucy is free to try the door of the wardrobe.

The actual opening of the wardrobe is significant in the fact that the mere turning of the knob is something that has not been done in a long time. If we take the symbolic significance of the dead blue-bottle to represent the destroyed guardian of the liminal space, then the opening of the doorway is incredible. Before this moment no one could actually reach the doorway to even try the handle in the first place. The guardian would have not allowed the pilgrim to try. Since the guardian is dead and done away with, the passage is open and the mysteries beyond are accessible to the voyager.

Since the door opens, Lucy steps inside because she saw the coats and she liked "the smell and feel of fur" but she leaves the door ajar because everyone knows "it is very foolish to shut oneself into any wardrobe" (LWW 5-6). The world has taught her how to be cautious in unknown or uncertain terrain. Once Lucy moves past the coats and into the snow-laden branches, she feels "a little frightened" but "very inquisitive and excited as well" (LWW 7).

However, one look over her shoulder reassures her that she can get back to her own world because "she had, of course, left the door open, for she knew it that it is a very silly thing to shut oneself into a wardrobe" (LWW 7). Lucy's inquisitive nature is what helps her climb into the wardrobe but her English sensibilities still have a place in her mind.

It is profitable to note the attitude of the person entering the liminal space has a powerful impact on their development during this period of transition. Though this analysis started with Lucy, the two best examples of "entrance attitude" in the *Chronicles* are Edmund in LWW and the Dwarfs in *The Last Battle*. The latter is part of a greater discussion on doorways and liminal space that warrants an investigation in and of itself[1]. The former is a smaller instance which will be tackled here.

Edmund can be labeled the greatest example of the transforming power of Narnia. His transformation goes through several stages. These stages are marked by his passing through multiple doorways. Van Gennep points out that in most cultures it is only the first threshold that has transitional significance, there are some cultures that place importance on passing through any door. He writes "The other openings do not have the same quality of a point of transition between the familial world and the external world" but "sometimes the sacred value of the threshold is present in all the thresholds of the house" (Van Gennep 25). Even though it is uncommon in cultures on the whole, I believe multiple doorways are significant in Narnia, especially in Edmund's case. All four of the Pevensie children sometimes pass through the same portal but it does not affect each in the same way. This will become more evident as each instance is examined. But for now let us return to Edmund and his initial entrance into Narnia.

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[1] For further reading on the dwarfs in The Last Battle please refer to Bruce Reichenbach's essay "At Any Rate There's No Humbug Here: Truth and Perspective" which can be found in The Chronicles of Narnia and Philosophy edited by Gregory Bassham and Jerry L. Willis.

The first doorway Edmund passes through is, of course, the wardrobe. His disdain for his sister Lucy's story about Narnia is turned to shock when he himself stumbles upon the snowy wood. Here his disbelief is dealt a staggering blow. Edmund is a character full of doubt and lacks the "English sensibilities" of his sister. Lewis takes pains to point out that Edmund "jumped in [the wardrobe] and shut the door, forgetting what a foolish thing this is to do" (LWW 30). Due to his foolishness and apparent lack of a strong moral radar, Edmund only vaguely senses that the woman he meets on the sledge is evil. Nor does he fully comprehend that the food and drink the White Witch gives him is magic food "that anyone who had tasted it would want more and more of it, and would even, if they were allowed, go on eating it till they killed themselves" (LWW 39). But Edmund's sulky attitude and his desire to be better than his siblings makes him easy prey. His moral instrument needs fine tuning which will only come through subsequent passages and future encounters.

For Peter and Susan their entrance into Narnia through the wardrobe is a mixed bag. Peter immediately realizes his disbelief and reconciles himself to Lucy.

> Peter turned at once to Lucy.
> "I apologize for not believing you," he said, "I'm sorry.
> Will you shake hands?"
> "Of course," said Lucy, and did (LWW 60).

Peter has bypassed his old attitude of a parent which he had assumed during the conversation with Professor Kirke (LWW 50-54). He is now a brother and a friend to Lucy. His sense of Truth has also been righted because of the reality of Narnia. Susan, however, does not apologize to Lucy at all but interjects a "what do we do next?" question just as the other two are making up (LWW 60). Also unlike Peter, Susan does not leave her parental tone at the wardrobe's door but continues to act as a "mother" by insisting they put on the boots and

coats in the wardrobe – a plan that Lewis labels “very sensible” – in the parental sense of the phrase (LWW 60-61).

Here is where I would like to begin to make the distinction between liminal space as a doorway and liminal space as a place of transition. Narnia as a whole is a place of transition for the children, but there are other doorways within Narnia that serve as places which foster change. This is key to understanding the following discussion about different doorways within Narnia and how they all play a part in the development of the children. The first of several doorways the Pevensie’s encounter is that of the fawn.

Now that all four are in Narnia, they begin the trek to find Lucy’s friend, Mr. Tumnus. Once they arrive, however, they discover a terrible scene:

> The door had been wrenched off its hinges and broken to bits.
> Inside the cave was dark and cold and had the damp feel and
> smell of a place that had not been lived in for several days…
> The crockery lay smashed on the floor and the picture of the
> Faun’s father had been slashed into shreds with a knife (LWW 63).

Not knowing exactly what the scene looked like, I would like to try placing the children according to their reactions. We know Peter and Susan are inside the cave because both look at the notice which Peter has picked up from the rubble (LWW 64). Lucy’s lack of comment could indicate that she is looking at the wreckage, perhaps lingering on the destroyed picture of Mr. Tumnus’ father that Lewis is so careful to describe at the end of the passage. And finally Edmund can be placed near the door, perhaps standing outside saying “This is a pretty good washout…not much good coming here” (LWW 63). If the scene is constructed this way, the effect of crossing Mr. Tumnus’ doorway is profound.

Beginning with Peter, it is evident he is concerned about Mr. Tumnus after he reads the note left by Maugrim. He asks Lucy about the queen mentioned in the letter and, despite all of the obstacles, wants to rescue the faun.

> I'm worried about not having any food with us. I'd vote too for going back and getting something from the larder, only there doesn't seem to be any certainty of getting into this country again when once you've got out of it. I think we'll have to go on (LWW 65-66).

This tone is no longer parental but carries the beginnings of a true leader who is concerned more with what is right than with what is easy.

Susan, even though she is the first to point out in her parental ways that they have no food, does demonstrate sympathy and kindness in her concern for Mr. Tumnus.

> I don't want to go a step further and I wish we'd never come. But I think we must try to do something for Mr. Whatever-his -name-is – I mean the Faun (LWW 65).

Susan has seen the destruction caused by the White Witch and rightly assumes that Mr. Tumnus must be rescued because his kindness to Lucy was indicative of his character.

Edmund, still angry about Peter's comment regarding his treatment of Lucy, is cold and uncaring. By standing outside the doorway Edmund avoids risking his feelings and getting emotional over the destroyed home. And because of the personal injustice he feels from his brother, Edmund does not support the idea of saving Mr. Tumnus. Unfortunately, this doorway within Narnia can have no effect on Edmund because he does not pass through.

The next doorway the Pevensie children encounter is that of Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. I believe there is a need to preface this doorway with a discussion on what the children were noticing as they approached the house. Lucy, Peter, and Susan were all looking at the dam, the house "shaped rather like an enormous beehive", and the smoke rising from the chimney

which caused you to think of cooking and made you hungrier than you were before (LWW 76). Lewis takes special care to describe the scene because in the next paragraph he begins with this sentence: "That was what the others chiefly noticed, but Edmund noticed something else" (LWW 76). Edmund's focus is on the two hills where he knows the White Witch's castle is located. Because his focus is so skewed, his time spent passing through the Beaver's doorway will have an adverse effect on him. Here is another example of how the person's attitude upon entrance affects their experience.

Mr. and Mrs. Beaver are both positive characters that represent the faithful that follow Aslan. They are morally upright creatures who love what is good and hate what is bad. Their sense of truth is so keen that it allows Mr. Beaver to sense right away that Edmund has been in the presence of the White Witch, a fact that he later points out to all of the children. The purpose of the children entering the home is for comfort, hospitality, rejuvenation and information. In the Beaver's home the children first hear about Aslan and the prophecy regarding "Adam's flesh and Adam's bone" sitting on the thrones of Cair Paravel (LWW 85-87). They also learn that the White Witch is part djinn and part giant without "a drop of real human blood" in her (LWW 88). Knowledge is chiefly what the children gain by crossing this threshold. But it is not the only thing.

