Chapter I

“I see with a myriad eyes”: Ontological Self-Consciousness in a Reading of Fantasy Fiction

“imaginative literature is our most fundamental mode of inscription of reality, and it is imaginative or imagistic concreteness that we need for this purpose. . .” (Falck 151).

Alice laughed. “There’s no use trying,” she said: “one can’t believe impossible things.”

“I daresay you haven’t had much practice,” said the Queen. “When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

(Carroll, Through the Looking Glass 238)

1.1 Introduction:

The genre of Fantasy Fiction had earlier suffered disparagement for providing an unhealthy form of escapism, for diminishing reason, for representing dangers and excesses of the imagination and was further censured by the prevalent literati for its derogatory association with another marginalized literature, writing for children. At present, the growing popularity of the genre suggests that some kind of reconciliation has been reached in order to license both the mass production and mass consumption of these forms. Accounting for the genre’s popularity may lie in several domains: psychoanalytical theories emphasise upon the deep structure such as the “monomyth”, “The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero . . . in the rights of passage: separation – initiation – return,” (Campbell 30); the “collective unconscious” of Carl
Jung recognizes that certain symbols or, “‘primordial images,’ or ‘archetypes’ . . . belong to the basic stock of the unconscious psyche” (Jung 112) shared by humanity. The genre is also explored in conjunction with psychoanalytical thinkers such as Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan’s theory of ‘the other’; notions of desire and the unconscious; the Romantic theory of imagination and fancy and the relationship between lack and desire in the Fairy Tale which Armitt explores (24). In addition to these studies, this chapter suggests that the popularity indicates that writers and readers have adopted a “new aesthetic” (Siebers 22): one that licenses an indulging in “narratives that deal with impossible and preternaturals” (AEC 50) as seen in the recent proliferation in fiction and in film of fantasy and science-fictional worlds. The popularity that the genre enjoys, suggests that not only is there an acceptance of what has been purportedly seen as “unreal”¹ but also an acknowledgement that one subscribes to a particular version of reality by practicing a knowing or willing participation in the artifice of the author’s imaginative construct which epitomizes the reading of Fantasy Fiction as an ontological self-consciousness. C.S. Lewis acknowledges the same when he proposes that in reading great imaginative literature, which has no bearing with our experiential world, one is aware of entering into the artifices of the author’s constructed “other world” but it is to the benefit of the reader who may “see with a myriad eyes” and “transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do” (AEC 141). Lewis and his contemporary J.R.R. Tolkien (1892 – 1973) were particularly important in popularizing the genre or to use Fantasy to “seriously” engage with a culture that had become increasingly secularized or “disenchanted”.

The “disenchantment” also cause critics to interpret the formalization of the genre as a reaction to the eighteenth century Enlightenment philosophy that perpetuated an intellectual and rational certitude reflected in scientific advancements.² In this context, the
world of Fantasy, of “enchantment” and “wonder” exists in contradistinction to a world
*contained* by a descriptive scientific system which does not afford conjectures of a
metaphysical “other-world” but instead propounds an image of the world as quantifiable.
Fantasy Fiction as a counter-narrative challenges the elision of magic and the
supernatural that began with the Age of Enlightenment and the later Modern period which
furthered the undue conflation of the “rational” with the “real world”. Max Weber’s
observes this historical development as a “disenchantment of the world” or
“*Entzauberung*”, an increasing emphasis on the knowledge of the universe via “empirical
observation and the experimental method of the natural sciences” and less through the
“supernatural forces and salvation doctrines” (Kalberg xxii-iii). Weber’s essay “Science
as Vocation” encapsulates the way science or empiricism produced a notion of progress
encouraged by rapid innovation and advancement (321). This increased man’s confidence
in an intellectualization and rationalization which could produce an objective knowledge
of the world which we may have access to. Kalberg states, “that principally there are no
mysterious incalculable powers that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle,
master all things by calculation. This means, however, that the world is disenchanted”
(Weber, “Vocation” 322) and science becomes the sole form of representation (Weber,
“Rejections” 341).

A certitude guaranteed in human systems of knowledge also effected language as one
may gather from Timothy J. Reiss’s description in his work *The Discourse of Modernism*
of, “‘analytico-referential discourse,’ a language of assertion and possession that is
structured syntactically using “elements that refer adequately through concepts to the
true, objective nature of the world” (qtd. in Lucy, 85). This is reaffirmed in another
reference to the philosopher of science Daniel Dennett, “He argues that science tends
towards the ‘desire to reduce, to unite, to explain it all in one big overarching theory’”
resulting in, “no oneness” (Eaglestone 191). In lieu of this increasing disenchantment, what role does the genre of Fantasy Fiction play? Zipes writes that the genre may perform the function of a, “profane conveyer of religious experience” (Fairy Tale as Myth 3) or the less authoritative and more popular carrier and transmitter of the sacred narratives of myth and religion, thereby performing the same functions as supernatural narratives such as the Bible. Kath Filmer proposes the same by framing the scepticism of the late twentieth century in relation to this genre, “fantasy speaks religion” (iii). In this role, Fantasy Fiction succeeds as a substitution of sacred narratives since it is less susceptible to scrutiny and total disavowal as its claims to truth and “reality” are protected by irony. In this respect, the Oxford Fantasists, such as C.S. Lewis and his contemporaries were aware of the functionality of their fictional worlds to dispense Christian truth. The problematization of “belief” – in something that is at variance with an experiential reality or at variance with one’s own belief - is relieved through irony or the understanding that the Fantasy world is, “a symbolic construct of reality” (Zipes, “Commodified Fantasticism”189).

With the Age of Enlightenment or the rationalizing and secular tenets that inform Modernity an element of self-consciousness or ‘irony’, is introduced in imaginative literature or Fantasy Fiction in particular. This is apparent in two areas: authors of Fantasy Fiction may be said to self-consciously ground themselves along the more accepted canon of literary realism or the more respectable mimetic tradition. Fantasy, in this way, is realised through a conscientious effort to apprehend and establish a set of assumptions against which it then operates. Fantasy Fiction thus self-consciously strives towards achieving a quality of ‘strangeness’ by positioning itself against norms and expectations generated by realistic fiction or instituted by the dominant belief. Second, readers must acknowledge participation in something which has no bearing with their
experiential world introducing an element of self-consciousness in this effort; brought about by the secularization or the “disenchantment of the world”, as aforementioned. This brings to one’s attention two interrelated areas which this chapter will elaborate on in reference to the imaginative enterprise of C.S. Lewis in *Chronicles*. How is the present popularity of the genre understood in relation with the reader’s growing acquiescence to the demands of the fictitious world? Or inversely, may the earlier castigation of this form be a direct result of a reader’s inability to resolve fictitious worlds with the experiential “real” world, problematizing belief and participation?

This chapter proposes that the popularity of Fantasy Fiction has increased with the reader’s deferential acceptance of the fictitious world or the awareness of ontological self-consciousness when reading a work of Fantasy. Central to the many definitions of what Fantasy, the Fantastic, and what the genre entails, is a recognition that the genre is a fundamental mode in its activities of world-production or the fabrication of “alternative realities”. Authors self-consciously offer *versions* of reality as seen in the genre’s propensity to generate “new vocabulary for conceptualizing the real” (Armitt 10). Hence, the Fantasy lexicon perpetuates the ideal of world-construction or reality-construction generating a close correspondence with ontological queries characteristic of postmodern fiction and the thought that one subscribes to a particular *version* of reality.

Quoting from Northrop Frye, Schlobin writes that the genre, “comes closest of all the arts to creation *ex nihilo*” (xiv). To propose that a reader is aware of entering this constructed reality is perhaps most discernible in the way readers assume this stance of self-awareness while they must simultaneously respond to the persuasions of the author and the text to enter into a world that exists at great variance with their experiential world or assaults their greater sense of reality. In this case, how may authors reinforce truth to the imaginary construct? This chapter proposes that authors validate their fictional worlds by
facilitating entry and subsequent acceptance of the greater design of the fictional worlds by persuading readers to abandon the rules and norms of their world; thus the success of their world as achieving a credibility or arbitrating a sense of reality relies on the reader’s acquiescence to participate in this given world. This recognition and subsequent agreement to enter the author’s world may resemble the Queen’s retort to Alice, as seen above, and one that appears to require “practice”, in the denotation of a tried and laboured sense such as the Queen’s usage suggests. The Queen’s declaration that she is capable of believing impossible things, is indicative of a different kind of belief at the level of fiction: a complicit agreement in order that an in-credible “alternative reality” may approximate a degree of credibility. In this way, this chapter also welcomes the term “practice” not only in the meaning that is implied by the Queen, but also as a means for this researcher to insinuate a custom or convention that has become routine in all reading of Fantasy Fiction and genres of the “unreal” especially in a postmodern context of ontological self-consciousness.

1.2 Fantasy Fiction as “Make-Shift Ontology”

Fantasy Fiction, as “make-shift ontology” or an ontologically independent and viable world analogous to the real world is based on an understanding of what is meant by “ontological commitment” concerning the relationship between fiction and the real world. How far a work of literature must have ontological commitment to a real world is dependent on the genre as seen in the example of the “heterocosmic model”. Jibu Mathew George builds on M.H. Abram’s *The Mirror and the Lamp*, according to which, “the only criterion applicable to a literary work is that its ‘possible world’ should be ‘compossible’” (176) and the basis of its truth is not how it should relate to the real world but its internal consistency. The author explores this especially with supernatural narratives of religion which may be said to have no ontological commitment as per the genre of Fantasy Fiction
and he examines religious narratives, their claim to reality, as capable of shifts between
the aesthetic and the ontological and operate both in the narrative-mode and the
ontological-mode, a choice which the author says is left to the reader/listener allowing
narrative which is received as “real” to function as narrative fiction. The heterocosmic
model allows the reader to be ontologically self-conscious of the wholly other world that
is presented to them and ask a different set of questions that are permitted within this
understanding; in recognition of an “other world”.