This threshold is significant to the development of the story but also to the development of the children's character and even their spirituality and awareness. It begins with Mr. Beaver speaking Aslan's name and a passage that has been quoted many times in Lewis criticism:

> At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in its insides. Edmund felt a sensation of mysterious horror. Peter felt suddenly brave and adventurous. Susan felt as is some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music

> had just floated by her. And Lucy got the feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realize that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer (LWW 74-75).

If Mr. Beaver does nothing else than speak Aslan's name, he has given the reader insight into the children's minds, but by providing a place of safety for the four, they are given time to realize that there is a greater reason for being in Narnia.

As Mr. Beaver reveals the prophecies regarding the humans appearing in Narnia and explains more about who Aslan is, Edmund slips away into the cold winter night, driven by an insatiable desire for more Turkish Delight and fueled by a selfish, injured attitude. If the main reason for crossing the Beaver's doorway is knowledge then Edmund once again misses out on the full effect of the passage. He receives only partial information and misses the key piece that might have kept him from visiting the White Witch: her lack of humanity.

So far in the story, only Lucy, Peter and Susan have started their own personal transformations from little English school children to warriors and rulers that believe in Truth and Justice. They have also begun to understand the hierarchy of Narnia once Mr. Beaver explains about Aslan. They know that He is the true king, "the Lord of the whole wood" (LWW 85). They also realize that the White Witch is no match for Aslan and in fact "if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly" (LWW 86). However, even though Aslan isn't safe "he's good…He's the King" (LWW 86).

At this point in the story, it is Peter who shows the greatest progress in his Narnian transformation by remarking "I'm longing to see him…even if I do feel frightened when it comes to the point" (LWW 86). Unlike the two girls that are still busy taking in the fact that Aslan is a lion, Peter has made a leap of faith similar to another Peter. In the Book of

Matthew it is Simon Peter who is the first to acknowledge that Christ is the Messiah (Matt. 16:15-19). For this, Peter is blessed and told that he shall be the rock Christ will build his church upon. Peter Pevensie, the first to truly want to see Aslan for what he really is, is the one whom Aslan places as High King over Narnia and the one who leads Narnia into a Golden Age. Both Peters came to a point where they readily accepted their leader for what he truly was – the King of Kings.

In contrast, Edmund's reaction to Aslan is one of "mysterious horror" which indicates that he has not progressed past his initial entrance experience. The fact that Edmund encountered the White Witch first, (instead of a kind faun as Lucy did), has colored his vision and slowed the effect Narnia can have on his identity. Edmund still holds his anger and hurt feelings close. Because of this emotional blanket, the doorways of Tumnus and the Beavers have little to no effect on him.

Edmund uses this blanket of bitterness to keep himself occupied as he treks toward the White Witch's castle and the second of the three most important doorways he will ever pass through (the first being the wardrobe). However, it must be noted that Lewis takes special care in telling the reader that "You mustn't think that even now Edmund was quite so bad that he actually wanted his brother and sisters turned to stone" (LWW 96). Lewis is demonstrating that Edmund still has a chance to be redeemed. This reassurance is a comforting thought to those who may identify more with Edmund's perspective than Peter's.

As Edmund approaches the Witch's castle Lewis describes it as "all towers" which looked like "huge dunce's caps or sorcerer's caps" (LWW 99-100). These two images convey first that what Edmund decided to do was a very stupid thing (i.e. dunce) and that the occupant of the house is wicked (i.e. evil sorcerer). It is debatable as to whether Lewis meant

to use the term “sorcerer” in a negative sense but since he was a fairytale aficionado, and most sorcerers in those tales are labeled as “evil” or “wicked”, it is permissible to conclude he drew upon the typical connotations these characters have within the traditional fairytale framework. Perhaps to solidify his negative meaning, Lewis follows the description with Edmund’s own feelings on the place: “And [the towers] shone in the moonlight and their long shadows looked strange on the snow. Edmund began to be afraid of the House” (LWW 100).

Just before Edmund fully crosses the White Witch’s doorway this fear subsides slightly (i.e. His discovery that the lion in the courtyard is a stone lion - LWW 101-03) but returns stronger than ever as he raises his foot to step over the seemingly stone wolf:

> He now saw that there was a dim light showing from a doorway on the far side of the courtyard. He went to it, there was a flight of stone steps going up to an open door. Edmund went up them. *Across the threshold lay a great wolf* (LWW 105 – emphasis added).

This wolf is Maugrim, the chief of the Witch’s secret police, who destroyed Mr. Tumnus’ home. Here is a prime example of what Van Gennep labeled a guardian. Maugrim guards the doorway as a filter. Instead of someone being allowed to speak with the tyrannical queen directly they must deal with Maugrim who decides if an audience is truly necessary. This is very similar to the way patrons would give offerings for a particular deity to the guardian placed at the temple doorway. Edmund offers up his information and identity to Maugrim in order to gain admission to the Witch’s house.

Between the look of the castle and the ominous wolf at the doorway, the reader knows that this threshold is one Edmund should not cross, a feeling affirmed by the cold and cruel greeting he receives from the White Witch. Where the Beavers gave the Pevensies

knowledge and affirmed their value in the grand scheme of Narnia, the Witch sucks information from Edmund, deflates his self-worth by denying him Turkish Delight (a symbol for the way the Witch played on his desire for sibling revenge), and lets him suffer in the open cold of the wintry landscape as the party travels to intercept his siblings. The results of this encounter are not all bad. Edmund's inner dialogue has now changed because of this threshold:

> It didn't look now as if the Witch intended to make him King. All the things he had said to make himself believe that she was good and kind and that her side was really the right side sounded to him silly now. He would have given anything to meet the others at this moment – even Peter (LWW 124).

More than any other doorway so far, the Witch's house has caused the most severe change in Edmund's disposition. While the others began to change the moment they entered the wardrobe, Edmund only slightly shifted because his reality was challenged. His mindset did not completely shift until his selfish desires were denied. Edmund's personal value was only determined by how he felt superior to his peers. Once the Witch stripped him of all hope of being "better" by awarding him a crown, Edmund is thrown into despair, relying only on the hope that "the whole thing was a dream and that he might wake up at any moment" (LWW 124-5).

During the time of Edmund's epiphany, his sisters and brother are on their way to cross a very different threshold that will have an incredibly positive impact on their lives. Peter, Susan, and Lucy journey to meet with the ultimate representation of a door, Aslan. The first indication that Aslan represents a way of passage can be seen in the initial description of where he stands amongst the crowd at the Stone Table.

> Aslan stood in the center of a crowd of creatures who had grouped themselves round him in the shape of a half-moon.

> There were Tree-women there and Well-women….there were
> four great centaurs…And next to Aslan stood two leopards
> of whom carried his crown and the other his standard (LWW 138).

First thing that must be acknowledged is Aslan's place in the center of the group. The group itself has created a "half-moon" shape which gives the image of symmetry leading out from the center (i.e. Aslan). And finally there are the two leopards that stand on either side of Aslan, splitting the symbols of his kingship in half. The act of halving anything is acknowledged by Van Gennep to represent the form of a doorway: "the rite of passing between the parts of an object that has been halved, or between two branches, or under something" (19). Therefore, if we keep with the description Van Gennep has given and apply to Lewis's depiction of the first encounter with Aslan, Aslan represents another type of doorway here within Narnia.

Van Gennep's anthropological description is not the only source that supports the argument of Aslan representing a door. There is an on-going critical debate as to whether or not Aslan is an allegory of Christ and Salvation (an argument which will not be rehashed here, but needs to be acknowledged). For the purpose of this paper, Aslan will be exactly what Lewis says he was to be: a supposal. Peter Schakel explains the concept of a "supposal" and how it relates to Aslan and his impending sacrifice:

> Lewis insisted that [Aslan and LWW] was not allegorical but suppositional:
> suppose there was a world like Narnia and that
> Christ chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in that world,
> this is what it might have been like….Aslan does not "stand for"
> Christ; in his suppositional world he *is* Christ (*Reading* 27).

In keeping with Schakel's interpretation[2], Aslan will be treated as Christ. Aslan, therefore, stands for everything Christ stood for and can claim all of the identity Christ claimed in the

[2] Many critics also agree with this representation. For an excellent overview of Aslan's character and symbolism please refer to Paul F. Ford's Companion to Narnia. There are entries devoted solely to Aslan and

New Testament. This identity as not only the Son of God but the pathway of Salvation is key to this discussion of transition and liminal space.

There are several scriptures in the Bible that symbolize Christ and Salvation as a doorway. First there is Matthew 7:13: "But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life" (NIV). This same statement is recorded in Luke 13:24. Christ makes a personal reference to himself as the passageway in John 10:7-11:

> I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved ….The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (NIV).