One must also pose a question as to what is expected from fiction and how it relates to
postmodernism. The diachronic historical development in literature illustrates a
movement from realism to modernism to postmodernism. Victorian Realism assumed that
there was an objective world that one can know and using precise language one can
represent that world. The novel was confident that it could do this. However, the First
World War (1914 -1918) shattered this confidence which led to writers creating new
modes; a crises-oriented art or as Ezra Pound proposes “make it new” (Childs 3) which
could respond to the crises-oriented worldview. This however did not negate the world;
the change was at the level of art or requiring a new kind of art. Postmodernism, on the
other hand, suggests that the world cannot be taken for granted: it is discourse, it is
representation and it creates the identity of the world. Fantasy Fiction, in this light,
became an important form of drawing attention to ontological presuppositions that
questioned what world is being presented; what version of reality did one subscribe to.
Importantly, the diachronic development of Western Literature also displays the shift
from epistemic to ontological presuppositions in a work of fiction, which one finds
relevant in Fantasy Fiction and distinguishes this genre from its “legitimate forbears
[which] include the fairytale, the Romance, and the fable” (Timmerman 2). The recurrent
themes of the supernatural, the numinous and the strange as shared by the tradition of
Western literature with Fantasy Fiction is made possible via an accretion and recycling of narrative in the formalization of the genre. Hence, this is presumed to form the basis of Fantasy Fiction in subject and in style. In what way, then, may one distinguish Fantasy Fiction as a genre distinct from these narratives?

The historical development of literary genres as detailed in Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957) illustrates a hierarchical and historical movement beginning with the genre of Myth where the “hero is a divine being. . . a story about a god”; followed by Romance where the hero is superior in some degree to “other men and his environment” (33) “whose actions are marvellous”; this is then followed by the Epic and Tragedy, the hero is “superior in degree to other men but not to his natural environment” (33-4), he is the hero of the “high mimetic mode” (34); followed by Realist Fiction or comedy, the “low mimetic mode” where the hero is “one of us”; and finally Ironic Fiction, where the hero is “inferior in power or intelligence to ourselves” (34). In other terms, Western Literary history illustrates a movement from “enchantment” narrative such as Myth towards an increasing “disenchantment” of the genres. The hierarchical development articulates an apparent *increase* in Realism and a *decrease* in Fantasy.

If this is so, where does twentieth century Fantasy Fiction as a genre fit in? Michael Saler discusses this in his text *As If* (2011) as remedying the assumption held from the late eighteenth century onwards that modernity is incompatible with ‘enchantment’ (“Ironic Imagination” 137). Identifying the “ironic imagination”, Saler explains how when one reads contemporary Fantasy Fiction, one is aware of its artifice, it’s fictitiousness however this does not deter the reader but the reader enters into a deal with the literary world and one’s enjoyment of the world is a result of that deal. “Enchantment” is defined as that “sense of delight and astonishment at the wonders, marvels, and mysteries that
they believed had been characteristic to the premodern view” which suffered disrepute by Modernity’s “iron cage of reason” (138). “Enchantment”, however, may mean both a “delight” and recognition that one may be “placed under their spell” which may be, “prevented precisely through being aware of this possibility” (138). Here Saler illustrates a self-conscious “strategy of embracing illusions while acknowledging their artificial status” (As If 12) in what he terms as “a disenchanted enchantment” (12), which entails the possibilities of being “delighted” without being “deluded” (Saler 12). In his other article, Saler terms this as the “ironic imagination” (139) reconciling the dissonance between the real world and fiction and the increase in the imaginary as part of “a larger cultural project of the West: that of re-enchanting an allegedly disenchanted world” (As If 6). Saler’s definition is united in the term “ontological self-consciousness” which this chapter proposes as a recognition that the genre of Fantasy Fiction produces provisional and contingent narratives or worlds, presupposing questions of ontology and finds greater resonance with the poetics of postmodernist fiction. Reverting back to Northrop Frye’s hierarchical survey and list of genres, one may now observe that what Frye actually illustrates is an increase in ontological self-consciousness through history made possible because of the increase in realism and subsequent demands on the reader to reconcile this with Fantasy worlds. This greater reconciliation attests to the popularity of the fiction.

1.3 “Of Other Worlds”: Mythopoesis and Sub-creation

Authors such as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien saw themselves as participating in the greater project of re-enchanting the world. Lewis acknowledges this, “Do you think I’m trying to weave a spell? Perhaps I am; but remember your fairy tales. Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as for inducing them” (“Weight” 31). Tolkien adds to this, “Small wonder that spell means both a story told, and a formula of power over living men” (“On Fairy Stories” 32) while the gospel for Tolkien was seen as a “good spell”
now known as “enchantment” (Sammons 188). One way in which they re-enchanted the world is in their return to myth via a creative art which they termed as “sub-creation” also known as “mythopoesis” or “myth-making”. For Tolkien, “Sub-creation” is an aspect of mythology (26) where “new form is made” (25) and achieves new approximations of reality with the acknowledgement that Fantasy world may exhibit, “the inner consistence of reality” which is arrived at via the “derived notions of ‘unreality’ . . . of unlikeness to the Primary World), of freedom from the domination of observed ‘fact’, in short of the fantastic” (44).

Their activities of world-construction have largely been overlooked by the critics of Fantasy Fiction as the informal literary group which represented themselves as “The Inklings” comprising of these British writers are largely read within the genre of the “theological romance fantasy” and are such rooted in a strong Judaeo-Christian tradition (Swinfen 148). Due to this, they are seen as participating in, “a nostalgic, humanistic vision...[looking] back to a lost moral and social hierarchy” (Jackson 2) and hence a reading of their innovative writing and imaginative techniques are overlooked or simplified. In addition, the twentieth century British fantasists, themselves, may be recognized as not only writers but theoreticians of Fantasy Fiction, who were intent on emphasising a certain truth to their “elvish craft” (Tolkien 45), a paradoxical effort that meant using fable to house truth. Rosemary Jackson’s definition of fantasy excludes these writers yet Lewis and his contemporaries may be seen as displaying “oxymoronic and subversive elements” in the use of fantasy to express faith (Brogan 3).