Aslan, who is Christ, stays true to this personal description. Aslan is not like his predecessor, the White Witch, who has done nothing but "steal and kill and destroy." She is a "thief" and a "robber", but those loyal to Aslan (i.e. "the sheep") have not listened to her lies. Lastly, Christ's promise to bring life is fulfilled by Aslan first, when he sacrifices himself for Edmund and later, when he brings the stone statues of the Witch back to life.

Even though Aslan is not a doorway the children can physically pass through, like the others analyzed here, he is the most important threshold they will ever encounter in Narnia, or for that matter, anywhere else. Aslan helps Peter become a man and a king by allowing him to fight Maugrim (LWW 143-45) and teaching him the ways of battle (LWW 160-61). Susan comes out of her mothering shell and becomes much more tender and sensitive to her family and to Aslan (LWW 161-64). Lucy gains more insight into Aslan than any of her siblings and has been called by many critics Aslan's favorite. She fully comprehends the description Mr. Beaver gives of Aslan as being both "terrible" and "good", indicated by her

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his many appearances as well as a section that connects the Biblical symbolism in The Chronicles of Narnia with specific verses.

examination of his enormous paws (LWW 141). She also understands that Aslan possesses a knowing that goes beyond verbal communication of thought (LWW 163). And it is Lucy who is (1) the first to notice the dawn after Aslan is killed (LWW 174), (2) the first to want to look after the Stone Table cracks (LWW 177) and (3) the first to believe that Aslan is not a ghost (LWW 178) unlike Susan who needs Aslan to lick her forehead in order to believe that he is alive (LWW 178). Lastly, during the wild romp after Aslan's resurrection, it is Lucy's thoughts Lewis chooses to narrate, not Susan's (LWW 179-180). This also indicates a high level of connection between Lucy and Aslan.

In spite of Lucy being the one who is considered the "favorite", Edmund also has a deeper understanding of Aslan when compared to Peter and Susan. His encounter with Aslan after being saved from the White Witch truly changes him. Aslan offers Edmund a liminal space that positively transformed him from what he was before Narnia:

> There [Peter, Susan and Lucy] saw Aslan and Edmund walking together in the dewy grass, apart from the rest of the court. There is no need to tell you (and no one ever heard) what Aslan was saying, but it was a conversation Edmund never forgot (LWW 152).

This relationship with Aslan caused a shift in Edmund, one that sustains him even when the Witch enters the camp, calling for his blood.

> "You have a traitor there, Aslan," said the Witch. Of course everyone knew that she meant Edmund. But Edmund had got past thinking about himself after all he'd been through and after the talk he'd had that morning. He just went on looking at Aslan. It didn't seem to matter what the Witch said (LWW 155).

Paul Ford connects Edmund's focus on Aslan to Hebrews 12:2 which reads "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus…who for the joy set before him endured the cross" (116). Instead of feeling guilty and horrible for what he has done, something the Witch would have wanted, Edmund has peace because his focus is on Aslan.

Edmund's actions here have a clear Biblical connection to Hebrews but his character has an even great correlation with another person who also encountered the ultimate Door and was completely transformed. Edmund's change can be paralleled to the Saul/Paul transformation in the New Testament (Acts 9:1-22 NIV). Saul's encounter with Jesus occurred on the road between two cities, Jerusalem and Damascus. Jerusalem represents all that Saul was before, the road serves as his liminal space (with Jesus as the threshold), and Damascus will come to represent all that he will be as he develops his faith under the new name of Paul. Even though Saul was more extreme in his hatred towards Christians as opposed to Edmund's anger toward his siblings, it still took a divine encounter to cause a shift in thinking.

The effect doorways have had on the Pevensie children ranges from mild to wildly dramatic. Each threshold offers a different lesson, an increasing level of personal change and development. All of the examples in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* are positive except for one, the Witch's Castle, but even this doorway serves as the stimulus allowing for a better transition later on. However, all these changes could never have occurred without crossing the first doorway, the Wardrobe.

Chapter 3: The Silver Chair

In order of publication, *The Silver Chair* was the fourth book in the *Chronicles,* following *Prince Caspian* and *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. The preceding books have transported their characters into Narnia by the call of Susan's magic horn and a picture in the bedroom of the Scrubb household, respectively. But *The Silver Chair* returns to Narnia via a doorway. This one is not a beautifully carved wardrobe but a simple wooden door in a high stone wall.

The book opens on a depressing scene. Jill Pole is crying behind the gym in the horrible school, Experiment House. She is discovered by Eustace Scrubb, cousin to the Pevensies and lately transformed from bothersome to beloved by Aslan in the previous Narnian installment, *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. The pair acknowledges one another's presence in a gruff sort of way which gets them talking about Eustace's transformation between last school year and the present:

> "Why were you so different last term?" said Jill presently.
> "A lot of queer things happened to me in the hols," said Eustace mysteriously.
> "What sort of things?' asked Jill….. "Could you believe me if I said I'd been right out of the world – outside this world – last hols?" (SC 4-5)

Many of the students share Jill's curiousity. Eustace's personality shift has caused quite a stir at Experiment House because he has changed sides from being a bully to getting bullied. All because of "That Place" and the "Someone" he met there (SC 6).

Jill asks how they can get to this place. Eustace explains "The only way you can – by Magic" (SC 5) but the dullness of their surroundings blunts her curiosity slightly:

> They were very excited…But when…Jill looked round and saw the dull autumn sky and heard the drip off the leaves and thought of all the hopelessness of Experiment House (it was a

> thirteen-week term and there were still eleven weeks to come)
> she said: "But after all, what's the good? We're not there: we're here.
> And we jolly well can't get there. Or can we?" (SC 6).

This description is very important to the events that follow. Lewis is communicating not only his dislike of the current modes of education but his opinions on the modern mindset. Similar to those studied by Van Gennep, Jill and Eustace have no way to access the presence of That Place or Someone, no way to get past the guardian. The world around them presents too great of a barrier. Even the truth of Eustace's experience isn't enough to totally whisk away all doubt from Jill's mind.

> Then suddenly a horrible suspicion came over her and she
> said…: "If I find you have been pulling my leg I'll never
> speak to you again; never, never, never" (SC 6).

Jill fiercely demands honesty from Eustace and in another ingenious show of narration, Lewis has him swear "by everything" instead of the Bible because "Bibles were not encouraged at Experiment House" (SC 6). This once again shows the lack of access the children have to any spiritual freedom, Christian or otherwise.

However, that access changes dramatically when Jill and Eustace find themselves being chased toward a mass of shrubbery: "For at the top of the shrubbery was a high stone wall and in that wall a door by which you could get out on to open moor" (SC 9-10). But "this door was nearly always locked" (SC 10). The chances of the door being unlocked were slim but the pair was still hopeful. When the handle actually turns and the door opens, the view is not of a heather-covered moor but a beautiful, sunlit world that "made the drops of water on the grass glitter like beads and showed up the dirtiness of Jill's tear-stained face" (SC 11). The way the light shines from this new world into our own demonstraes its revealing power. The beauty of the natural world is heightened and the ugliness caused by

the cruelty of other human beings is magnified. Jill's dirty, tear-stained face is seen in contrast with the diamond droplets on the grass. This is just the first of many revelations that occur because of a change in environment.

Once the pair passes through the gate, the world they enter is actually in itself part of the doorway marked by the stone wall. They find themselves in a "lonely wood" filled with birds making "riotous noise…like music, rather advanced music" (SC 12). Traveling through the wood, Jill runs out towards an open space that is the edge of a cliff. This cliff edge is the edge of the doorway but part of the liminal space that will facilitate a shift in their personalities. Understanding the role of the forest and cliff that Eustace and Jill find on the other side of the door is key to the discussion of another mysterious wood in a subsequent installment of the *Chronicles*.

This cliff-top place can be labeled as a pre-liminal space; it is part of the doorway that leads to the larger liminal space that is Narnia. Not only does it usher the children into that "cultural realm" Turner alludes to, but it also causes a shift in the characters by existing as a liminal space in its own right. For example, when Eustace falls off the cliff and as blown by Aslan into Narnia, Jill is left alone by herself. After a period of crying, Jill decides to go in search of water and finds a stream. But next to the fresh water sits Aslan himself. Here is where Jill begins to understand that her mindset cannot remain the same now that she is in this other world. Aslan's voice and presence compel her to tell the truth about why Eustace fell over the cliff. Just like the light of the new world revealed the beautiful (dew on grass) and the ugly (Jill's tear stained face), Aslan's presence demand that truth be revealed also.