Tolkien coins the term “Secondary Belief” for the kind of reality that the Fantasy world achieves and how this draws both author and reader into the pretence of the imaginative world. In other words, the genre establishes a “consensus reality” (Hume 21) or a mutual effort to build an agreed-upon acceptance of the world. The basic tenets of reality as
shared by author and reader are subsequently reversed as the presence of the fantastic is ushered, forging a wholly other construct of the Fantasy world (Rabkin 78). Hume cites this further with Robert Scholes, ““It is because reality cannot be recorded that realism is dead. All writing, all composition, is construction. We do not imitate the world, we construct versions of it. There is no mimesis, only poiesis. No recording. Only constructing” (qtd. in Hume, 24).

Brian McHale’s *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987) emphasises this in his distinction between epistemological and ontological questions in modernist and postmodernist fiction, respectively. Borrowing from Roman Jackobson’s understanding of the “dominant” (6), McHale identifies that the dominant of modernist fiction is epistemological foregrounding which asks a different set of questions relating to the stable objective world (9). Postmodernist fiction, on the other hand, is ontological and uses methods which according to McHale, presuppose questions such as what Dick Higgins calls “post-cognitive” (qtd. in McHale, 11) asking questions such as:

‘Which world is this? . . . . Other typical postmodernist questions bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects, for instance: What is a world?; What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?’ (qtd. in McHale, 10)

The dominant of postmodernist fiction as “ontological” derives from an understanding of Thomas Pavel’s definition of ontology as a “theoretical description of a universe” (qtd. in McHale, 27) rather than the universe, suggesting a “plurality of universes” (27) which may extend to describing fictional possible worlds (27) which functions “in the twentieth century under the rubric of ‘fictionality’” (28). In acquiring a “visible maker”, the
fictional world becomes, “less the mirror of nature, more an artifact, visibly a made thing” (30). This again finds parallels with Fantasy Fiction which draws attention to its status as an imaginary construct or “draws attention to its own fictiveness” (Jay 6), by questioning our notions of reality and re-envisions what is meant by reality in refusing to accept the experiences of the “real world” as a standard of the “real”. Ontological questions encourage the reader to, “abandon the actual world and adopt (temporarily) the ontological perspective of the literary work” (33).

Similarly, Fantasy Fiction as “characterized by a mode of thought that embraces the empirically impossible in its most elevated examples and the socially impossible in its most pedestrian ones” (Schlobin x) issues a call to believability or participation which is decisively different as McHale offers in his definition of the ontological presuppositions of postmodernist fiction. Furthermore, one may infer that one has moved beyond a preliminary compulsion to “suspend disbelief” and instead Fantasy and Science Fiction have become contesting re-presentations of reality and as such have become an indubitable part of how we have structured our conception of the world in our welcoming of new forms of alternative realities with our own.

Believability is thus characterized as a bargain that one enters into with the author to knowingly participate in the imaginary. Any make-shift ontology implies a set of commonly agreed upon rules depending not on “descriptive truth, but on conformity to his [writer’s] hypothetical postulates” or, “the accepted postulate, the contract agreed on by the reader before he can start reading” (Frye 76). One such contract or the believability that is particular to the literary convention of the Fantastic may be articulated in the reversal of ground rules for the ground rules that one adheres to produces a set of perspectives as formulated by Eric S. Rabkin. When one enters a Fantasy world, one must agree to surrender a number of real-world perspectives in exchange for the perspectives
offered by the Fantasy world for the experience of the Fantastic depends on the
“contradiction of perspectives” (4). Questions of ontology are pushed into the foreground
but is also followed by a necessary agreement that is provoked in the reader to indulge in
a world that is at variance with the experiential world. This is usually done via the
characters who act together with the reader. Thus when characters such as Peter and
Susan Pevensie do not believe that their sister, Lucy, has indeed entered into the
imaginary “other world” of Narnia via the wardrobe, Professor Kirke must initiate
persuasive rhetoric to reinforce believability to this imaginative construct at the level of
the reader who participates vicariously through the characters. The reversal of ground
rules is apparent when Peter challenges the believability of Lucy’s story when they’re
unable to find the country in the wardrobe. To which the Professor replies,

‘What has that to do with it?’ said the Professor.
‘Well, sir, if things are really, they’re there all the time’.
‘Are they?’ said the Professor; and Peter did not know quite what to say’. (LWW 49)

This falls in line with Lewis’ term of “supposal” ⁴ as not only a means for ontological
presuppositions, one that is contrived and constructed, but also the initiations of a game
or agreement that is directed towards the reader. Fantasy Fiction problematizes belief and
demands the reader’s acquiescence or believability to the fictitious construct. As
aforementioned, it is not like the “willing suspension of disbelief” which is not an entirely
new observation to make, as characterized by a reference to the nineteenth century poet
Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s dictum of reading imaginative literature. The Romantics were
keenly involved in such projects to disrupt mundane reality by resorting to the
supernatural to combat a “secularizing materialism” (Logan 31) or “disenchantment” that
the later Modernist movement would usher. In a movement away from this kind of belief,
J.R.R. Tolkien’s definition of “Secondary Belief” anticipates the potency of Fantasy
Fictional worlds in providing an alternative self-consistent reality which induces a reader’s ontological self-consciousness facilitating an enjoyment of the text:

Children are capable, of course, of literary belief, when the story-maker’s art is good enough to produce it. That state of mind has been called ‘willing suspension of disbelief’. But this does not seem to me a good description of what happens. What really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful ‘sub-creator’. He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is ‘true’: it accord with the laws of that world. You therefore believe it, while you are, as it were, inside. (Tolkien 36-7)

In Tolkien’s later passage, he exchanges “a willing suspension of disbelief” which is equated with “a somewhat tired, shabby, or sentimental state of mind” (37), for a “Secondary belief” a result of an enjoyment of the work and as an anticipation of fictitious worlds that are capable of achieving independent reality, foreshadowing the popularity of such forms. Secondary belief is a product of a successful ‘sub-creator’, the reader’s mind is able to enter fully into the secondary world of the author’s and the secondary belief is dependent on the sustained enjoyment of the artifice that the author has proposed. An author can thus sustain believability of a different order: here one finds in Tolkien’s observation, a variant of the ontological self-consciousness one observes in a work of postmodernist fiction.

1.4 “We half-believed you”: Fantasy as In-Credible

If the exercise in ontological self-consciousness has become a convention in a reading of Fantasy Fiction, why then do authors continue to employ a strategy of persuasion in support of a world that readers will nonetheless accept deferentially? When Lucy tries to convince her siblings of the existence of a country through the wardrobe, her siblings
especially Peter confess that they “half-believed” (LWW 25) her and almost fell for her “hoax” (25). From here, Lewis via the interaction of the children and the Professor, begins a rhetoric of persuasion tinged with the Professor’s lamentation “Bless me, what do they teach them at these schools?” (LWW 189) and culminating in his argument in support of other worlds that “It’s all in Plato, all in Plato: bless me, what do they teach them at these schools?” (LB 208). Chronicles with their neo-platonic underbelly as in the tradition of George MacDonald (1824-1905) deals with themes such as “truth’ versus illusion” (Manlove 27) which Manlove observes that MacDonald valued fantasy for being real while what we may consider reality is in fact an illusion (27). Proposing that Fantasy is reality relies on persuasion as fundamental to the acceptance of the suppositional world which makes claims for a modicum of credibility and reinforces truth to its imaginary construct in this way. By this reasoning, no Fantasy world exists as a neutral supposition. It is built on a strategy of persuasion in order that the fictive world may sustain a reader’s participation and achieve credibility. Although this may amount to an understanding of the author as a controlling force that uses Fantasy as means to surreptitiously veil a hidden intent, this chapter examines what precedes the question of motive as with didactic literatures. That is to say, the successful communication of the greater intentions or ideologies of an author rests on the believability and acceptance of an imaginary world. The advances that an author makes on the reader to accept the fictitious construct, is what makes the project of Fantasy Fiction an important mode in a postmodern context as it accentuates questions of ontology and believability.

The barter that the author initiates with his reader for the acceptance of a “what if” proposition produces a picture of the world as negotiable which is a concept validated within the permits of a postmodern context, moving the reader towards accepting the pretence of the fantasy world which is, “an arbitrary construct of the mind with all under
the control of logic and rhetoric” (Irwin 9). The religious underpinnings of Lewis’s writings are largely successful because of Lewis’s persuasive inculcation of the rules of belief that structure the world of Narnia where, “writer and reader knowingly enter upon a conspiracy of intellectual subversiveness, that is, upon a game” (9) by proposing a new kind of real - one that must be viable to the extent that it may sustain participation. But this depends on a rhetorical persuasion of its functionality as a world, “Credence and participation are interdependent” (66). Especially in terms of Johan Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens* (1938) and his theory of the “play world”, “The reader’s ‘belief’ is one of the rules by which the game is played” (Irwin 66). Lewis’s recasting of the Christian story via mythopoesis implies that the imperatives of storytelling may also apply to what is seen as religious narratives with an overlapping between religious narrative and Fantasy Fiction, with even religious narrative possessing an element where they may be read as stories. Adopting the Fantasy world governed by its own laws reinforces truth to this construct by facilitating participation through a persuasion of its credibility and questions the reader’s assumptions of reality.

1.5 “Reality” and Story: Supposals as “Contingent Narrative”

The importance of Fantasy in relation to reality is understood when one observes that *Chronicles* is informed by Lewis’s criticism of the certitude with which knowledge was postulated via the scientific advancements and rationalisation of the world, leading to the notions of progress and development which Lewis humorously describes as having “seen them both in an egg” which Caspian maintains is equivalent with “Going Bad” in Narnia (*VDT* 60). The ongoing contestations of reality and the real meant that stories are validated as “contingent narratives” (*As If* 21). The guarantee of objective knowledge and the value of truth is debateable and contested as Owen Barfield states that the dominant questions in Lewis’s time may have been “What does one mean by ‘truth’? Is there such a
thing? (Barfield 171) which is best expressed in Lewis’ article “The Poison of Subjectivism” (1943). The theoretical basis in reading Lewis’s *Chronicles* lies in an understanding of the questions related to representation and an understanding of “reality” in relation to Postmodernism.