Another indication that the cliff-forest is a pre-liminal space is that it allows the person who enters a clear mind. Aslan verifies this when he prepares Jill to be sent off to

Narnia with the four signs in her memory. He warns "Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop in to Narnia the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind" (SC 25-26). For the purpose of their quest, it was necessary for Eustace and Jill to enter the cliff-forest before traveling to Narnia. The mindset of their world needed to be wiped away in order to make room for Aslan's task. Once cleansed the pair would be ready to go on their quest.

The act of cleansing is something Van Gennep notes as an act of separation: "Purifications" (washing, cleansing, etc.) constitute rites of separation from previous surroundings; there follow rites of incorporation (presentation of salt, a shared meal, etc)" (20). Jill is cleansed by the air and Aslan's presence. This is a "pre-liminal rite" that occurs within the threshold experience according to Van Gennep (21) and in this context, helps Jill leave behind her old ways and endeavor to adopt new ones. The indication that Jill is ready to be "incorporated" into Narnia is given by Aslan himself when he changes from calling her "Human Child" to "Daughter of Eve" right before he blows her away from the cliff-side forest.

Jill leaves behind the pre-liminal space (or finally finishes crossing the threshold depending on how you look at it) and enters the liminal space, the world of Narnia. After realizing that they have missed the first sign, Eustace and Jill begin to cross thresholds that help to direct their path and perspective much like the Pevensies in *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*. The first significant portal is the belfry which houses the Parliament of Owls. Here, Eustace and Jill are presented with a full story of the events leading up to Prince Rillian's disappearance.

Much like the Beavers, the Owls provide the children with valuable information about what has happened in Narnia since Eustace's last visit. Glimfeather explains that the pair cannot go to Trumpkin, the Lord Regent, and ask to go in search of the Prince. This is very similar to the warning the Beavers give the Pevensies about going in pursuit of Edmund once he has defected. Both sources indicate that the best way is to follow what Aslan would have them do. To help matters further, the Owls offer Eustace and Jill the best guide of the north, the Marshwiggles: "They're the only people who can help them much" (SC 62). Without this encounter, Eustace and Jill would be stuck in the King's castle, or worse, wandering Narnia without direction. Just like the Beavers, the Owls help to provide a measure of transition for the children as well as information and safety before embarking on their quest.

The land of the Marshwiggles is right on the border of Narnia and the Wild Lands of the North. This marsh area and the river Shribble that runs through it, serve as the natural border of Narnia but it also represents another form of the "doorway." Van Gennep discusses the fact that in medieval times "each country was surrounded by a strip of neutral ground" (17). These neutral areas were often "deserts, marshes and most frequently virgin forests" (Van Gennep 18). The marshes of Narnia echo this classic practice of antiquity, a practice Lewis was familiar with due to his knowledge of literature and medieval culture. Van Gennep goes on to describe the experience of passing through this neutral place: "Whoever passes from one to the other finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds" (18).

It is worth pausing for a moment to note that in this far border of Narnia, Lewis creates an original and unique character: Puddleglum. Nowhere else in the *Chronicles* have

the Marshwiggles been mentioned. He was created specifically for the purpose of guiding Jill and Eustace in the Wild Lands of the North, and who better to guide them than a creature that lives within the magical, in-between realm that borders both worlds. The Marshes are not a place that causes a change in the children, but serve as a liminal space purely in the sense of a portal or doorway. It is not a doorway that can be closed like the wardrobe or the gate in the wall, but a place of passage that connects the liminal space of Narnia to the liminal space of the North. Think of it like a dove-tail joint in carpentry. The joint is there to seamlessly merge one piece of wood to another, but even after the two are joined you can still see the outline of the dove-tail. The marshes are the dove-tail.

Once the threesome passes beyond the marsh, they enter a world of giants, ruined cities, and mysterious green-clad women. This is the place that will truly put the children to the test and bring out their best qualities (as well as their worst). After carefully sneaking past a group of rowdy giants (SC 80-84), the children and the marshwiggle set out across the beautiful but rough landscape of Ettinsmoor.

Just when Eustace, Jill and Puddleglum appear to be on the right track as they cross the crucial giant's bridge, a beautiful lady and her knight appear. Up to this point the children have been maturing during their travels. Jill and Eustace, though they sometimes have disagreements, do not quarrel. They have been toughened by their time on the moor, developing survival skills far beyond those they had when they entered Narnia. And thanks to Puddleglum being a constant "wet blanket", Jill and Eustace must maintain a positive outlook on things (SC 86). This includes Jill's recitation of the signs which leads her to the "real brain-wave" about the "old bridge leading to the old city" (SC 86).

However, with the bridge comes their first real challenge. The Lady of the Green Kirtle tells the children of the "gentle giants" of Harfang (SC 90). The Green Lady is beautiful and her voice is lovely. She speaks in a courtly manner that puts the children at ease. Her laugh is "the richest, most musical laugh you can imagine" (SC 90). All of these factors cause Jill and Eustace to trust the information she gives them, especially because she touches upon the fact that they will be able to "find good lodgings and merry hosts" and have "steaming hot baths, soft beds, and bright hearths" in the walled city of Harfang (SC 90-91).

Puddleglum, however, does not trust the Green Lady from the moment he sets his eyes upon her:

> "Keep on. Move toward them," said Puddleglum. "Anyone
> you meet in a place like this is as likely as not to be an enemy,
> but we mustn't let them think we are afraid." (SC 88)

His lack of trust should be an immediate signal to the children. Puddleglum was already on guard when they decided to cross the ancient bridge: "We've got to look out for enchantments in a place like this" (SC 86). Being from Narnia, where truth is almost compelled by the environment, Puddleglum has a better sense than the children, who have not spent enough time in Narnia to develop a proper "truth barometer."

The party, unfortunately, is no longer in Narnia. They have crossed over the bridge into yet another liminal space. Where Ettinsmoor was a space that developed the children physically, Harfang and the surrounding wild lands will now develop their sense of truth. This liminal space is extremely important because of what awaits them later on in the course of their journey.

Lewis points out that the children do not sense anything harmful in the Green Lady's words and that things get markedly worse as time goes on:

> After that talk with the Lady things got worse in two different ways. In the first place the country was much harder….In the second place, whatever the Lady had intended by telling them about Harfang, the actual effect on the children was a bad one. They could think about nothing but beds and baths and hot meals and how lovely it would be to get indoors. *They never talked about Aslan, or even about the lost prince, now. And Jill gave up her habit of repeating the signs to herself every night and morning* (SC 94 emphasis added).

If Lewis mentions nothing else but these last two sentences, Puddleglum's suspicions are confirmed by the negative effect their encounter with the Green Lady has on Jill and Eustace. No matter how much Puddleglum argues against going to Harfang, even reminding them that "Aslan's signs said nothing about staying with giants, gentle or otherwise" (SC 93), the children hold on to the Lady's words and become gloomy.

This encounter is very similar to the meeting Edmund has with the White Witch during his first sojourn into Narnia. The White Witch plays on Edmund's desire for comfort in much the same way the Green Lady does with Jill and Eustace. The White Witch also skews the truth so that Edmund believes her comment about fawns not being trustworthy. And finally, Edmund's attitude becomes sour in a similar fashion to that of Jill and Eustace, causing him to defect to the White Witch.

The events at Harfang affect Jill and Eustace similar to the way the White Witch's castle causes Edmund to rethink his actions and second guess his judgement. The first event is Jill's dream where Aslan comes and takes her in his mouth and tells her to repeat the signs which, of course, she cannot (SC 119-120). The second event is the realization that they passed right over the ruined city and the stone words "UNDER ME" (SC 122-123). Apologies are offered all around on account of this and both Jill and Eustace acknowledge that Puddleglum is "the only one who isn't to blame" (SC 122). The third event is the

realization that humans are on the menu for the Autumn Feast (SC 135). All truth has now been revealed during their sojourn at Harfang.

Armed with the truth and a renewed determination to follow Aslan's signs, Jill, Eustace, and Puddleglum escape Harfang and end up under the stone words in the Deep Realm. Now is the time to test the children's development. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the children were not put to the test until they had come through a period of maturation. Aslan sent the boys into battle only after they had encountered him, the ultimate doorway. Jill and Eustace do not descend into the Deep Realm until their sense of truth has been righted, a change caused in part by Jill's encounter with Aslan in her dream. Puddleglum sums the shift admirably: "There's one thing you've got to remember. We're back on the right lines. We were to go under the Ruined City, and we *are* under it. We're following the instructions again" (SC 154).