Postmodernism perpetuates the idea that reality is contingent, subject to perspective and is provisional unlike the epistemic certainty which characterizes Modernity as emphasising a confidence in man’s capabilities to observe objective reality and a confidence in indubitable methods to access certain universal truths, also leading to a “disenchantment” as aforementioned as a form of secular humanism. Jean Baudrillard pronounces an indictment of the postmodern scenario as characterized by a production of “simulacrum” effacing the real as a result of mass culture and media forms. Continuing the tenets of Walter Benjamin’s essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), Baudrillard argues that the real is effaced due to a constant bombardment of simulations or copies that blur the distinction between real and copy, finally replacing the “real” and, “thus rendered meaningless” (Constable 46). In Baudrillard’s text *Simulacra and Simulations* (1981) there is no difference “between object and representation” (Poster 5) and the simulation points to, “an absence as a presence, the imaginary as the real” (6) with the only result being a “hyperreal” (Baudrillard 166). In *The Vital Illusion*, the author argues that the Real has disappeared due to “the excess of reality that puts an end to reality” (66).

In support of this disappearance of the “real world”, Postmodernism challenges the Archimedean stance as the “view from nowhere” undermining access to universal truths, problematizing what is conceived of as “real” and resulting in a “reality crises” (Brooke-Rose 3). Man is no longer the adept, “autonomous” observer (Sheehan 25) and
postmodernism issues a challenge against “grand narratives” of history that may give access to an “objective knowledge of the real world” (Cahoone 2) and “the possibility of truth itself” (2). Even science which once enjoyed as “special cognitive status” is gradually understood as arising from a, “sociocultural context” which “limits the claims for objectivity and universality that can be made on their behalf” (Heise 150). There is therefore, an “incredulity towards metanarratives” or “master narratives” as observed by Francois Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* (1984) as comprehensive and totalistic explanations of knowledge and experience instead, there is the “petit-recits” or “mininarratives’, which are provisional, contingent, temporary, and relative. . .” (qtd. in Barry, 83).

Such notions regarding the “real” and access to this knowledge, explains how the genre of Fantasy Fiction in the wake of its mass commoditization, becomes an important mode of reality-production allowing authors to refashion the world and serves as an example of our more general acquiescence to subscribe to fictitious worlds. This is encapsulated in a critic’s observation that the fantastic has become “the realism our culture understands today” (Olsen 704) and its popularity therefore lies not only in being the accepted vernacular but lies in the provisional character of its enterprise as an important “contingent narrative”. As readers of Lewis’s fiction, this reading appears to undermine the grand narrative of the Judeo-Christian tradition. It appears that no one theory or narrative can represent a complete and knowable “real world” for, “narrative knowledge” looks to “its own consistency and rules for ‘proof” (Sheehan 28) and “The notion of the ‘real world’ is permanently encased in quotation marks” (21). Richard Rorty states that, “The world does not speak. Only we do” (qtd. in Barker, 104-05). Since language is no longer viewed as an independent meaning system to describe reality, these notions suggest that language instead constructs reality and objective reality and access to truth
or, “the brute ontological fact is inaccessible to us, since man can only re-present it
trough his many arbitrary systems, including language and the languages of science”
(Brooke-Rose 3-4). “Reality” undergoes a heavy attack and all of man’s meaning-making
systems undergoes a “readjusted significance” (10) perpetuating the notion that, “there is
no such thing as truth, but that there is a plethora of truths” (Drolet 23).

Amidst the contestations of what is meant by truth and reality, or whether such claims to
either may be conclusively made, Fantasy Fiction has a sustained popularity as an
important means to reorganize experience in lieu of the recognition that contingent,
provisional narratives are fundamental in our recognition of the world and ourselves and
Fantasy Fiction continues to question narratives of the kind that Lyotard posed an
incredulity towards. Here, Saler’s observation is important for imaginary worlds of fiction
may function as “contingent narratives” (As If 21) that inform one’s understanding of “the
real world” (21) and also provoke criticism of, “essentialist interpretations of the world”
(21) thereby other forms of knowledge such as spiritual and secular beliefs as well as
science may be seen as “incomplete . . . [open] to alternative interpretations” (21).
Therefore, contingent or “provisional” (21) narratives and the sustained participation of
these worlds via what this chapter calls “ontological self-consciousness” suggest that
myths and imaginative fiction may become fundamental devices or “provisional tools”
(21) in an understanding of the “real world” and may satisfy a desire for meaning and
resolution which is otherwise not afforded in a “reality crises” where heavily contested
terms such as “truth” or “reality” are scrutinized.

There seems to be room only for provisional and contingent narratives which, one must
point out, is not a detriment to the Christian subtext of Lewis’ fictional stories nor does it
present the Christian beliefs of the author, as presenting one truth among many which
would challenge the religious basis of his stories and undermine the truth-claims of his faith. Instead, Lewis may be pictured as pre-empting or premeditating the shaky grounds on which transcendental truth such as Christianity is to be circulated, by turning to imaginative fiction as a narrative that could supplement the otherwise narrow view of reality that modernity afforded with Lewis’s view that myth may present a picture of reality and therefore, truth. The importance of Fantasy or stories as contingent narratives is most palpable when the children constantly refer to their knowledge of fairy tales, adventure stories or epics to organize and inform their experience in Narnia. The final fictionalizing or use of contingent narratives is to depict that in some ways reality may be like a story.