The final encounter in the Deep Realm is the end result of spending time in these liminal spaces. The children have developed to a point where they can be tested. If they pass the test then they will be allowed to return to their own world. The same was true for the Pevensies. They had to fulfill the prophecy of the four thrones at Cair Paravel and defeat the White Witch. Jill and Eustace, according to Aslan, must find Prince Rillian or die in the attempt (SC 23). This test, in either example mentioned, can still be considered part of the liminal space experience. According to Van Gennep and Turner this test can be likened to a "rite of incorporation" which will allow the individual to reenter society (Van Gennep 11). Without Prince Rillian, the children will not find a way back to their own world.[3]

[3] The descent into the Deep Realm and the purpose of the quest for Rillian has been discussed by many critics, including Peter Schakel (*Reading with the Heart*) who uses Northrup Frye's analysis of the pattern of descent and ascent in medieval romance. The medieval romance was a source of inspiration for Lewis and should be acknowledged. Northrup Frye's model can be found in *The Secular Scripture*.

Once the party has been brought by Underland guards to the dark castle of the Green Lady, they meet the enchanted Prince and hear his version of history since his arrival (SC 163-165). The bewitched Prince tells them that the sign of the words UNDER ME was not meant for them at all. This puts a damper on the spirits of Jill and Eustace but Puddleglum, who is the most developed of all the characters and a native Narnian, stays firm in following the signs and reminds them:

> "Don't you mind him…There are no accidents. Our guide is Aslan; and he was there when the giant King caused the letters to be cut, and he knew already all the things that would come of them; including this" (SC 160).

To put it simply this is their first test of faith; faith in Aslan, recognition of the truth in the signs he gave them, and devotion to their quest. Puddleglum, as mentioned previously, is the most developed in this area, not only because he is a Narnian, but also because of his position of being on the edge of two worlds. Later on he points out "There's a stronger smell of danger and lies and magic and treason about this land than I've ever smelled before" (SC 169). The ability to smell treason is talent well worth having. Therefore, it is not surprising, that he should be the first to step in and encourage the children who have only as of late developed the abilities he has possessed for quite some time.

This small instance, is nothing compared to the events that follow. Next is the Prince's nightly imprisonment in the titled Silver Chair. As he begins to cry out in torment as his enchantment is temporarily lifted, Jill, Eustace and Puddleglum must put themselves to the test. When Rillian finally mentions Aslan in his ravings all three react "as though they had been hurt" (SC 174). Now is their decision, the decision whether they will do what they know to be right or, out of fear, do nothing. In agreement, Eustace and Puddleglum begin cutting the Prince's bonds "In the name of Aslan" showing that their faith and trust does lie

in the words they know to be true rather than the ravings of a prince, enchanted or otherwise (SC 176).

With Prince Rillian now free of both his bonds and his enchantment, the four must try and escape the powerful, evil magic of the Green Lady. Upon her return, she finds that her efforts have been undone and sets about lulling the four into an enchanted stupor, seducing them to believe that nothing exists other than her world (SC 181-191). Eustace and Jill fight hard against the soothing music, sweet smells, and melodic voice of the Green Lady. Their resolve is much improved but when their efforts wane slightly, Puddleglum is there to guide them back again with a short reminder as he talks about the sun and stars (SC 185).

Now is the most telling part of the book: have Jill and Eustace been transformed enough by their time in Narnia and the Wild Lands of the North to fight off a false enchantment and remember the truth which cannot been seen in that moment? Indeed they have and it is Jill who surprises them all:

> For the last few minutes Jill had been feeling that there was something she must remember at all costs. And now she did. But it was dreadfully hard to say it. She felt as if huge weights were laid on her lips. At last, with an effort that seemed to take all the good out of her, she said: "There's Aslan" (SC 187).

Here is the evidence that the travels in this other world have not been in vain. Here is proof that the liminal space has changed Jill (and Eustace) in a powerful way. The seed planted on the mountain top is bearing fruit.

The Green Lady senses the power in Aslan's name and begins "quickening ever so slightly the pace of her thrumming" (SC 187). Even though the children have rallied well during the fight against the enchantment, Puddleglum is the one who finally provides the moment where they can all break free from the Green Lady's intoxicating spell. By stamping

his foot on the witch's fire, his mind clears (as well as the others) and he is able to make one of the most powerful speeches in the *Chronicles*:

> One word, Ma'am…. Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things – trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones….I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia (SC 190-191).

To live like a Narnian is to know what is right and true; to have faith in a lion that is not always seen. Puddleglum, a creature who must navigate his identity as a Narnian every day due to where he lives, proclaims the lesson that Jill and Eustace have been instructed upon ever since they passed through the gate in the stone wall.

After the spell is broken, the foursome proceeds to kill the witch, escape from Underland and make their way through the perilous tunnels toward the surface. During their journey upward, the party observes an interesting sight: the Earthmen are celebrating their freedom by shooting off fireworks and jumping down to their true world. The gnomes came from the Land of Bism where there are "bunches of rubies you can eat" with "cupfuls of diamond juice" (SC 218). As they peer down into the red glow of Bism, Rillian and Eustace feel a growing desire to explore the deeper realms of the earth but Puddleglum and Jill implore them to hurry to the surface.

While the Land of Bism and the party's reaction to that world is worth discussing, it is not a portal our characters venture through. However, the resurfacing of the four into the land of Narnia is very important. The fact that Jill is the first to find herself on the Dancing Lawn in the heart of Narnia is an interesting choice by Lewis. Perhaps it was to describe the surprise and enchantment of the scene from the perspective of someone who had never been

to that part of Narnia before. However, from reading the other *Chronicles*, we know that Eustace had not been inside Narnia either. I believe that Lewis chose Jill to be the first to re-enter Narnia as a reward.

According to Van Gennep, the last stage of the liminal phase is preparation for re-aggragation, or reentrance into society with a new identity. Jill is the person who changes the most during her time in Narnia. She is the one to whom Aslan entrusts the signs; she is the one who remembers Aslan even when the Green Witch is trying to wipe all memory from her; she is the one who should receive the delight of re-entering Narnia by being welcomed into a ritual of Old Narnia. The Great Snow Dance is "done every year" and "Jill felt she could have fainted with delight; and the music – the wild music, intensely sweet and yet just the least bit eerie too, and full of good magic as the Witch's thrumming had been full of bad magic – made her feel it all the more" (SC 230-231).

After Eustace, Puddleglum and Rillian (as well as the horses) are above ground, they are all cared for by the talking animals, dwarves and centaurs. Rillian is recognized by all to be the lost prince and is eventually taken to Cair Paravel to see his father arrive home. Poor King Caspian has only has a moment's reunion with his son before his death. The children arrive only to catch a glimpse of the ending of one monarchy and the beginning of another before Aslan appears behind them. Aslan announces their task has been completed:

> "You have done the work for which I brought you into Narnia…. I have come to bring you Home," said Aslan. Then he opened his mouth and blew….Then they saw that they were once again on the Mountain of Aslan, high up above and beyond the end of that world in which Narnia lies. (SC 251)

The children have completed their task of transition and are now ready to re-enter their own world forever changed by the events they have experienced in Narnia and countries beyond.

One final encounter confirms the change in Jill and Eustace. After the renewal of Caspian, the three children are given weapons and allowed to "set things right" at Experiment House (SC 255) but they must "only use the flat [part of the sword], for it is cowards and children, not warriors" which they will meet (SC 254-255).

With a ferocious roar Aslan breaks down the wall between His world and our own, revealing the rabble that was pursuing Jill and Eustace moments before their adventure began. Lewis makes a note while describing the following scene: the Head of Experiment House, finding her students being taken to task by three people in glittering clothes and a large lion sitting in the gap in the wall, fails to recognize Jill and Eustace (SC 256). This lack of recognition is truly the mark of the children's transformation. They have fulfilled Van Gennep's requirement of passing through a liminal space that will cause them to become something totally different than what they were before. In fact, their transformation is so powerful that it ends up changing the entire school: "And from that day forth, things changed for the better at Experiment House, and it became quite a good school" (SC 257). This is quite a compliment coming from an author whose memories of boarding school were nothing close to "happy" or "good." However, the more important development was this: "Jill and Eustace were always friends" (SC 257). This friendship is so strong that it will carry our heroes into the final Narnian installment, *The Last Battle*, where they are numbered among the Seven Friends of Narnia.

Chapter 4: The Magician's Nephew

There is one more book in *The Chronicles of Narnia* that is worth taking a look at in regards to its use of liminal space and liminal transition. *The Magician's Nephew* is the first book in a chronological ordering of the Narnia series but it is second to last in composition. This book describes the birth of Narnia, a world that has become one of the most beloved places in literature since its time of publication. However, *The Magician's Nephew* also offers up one of the most marked uses of liminal space in Lewis's series.

The Wood between the Worlds is a fascinating and beautiful representation of liminal space. But even before the two main heroes of this book, Polly Plummer and Digory Kirke, make it into the Wood, they arrive at 'The Wrong Door.' This is the title of the first chapter of the *Magician's Nephew* and very telling. How the two children came upon the 'wrong door' is interesting because they were actually in search of a door that *would* lead them to another 'world'.

Polly and Digory were exploring the tunnel in the attic that connected several houses along their street.

> "Look here," he said, "How long does this tunnel go on for? I mean, does it stop where your house ends?"
> "No," said Polly. "The walls don't go out to the roof. It goes on. I don't know how far."
> "Then we could get the length of the whole row of houses."
> "So we could," said Polly. "And oh, I say!"
> "What?"
> "We could get *into* the other houses." (MN 7)

Both children are anxious to begin exploration. The possibility of encountering a house full of adventures is a rich thought.

Unfortunately, Polly and Digory mis-calculate how far they should travel before ending up in the empty house beyond Digory's (MN 7-9). Instead, they end up in Uncle Andrew's 'forbidden' study. This is where they discover the magic yellow and green rings as well as Uncle Andrew's desire for human guinea pigs. With unctuous words, Uncle Andrew entices Polly to take one of the yellow rings, "with his love" (MN 15). Digory then berates his Uncle for being a coward and sending Polly away without even knowing the real consequences. Uncle Andrew, in true villainous style, plays upon Digory's sense of honor and chivalry.

> "Oh shut up!" said Digory. "If you had any honor and all that you'd be going yourself…I suppose you planned the whole thing, so that she'd go without knowing it and then I'd have to go after her."
> "Of course," said Uncle Andrew with his hateful smile. (MN 27)

Uncle Andrew, even though he holds the key to the portal, is not the guardian of that doorway. The guardian was supposed to serve as a blockage or bypass to the doorway of the temple of the deity. Unlike Maugrim who serves as a blockade between Edmund and the White Witch (someone who perceives herself to be a deity), Uncle Andrew is just another traveler who wants to explore other worlds like Digory but his motives are selfish and cruel. Digory labels him perfectly: "And you're simply a wicked, cruel magician like the ones in the stories. Well, I never read a story in which people of that sort weren't paid out in the end, and I bet you will be" (MN 27). This hope of justice propels Digory's resolve to take the yellow ring and save Polly.

Now we enter the Wood between the Worlds. Where Aslan's cliff-top wood in the *Silver Chair* serves as a pre-liminal space structured like an extended door-jam, the Wood between the Worlds is a pre-liminal space structure more like a hallway. This hallway,

however, does not merely connect the doorway at one end to another at the opposite end, it offers up multiple doorways all along its structure. “The pool [Digory] had just got out of was not the only pool. There were dozens of others – a pool every few yards as far as his eyes could reach” (MN 32). These are the doorways in and out of the Wood between the Worlds. Digory ascends through one from our world when he touches the yellow ring. This in-between place embodies the passage from our beginning state into a liminal space. Digory describes the wood as “not the sort of place where things happen” (MN 33). The hallway is just the precursor to the actual liminal space where things *can* happen.

Once Digory and Polly have discovered each other and rediscovered their purpose for being there, Digory makes a profound statement:

> “Uncle Andrew…only talked of one Other World. But suppose there were dozens?”
> “You mean this wood might be only one of them?”
> “No, I don’t believe this wood is a world at all. I think it’s just sort of an in-between place.”
> Polly looked puzzled. “Don’t you see?” said Digory. “No, do listen. Think of our tunnel under the slates at home. It isn’t a room in any of the houses. In a way, it isn’t really part of any of the houses. But once you’re in the tunnel you can go along it and come out into any of the houses in the row. Mightn’t this wood be the same?” (MN 38).

Digory has identified the pre-liminal hallway in his own terms. He goes on to discuss the fact that nothing ever happens in the passage between the houses only inside them (MN 39). They key is to get past the pre-liminal stage in order to get to the real liminal space. That is where adventures happen, characters develop and plots unfold.

Now we come to an interesting fork in the liminal road. Two worlds are visited within the story of the *Magician’s Nephew*: Charn and Narnia. Which one is the true liminal space? My claim is that both are liminal spaces because each helps the character (by that I

mean personal or moral) development of Polly and especially, Digory. But it is significant which place they visit first (and not just for the sake of the story).

Charn is one of the most haunting places in the entire *Chronicles of Narnia*. The massive city, once beautiful but now destroyed by wars and battles, was no doubt birthed from Lewis's remembrance of wartime events. Charn is full of silence like the Wood but "the silence of the Wood had been rich and warm…and full of life: this was a dead, cold empty silence" (MN 48). Polly is the first to sense the emptiness and implores Digory to go home. But Digory eagerly insists that they must have a look around: "We haven't even seen anything yet" (MN 48). Soon even Digory begins to rethink their plan because everything "was all so dreary and all so much the same" (MN 49).

Everything changes once the pair finds a room full of majestically dressed figures. Polly is the first to investigate the scene by examining the gorgeous clothes but her keen senses point out a very obvious fact: "Why haven't all these clothes all rotted away long ago?" (MN 53). Digory responds in a whisper, "Magic…Can't you feel it? I bet this whole room is just stiff with enchantments. I could feel it the moment we came in" (MN 53). Here we have a differentiation between the sensing abilities of our heroes. Where Digory senses the enchantment as soon as he came into the hall, Polly has actually been aware of the powerful presence since they entered Charn. Her desire to return to the Wood was not so much motivated out of fear but out of a subconscious "knowing" that this world is dangerous. Digory, motivated by his desire for adventure, cannot sense it until his initial appetite for exploration is satiated.

As Polly and Digory study the faces of the statue-like people, they both notice a gradual change from solemnity to cruelty to despair in their expressions. The last figure, a

woman, possessed a look "of such fierceness and pride that it took your breath away" (MN 54). Digory declares that he wishes he knew what the story behind such a collection and the pair turn to find a small table with a golden bell and hammer. After reading the inscription (which could only be read through the enchantment) a fight ensues between Polly and Digory about what to do. Here the ugliness of both characters comes out (due to the magic of the room or not) and Digory begins to show that he has more of Uncle Andrew in him than the reader realizes. In that spirit, Digory pins Polly to prevent her from escaping with her yellow ring and grabs the little hammer to strike the bell, calling the last figure to life.

The next few chapters reveal more of Polly's awareness and Digory's slow trudge toward realization. Immediately Polly dislikes Queen Jadis: "This is a terrible woman…. She's strong enough to break my arm with one twist… Whatever happens we mustn't let her know about the rings. I do hope Digory has the sense to keep his mouth shut" (MN 64). Polly's judgement contrasts greatly with Digory's first thoughts of Jadis: "She's wonderfully brave. And strong. She's what I call a Queen!" (MN 66). His first small moment of realization doesn't arrive until after Jadis utters words terribly similar to those of Uncle Andrew: "You must learn child, that what would be wrong for you or for any of the common people is not wrong in a great Queen such as I" (MN 71). However, even then Digory thinks these words "sounded much grander when Queen Jadis said them" (MN 71).

Finally, after Jadis retells the story of the destruction of her world, Digory reaches a full dislike of her: "Digory, now that he had heard the story, felt that he had seen quite as much of her as he wanted. Certainly, she was not at all the sort of person one would like to take home" (MN 73). This development proves that even Charn is a form of liminal space, though a stale and lifeless one. Charn's surroundings help to hone Digory's ability to

recognize deceit and sinister behavior. Towards the beginning of the story, Digory's encounter with his Uncle Andrew shows that he possesses discernment but needs refinement. Jadis, unknowingly, provides the tempering fire.

The next key place of transition does not appear until chapter eight. After a horrendous fight in London, Digory and Polly make an effort to transport Jadis back to the Wood or her own world. Unfortunately, in the confusion caused by the row, not only do they bring Jadis but Uncle Andrew, the horse Jadis was riding and the Cabby who owns the horse. Once in the Wood, Digory and Polly, successfully leap into another pool, hoping to get away but instead the entire party lands in a world of darkness.

Out of their black surroundings, all watch as Narnia is created by the Voice and its song. The creation of Narnia has been discussed at length by many other critics but for my purpose, Narnia serves as a place of transition after its birth. Once Aslan has created this new world and its inhabitants, he announces to a counsel of beasts that "This is the Boy…this is the Boy who did it" (MN 160). Digory is asked to explain how the witch, Jadis, came into Narnia. During the explanation Digory realizes that no excuse can help him in his mistake and he must tell Aslan the whole truth. The truth, he believes, will keep him from gaining anything that might help his sickly mother.

Digory could not be more mistaken in his assumption. After the story is told, Aslan delivers a speech full of hope:

> You see, friends," he said, "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….But do not be cast down….Evil will come of that evil, but it is still a long way off, and I will see to it that the worst falls on myself…. And as Adam's race has done the harm, Adam's race shall help to heal it." (MN 161-162).