This is communicated in the ending of the last book with the death of the children and their family, “But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia has only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before” (LB 224). The Christian heaven is equated with the Great Story; the children’s lives and the lives of the readers are informed by a series of contingent narratives, where important stories from the Western literary tradition are made to communicate the greater reality that a “disenchanted” world does not afford. Here, one may surmise that Lewis uses the term “supposal” as a confirmation that at best, one may devise provisional models or “contingent narratives” to illustrate Christian truth in an age of scepticism where knowledge has a provisional character. Swinfen illustrates this principle in her observation that the realist novel limits the areas of experience such as imaginative, subconscious and visionary whereas the fantasist has access to these unexplored domains.
in order to produce new versions of reality that address rather than escape from dilemmas posed by “contemporary reality” (231).

For Lewis and Tolkien, Primary and Secondary Worlds of Fantasy and Myth were fundamental as conceptions of what is “real” is increasingly seen as a “provisional story” (Saler 194) and stories of this kind that may be at variance with the demands of an experiential world, may offer glimmers of reality and enrich our experience (194). Saler notes that in order to “re-enchant his world”, Tolkien and Lewis may both be seen as maintaining a balance, “between essentialist and anti-essentialist narratives” (194). This however does not challenge the Christian truth of their fiction but is the outcome of an awareness that, “errant humanity can only approximate that truth through contingent and ongoing narrations, ‘as if’ fictions” (194). Therefore, our perception of the world is often informed by contingent and provisional narratives.

1.6 Motives for Persuasion

What is offered to a reader to entice him to buy into a world that is radically at variance with his own? Critics of Fantasy have acknowledged the lure of escape in the more derogatory understanding of escapism. Escape literature provides relief to the reader who experiences a certain liberation from the constricting ground rules of the extra-textual world and experiences a diametric reversal of these rules not for chaos but for order (Rabkin 44). Tolkien is keen to rescue the meaning of “escape” from its more derogatory understanding by redefining Fantasy as a release from the real world but not a denial of it. He uses the analogy of a man who is in prison and whether he should receive scorn for wanting to go out or go home citing that critics, “are confusing, not always by sincere error, the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter” (Tolkien 55).

Particularly, fantasies may offer the consolation of the happy ending – eucatastrophe (60) or good catastrophe and takes into account “dyscatastrophe” or “sorrow”, “it denies (in
the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is *evangelium*, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief” (60). The concept of Joy is particularly important to C.S. Lewis as it represents his conversion from atheism to Christianity as directed by his desire for Joy. Tolkien identifies that “The peculiar quality of the ‘joy’ in successful Fantasy can thus be explained as a sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth” (62). In Lewis’s description of Joy, Fantasy satiates what Timmerman has observed as a sharpened increase in mans, “thirst for ‘otherness’” (2) which scientific precepts denies.

Particularly for Lewis, the desire for Joy, *sehnsucht* or longing is captured by imaginative fiction and one that eventually found its source in the Christian God. Lewis articulates this briefly in describing a desire or Joy which came via images or literature, however it is not these images that you desire, but rather they are conduits for, “something other and outer” (*SBJ* 168). Fantasy Fiction operates on a recognition of alterity or “otherness” and therefore our motives for reading a work of Fantasy Fiction lies in our desire for the Other falling in line with Jackson’s definition, that the fantastic, “is a literature of desire which seeks that which is experienced as absence or loss” (Jackson 2). Both religious and Fantasy Fictional narratives involve the reversal of the given; it is therefore the alterity of the other that is desired and captured in a time where the “other” is made absent in a disenchanted world. This desire is seen in a reading of Lewis’s autobiography *Surprised By Joy* (*Surprised*) published in 1955, which narrates Lewis’s desire for the other and the elusive quality of Joy.

1.7 Preface to the “Other”: An Experiment in Criticism

In order to gage how Lewis articulates the concept of “otherness” in his Fantasy Fictional series, it is first important to recognize a continuum in thought between two non-fictional texts, *Experiment* and *The Discarded Image* (*Discarded*) published in 1964. In
Lewis’s *Experiment* is a concise treaty that examines different readings that are detrimental to a successful reception of a text “as an end it itself” (*AEC* 130) for readings are either erroneously dominated by taste which is subject to fashion and the prevailing literary establishment (105) or is an egoistic endeavour that finds only oneself in any text, failing to embrace what the author may have created. Instead, an informed and unbiased reading may render a true judgement of the texts’ inherent value as literature. Lewis’s stance is that a work of art may add to one’s life by performing the role of what Saler has termed as “contingent narratives”. Lewis reduces the act of reading into two positions that readers generally may take, “‘Using’ is inferior to ‘reception’ because art, if used rather than received, merely facilitates, brightens, relieves or palliates our life, and does not add to it” (*AEC* 88). Lewis’s preferment of “receiving” as opposed to “using” suggests that any work of art or more specifically Fantasy Fiction as this thesis discusses, presents itself as an entirely different vantage point from the one we are confined to as “self”, and hence “using” only results in isolating ourselves further rather than “adding”
and therefore enlarging our lives as Lewis states in an earlier passage. “Using” is a “negative effort” (18) that leads the reader to forever find oneself by imposing upon a text one’s own preconceptions or beliefs. The Logos in *Chronicles* may be identified as typical of the Christian story, however it is the Poiema, as a work of Fantasy that structures its theme. Enjoying the shape in the sense of Poiema, is “a metaphor”, “The parts of the Poiema are things we ourselves do; we entertain various imaginations, imagined feelings, and thoughts in an order, at a tempo, prescribed by the poet” (133).