The transforming capacity of Narnia is summed up in this speech. The world that Aslan created has the power to change evil for good and bring restoration to a wounded land. In a place such as this, is it any wonder that Digory cannot lie about the events with Jadis? Are we surprised that the Cabby, now in Narnia, "looked younger and nicer, and more like a countryman and less like a London cabman"? (MN 162).

The best part of Aslan's speech is the knowledge that there is redemption for someone who is burdened with guilt and pain. Aslan turns to Digory and asks one of the most telling questions in the book "Son of Adam… are you ready to undo the wrong that you have done to my sweet country of Narnia on the very day of its birth?" (MN 167). For a moment we see the old Digory who begins to make excuses or contemplates bargaining with the great lion, but then he thinks better of it and answers with a simple, "Yes" (MN 168). Digory is on the cusp of realizing a true change in his self.

Once he is charged with the task of obtaining a silver apple from a far off garden in the West, Digory embarks on his journey. Digory has already shown that his ability to discern the evil in people has been sharpened, but his trust in Aslan shows how he is also able to see the good. After reaching the garden with Polly and Fledge, Digory walks up the garden gate and there finds himself in a situation similar to Charn. A plaque gives instructions on what to do. Digory carefully reads those words and follows the first two lines as he enters the garden through the golden gates and picks a silver apple for Aslan. However, Lewis doesn't make him immune to the powerful enticement the apples offer. Digory stands firm in his resolution not to taste the shining fruit and places the apple in his pocket.

Digory's second victory, and most important one, is his final encounter with Jadis. Seeing her face stained with the dark juice of the silver apple she has just consumed, shocks

Digory to his senses. He immediately thinks of Polly's and Fledge's safety. But Digory will have to endure the most emotional onslaught of words he has yet to face. The witch cunningly tells him how the silver apple could change his life: "Your home will be happy again. You will be like other boys" (MN 193). Then Jadis attacks Aslan, claiming that he has done nothing to deserve Digory's faithfulness.

In the midst of her angry, horrid tirade, we are given a glimpse of Digory's development. Not only does he fully recognize the evil Jadis embodies, but his senses have brought him into another level of discernment. In a moment similar to Jill's experience in the Underworld, Jadis labels Aslan a "wild animal." Digory responds: "I – I don't think he is a wild animal…He is – I don't know…" (MN 193). Digory sees something in Aslan that is beyond the obvious. He had already demonstrated a flicker of recognition in the very early moments of Narnia's creation. As the stars were being born Lewis writes this:

> "If you had seen and heard it, as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves which were singing, and that the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing" (MN 117).

Lewis does not describe Polly's view but Digory's instead. This and his description of Aslan later on (or lack of the ability to fully give one), demonstrates his transition from the tear-stained little boy in the beginning to a mature, thoughtful, sensitive and caring young man. Without such development, it is doubtful Digory could have returned to Aslan with the silver apple. Nor would Digory have been rewarded with an apple to take to his mother had he not moved beyond the point of a selfish child in the courts of Charn.

Once again Narnia proves itself to be a powerful liminal space for those who enter its lands. From the very beginning, the atmosphere, born from the voice of Aslan himself, compels visitors to rise above what they were and become someone who is a better and more

beautiful version of his or her self. Though every person who travels across the threshold between our world and Narnia is affected, there are those characters whose lives are profoundly changed. I have touched on three in the last few chapters: Digory, Jill and the most memorable for many readers, Edmund.

The changes that we see in these characters hold the key to the staying power of Lewis's work. In Narnia the average person becomes extraordinary. The transformative power of this world is rarely seen in other works. It isn't just about moving from pauper to prince or downtrodden stepsister to queen of the realm. Lewis offers more. He offers the reader a place where they are not only challenged and changed physically, but spiritually as well.

Chapter 5: Re-enchantment

"What should happen upon re-entry"

So what happens next? If I have proven that Lewis does create a liminal space, a space for profound character construction and enhancement, what is the point of it all? What good is a liminal space to someone once he or she has left it? Now we have come to the point – the mysterious and fantastic place of re-enchantment.

To be re-enchanted, there first must be disenchantment. The phrase "the disenchantment of the world", used by Friedrich Schiller but appropriated by Max Weber (Jenkins 11), is a theory that, according to author Christopher Partridge, "describes a network of social and religious forces" that were driven by rationalism leading humanity towards a godless existence (*Re-enchantment* 8). In his book *The Re-enchantment of the West: Volume I,* Partridge connects Weber's theory about disenchantment to others such as Nietzsche and his "death of God" view (8). However, though Weber's theory may agree in thought it does not agree in spirit with his contemporaries. Partridge makes it clear that Weber did not welcome the projected outcome of a godless world, void of meaning and significance (*Re-enchantment* 8).

In the pursuit of knowledge, humanity did something on a much more literary level that only furthered the disenchantment. According to J.R.R. Tolkien:

> Fairy –stories have in the modern lettered world been relegated to the 'nursery', as shabby or old-fashioned furniture is relegated to the playroom, primarily because the adults do not want it, and do not mind if it is misused (*Tree and Leaf* 34).

Because they do not further the enlightened mindset of the modern world, fairy-stories are put on the back burner with other things like myths (which are linked in Tolkien's literary view).

Peter Lowentrout describes society's situation this way: "The steady demythologization of our culture over the past centuries has been both enriching and impoverishing – a necessary precursor to greater insight and yet all too often psychically and spiritually debilitating" (47). Lowentrout continues by stating that this demythologization has created a "world emptied of its meaning" where "we reduce ourselves to objects" (47). Our desire for knowledge and explanations has reduced humanity to mere numbers that can be manipulated in any manner which a person chooses, should it serve his or her purpose. Lowentrout reiterates his concern for our world's current state in a powerful but haunting paragraph:

> Swinging from one extreme to another, we have moved from a simple faith in our relation to and importance for cosmic process to a lack of faith in all but radical relativism which at its worst enervates, and which denies us the reasonable access to the sacred. Look beyond the feverish concerns of our day and you will find a world painfully wrenched free of the myths that once sustained it and bound it up in common cause with all creation, a world filled too full with weightless and frightened people (47).

If the world was in such a state when Lowentrout wrote his article in 1985, how much more "weightless and frightened" were the people of Lewis's day during and after the World Wars? The need for the restorative powers of myth was just as great.

However, there is hope for the dying myth. Due to the increasing level of scientific inquiry and a modern desire to rid all things natural of any supernatural association, humanity has produced the reverse: a desire in itself to see the supernatural or encounter the divine. Tolkien labels the modern world as "an age of improved means to deteriorated ends"

but he continues on to say that "it is part of the essential malady of such days – producing the desire to escape, not indeed from life, but from our present time and self-made misery – that we are acutely conscious both of the ugliness of our works, and of their evil" (*Tree and Leaf* 65).

So starts a vicious cycle: the modern world abandons fairy tales because they are unrealistic or lacking enlightenment, a world void of enchantment is created, the desire to escape from modern life is fueled and fairy tales are brought in to serve as an escape. Please note that I am using the word 'escape' and not 'enchantment'. Lewis, as well as Tolkien, draws a clear distinction between tales that are 'escapist' in nature and those that are able to enchant their reader beyond this world and into another.

Lewis encouraged the world to return to the fairy tale for something that is lacking in this modern time, something that is intangible, something that science cannot create or verify. Lewis puts it this way:

> It would be much truer to say that fairy land arouses a longing for he (the reader) knows not what. It stirs and troubles him… with the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth. He does not despise real woods because he has read of enchanted woods: *the reading makes all the real woods a little enchanted*. (OOW 29-30 emphasis added).

Lewis isn't writing about escapist stories. He draws a hard line between the two stating that each produces a longing in the reader: "one is an *askesis*, a spiritual exercise, and the other is a disease" (OOW 30). The woods of this world only become enchanted if the reader's longing is produced by the first category of fairy tales and not the second.

Enchantment is the key to understanding Lewis and his writings because they are meant to be "a spiritual exercise". Wesley A. Kort, professor of Religion at Duke University,

states “Lewis believes that religion can be rightly understood only by people who live in a world that is at least to some degree *enchanted*. An enchanted world is one that intrigues the person and that presents itself as being, at least in some respects, more significant than the person and his or her own interests” (Kort 33 author’s emphasis). If we do not take “religion” to mean Christianity but merely spirituality, the entertaining any thoughts upon the divine must come from an “enchanted” or re-enchanted mind because such notions are clearly beyond empirical and tangible experience.

Kort also echoes Lowentrout’s concern regarding the way humans view one another as objects, basically stating that only as long as someone is serving your personal interests can they be of value. They have no value in and of themselves, only what you place on them because of how they serve your personal interests. This attitude can not comfortably exist in a world that is enchanted because there is the intangible significance that lies just beyond the veil – a meaning that you can not define nor can you deny. Donald Glover points out “Lewis suggest[ed] that the greatest obstacle to acceptance of a role in the cosmic dance is learning that you are not dancing solo but are part of an intricately patterned ensemble” (“The Magician’s Book” 221). When we accept “our role” we cannot totally depend on ourselves because the “cosmic dance” requires trust in another. However, to recognize “the dance” there first must be re-enchantment.

If our own world is disenchanted, and the human race is full of people who “evince cynicism, suspicion and cultural alienation not only because [the World Wars] have forced them to but because they were predisposed by modern culture to such attitudes” (Kort 34), is it a shock to discover that in order to be re-enchanted we must journey outside our own world and into another? Narnia is a place that has value in and of itself, not value placed upon it by

us. Lewis stripped away "the stained glass" in order to allow us entrance into an enchanted world and give us the chance to be re-enchanted.

In each instance of liminal transformation described in the previous section, whether it is Edmund, Jill, or Digory, the character in question is ushered into this enchanted realm and challenged to think beyond his or her self. For example, Edmund realizes that his act of betrayal has an impact beyond himself. Narnia might never be the same because of what he has done. Here is the point where we can see how much Narnia differs from our own world: Edmund is not condemned and devalued by those around him. Instead, through Aslan, he is redeemed and restored to a level of value beyond what this world could give him: Edmund is crowned a King.

But transformation is only legitimate if the person affected re-enters our world with a new perspective; a re-enchanted perspective. Does Edmund remain a changed person? Did his experience with Aslan in Narnia stick? According to the book:

> As soon as [Peter, Susan and Lucy] had breakfasted they all went out, and there they saw Aslan and Edmund walking together in the dewy grass, apart from the rest of the court. There is no need to tell you (and no one has ever heard) what Aslan was saying, but it was a conversation which Edmund never forgot (LWW 152).

And, though I did not focus on it here, in *The Last Battle*, Edmund appears with the other "friends of Narnia" (TLB 168-169).

Jill and Digory are certainly two other characters that have been forever changed by their Narnian experience. Jill, after she is forced to look at her own selfishness, is sent on a quest to re-ignite her self worth – something that has been trampled upon by the students at Experiment House (SC 1-3). For Digory, he finds himself in much the same place as Edmund. His selfish actions brought evil into Narnia before its first day was completed and

as such, he must make things right by completing the task Aslan sets before him, a task that changes his entire outlook (MN 197). And like Edmund, Digory and Jill are both listed among the "friends of Narnia" at the end of days.

Sally Rigsbee, though she is solely comparing Lucy (from LWW) to Irene in *The Princess and the Goblin,* says it perhaps best in her article "Fantasy Places and Imaginative Belief":

> The [heroes & heroines] return to the world of reality having achieved a new stage in development, a new status, and a new perspective on life. Their selfhood is enriched, for the memories of their experiences in the fantasy places undergird their belief in the value of imagination and the importance of the intangible, spiritual dimensions of human existence (10).

Here is an example that proves even the characters that do not appear to be in need of transformation, are affected by their time within Narnia. Lucy, the one who first encounters the amazing world within the wardrobe and who Rigsbee labels as "spiritually superior to her siblings" (10) is still in need of re-enchantment on some level.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to examine C.S. Lewis's use of liminal space in three of the volumes in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The "doorways" Lewis provides are not only for the sake of the story's development but for the development of the reader. By employing liminal space, Lewis has created points of easy access, allowing the reader to embark upon his or her own journey of transition, transformation, and (hopefully) re-enchantment.

Through the course of several chapters, I have examined the term liminal space and its application to *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, *The Silver Chair*, and *The Magician's Nephew*. As part of this analysis, the term liminal space (*limens* = "doorway") has been expanded from being applied not only to the primary place of entry (e.g. the wardrobe) but to examine the effect other "doorways" have on characters within Narnia. These additional "doorways" provide growth and refinement of character, morality and truth.

In addition to the changes seen while inside the overall liminal space of Narnia, the changes seen in characters after exiting Narnia were also examined in the chapter on Re-enchantment. If the characters simply returned to our world in the same state in which they left, the liminal space was not effective and transition/transformation did not occur. But in all three works mentioned here, the change in each character lasted far beyond his or her Narnian experience. This is especially true in the cases of Edmund, Jill and Digory who were the most re-enchanted among those who ventured into Narnia.

In *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, four children are taken out of their normal lives and walked through a series of passages within the ultimate doorway of liminal space. Peter, Susan, Lucy and especially Edmund all change (to differing degrees) and find crowns placed upon their heads because of their encounters beyond the wardrobe door. In *The Silver*

Chair, Jill and the recently transformed Eustace, are given the chance to find the potential within themselves. And in *The Magician's Nephew*, Digory's less than happy existence is left behind when he enters a place filled with hope and life. Each outcome, every shift, could not have happened if the characters had not walked through a "doorway", through a liminal space, and into that place of transition and transformation, Narnia.

The application of Van Gennep's term to the *Chronicles* was not one he had expected but I believe his research has actually helped to uncover a deeper understanding of the sustained interest and inspiration Lewis's works have provided over the years. Without Narnia, Edmund (and all readers like Edmund) would still be reserved, cold, and filled with bitterness. The same goes for Jill and Digory. Every reader has found one or more characters in the series with whom he or she can identify. Narnia is an amazing place that (via the "doorway") takes us away from this world filled with empirical data and lets us journey through a landscape that transforms us back into human beings, full of value and meaning.

Many feel that it is our world's fate to end up as another Charn. Polly asks Aslan this very question toward the end of The Magician's Nephew:

> "…[Charn] is ended, as if it had never been. Let the race of Adam and Eve take warning."
> "Yes Aslan," said both the children. But Polly added, "But we're not quite as bad as that world, are we Aslan?"
> "Not yet, Daughter of Eve," he said. "not yet. But you are growing more like it." (MN 212)

If we do not become a re-enchanted race where "people and cosmos are once again intimately linked" (Lowentrout 49) and value to the individual as part of something greater is restored, our world is certainly on the path to discovering the Deplorable Word.

I would not be doing my job if I didn't end with a prescription on how Lewis would advise us all to steer clear of Charn's horrid end. To avoid this, we must return to the art of story-telling and go in search of "doorways" that lead us through transformation and into a state of re-enchantment. Lewis writes "those who have a story to tell must appeal to the audience that still cares for story-telling" (OOW 41). We must do this even though "the literary world of today is little interested in the narrative art as such" (OOW 41). The stories of the Fantastic or Mythical, according to Lewis, are "available at all ages for some readers…[and] at its best…it can give us experiences we never had and instead of commenting on life, *can add to it*" (OOW 38 emphasis added).

J.R.R. Tolkien comments on his hope that we do not reach Charn's level of death and decay:

> Before we reach such states we need recovery. We should look at green again, and be startled anew (but not blinded) by blue and yellow and red. We should meet the centaur and the dragon and then perhaps suddenly behold, like ancient shepherds, sheep, and dogs, and horses – and wolves. This recovery fairy-stories help us to make….Recovery… is a re-gaining – regaining of a clear view (*Tree and Leaf* 57).

Narnia is an excellent example of recovery. Many readers have found within Lewis's works a startling new view of the world and all that is in it. Lewis, according to Donald Glover, "had essentially one message: the search for truth begins with a longing to recapture an impression which has tantalized our senses and our minds" (*Art of Enchantment* 201).

It is time to go in search of that "far off country" and become more like Lewis in our relation to fairy-tales:

> When I was ten, I read fairy-tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty I read them openly (OOW 25).

The Chronicles of Narnia is one of the best places to begin a path towards re-enchantment. Not because it is the focus of this paper, but because Lewis was keenly aware of the effect fairy-tales could have on a value-stripped, men-without-chests society. Characters like Edmund, Jill and Digory give us hope – hope that we are part of something greater than ourselves. Narnia excites that longing for a place where one day we will begin "Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before" (TLB 228). So let us hope that authors will take Lewis's advice and continue to clear the path toward liminal spaces and "doorways" that will transform readers and redirect us down the road of re-enchantment.

Abbreviations:

Since there are many C.S. Lewis works used in this paper, titles have been abbreviated as follows within citations:

OOW = *Of Other Worlds*

LWW = *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*

SC = *Silver Chair*

MN = *The Magician's Nephew*

TLB = *The Last Battle*

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