Reading imaginatively according to Lewis’s critical essay is less concerned with altering our own opinion and more concerned with, “entering fully into the opinions, and therefore also the attitudes, feelings and total experience, of other men” (85) and literature helps one “eliminate the grosser illusions of perspective” (101). Lewis recognizes that one need not approve of or belief the Logos of a text or pay attention to the lack of correspondence with a real world (136). Asking why we, as readers, may continue to indulge in impossible stories or, “entering vicariously into feelings which we should try to avoid having in our own person” (137) or to indulge in things that never existed (137), Lewis replies that it is precisely because:

We want to, be more than ourselves. Each of us by nature sees the whole world from one point of view with a perspective and a selectiveness peculiar to himself. And even when we build disinterested fantasies, they are saturated with, and limited by, our own psychology . . . But we want to escape the illusions of perspective on higher levels too. We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own. (137)

Imaginative literature thus allows us to, “become these other selves” (139) remedying our “provincialism” (138) and does not depend on the historical truthfulness of the poet’s
work but only on, “his power to make us live it” (139) giving us new experiences in the process. Different texts, thus may represent different worlds as one critic comments, “Lewis had long been interested in what Thomas L. Martin calls ‘possible world semantics’ . . . . The text has an ontology all its own” (qtd. in Harrold, 187). By introducing Lewis’s understanding of the reading of imaginative literature as providing “contingent narratives” that facilitate a greater experience of reality and escape one’s own provincialism, one may explore a similar line of thought in Discarded in an experience of Otherness.

This experience of an Other through literary mediums may be explained with reference to his essay “Modern Man and his Categories of Thought”. Lewis observes that in comparison to the ancients such as the Pagans, the twentieth century predicament is so far removed in terms of believing in the supernatural (61). Especially, the removal of an education in the Ancients has led to a dangerous effect, “to isolate the mind in its own age; to give it, in relation to time, that disease which, in relation to space, we call Provincialism” (62). Being severed from the past and from truth or “the eternal. We are being further isolated; forced down to the immediate and the quotidian” (63). Lewis is perhaps articulating his disapproval of ‘chronological snobbery’ and the movement towards a self-centred and self-validating existence.

1.8 Metaphors of Medievalism: The Discarded Image

The Medieval worldview underlies Lewis’s creation of Chronicles and is evident in certain images that Lewis found indispensable. Each historic moment produces definitive metaphors and in the case of the Medieval period, this chapter examines two distinct metaphors: namely the anthropomorphic movements of the planets in a great dance which reinforces hierarchy and the movement as emitting a music. It is important to examine how this historically contingent worldview or provisional metaphor becomes an
important narrative contingent to the reader’s experience in *Chronicles*. Lewis’s
illustration of the Medieval model of the world is done with the recognition that our idea
of the world is a mutable concept that is subject to a specific historical mental system.
More importantly, these models are not realities but emphasises man’s propensity to think
in metaphors as implied in the term “image” in his title, one that is “discarded” when a
better theory or model supplants the current one. Lewis emphasises upon an
inaccessibility of a totalizing knowledge of the world, postulating one that is instead
historically contingent. In lieu of this, our conceptions of the world are perceived as
negotiable rather than objective and Lewis’s illustration turns our attention from an
objective world to man’s imaginative capacities in constructing metaphors that are
informed by a recognition of the limitations in making conclusive theories of the world.

Lewis delights in the old Model which combines “splendour, sobriety, and coherence in
the same degree” (*DI* 216) yet since it’s serious defect lies in it not being true (216) and
he also suggests that we must:

> regard all Models in the right way, respecting each and idolising none. . . .No
> model is a catalogue of ultimate realities, and none is a mere fantasy. Each is a
> serious attempt to get in all the phenomena known at a given period, and each
> succeeds in getting in a great many. But also, no less surely, each reflects the
> prevalent psychology of an age almost as much as it reflects the state of that age’s
> knowledge. (222)

Schakel maintains that for Lewis, reality does exist, “but he accepts that perceptions of
reality inevitably vary” (20) and the variations in this perception are collective thus
lending, “a degree of objectivity to the Model itself” (20). Therefore, though Lewis uses
the term the Model, implying that it the definitive Model of the Medieval Ages, Lewis
does this with the recognition that no one picture may represent in totality the given world, the Model is thus, provisional and historically contingent. Lewis borrows from the Medieval model to construct an entirely other world in his *Chronicles*. This is particularly important since the perpetuation of the fantastic-medieval is first an act of “inventing” as Norman Cantor’s work suggests. The act of invention as fundamental to our understanding of the Medieval suggests that Fantasy constructs and replaces a real Medievalism that may be gestured to historically; or it *adds* to the idea of the Medieval in becoming an important mode of imaginative recreation. In terms of “invention” the literary group to which Lewis belonged to is identified as reconstructing the medieval in twentieth century popular literature, “Their fictional fantasies cannot be separated from their scholarly writing. Their work in each case should be seen as a whole and as communicating an image of the Middle Ages that has entered profoundly and indelibly into world culture” (Cantor 208).

One may infer that Cantor’s work outlines the intertextual dynamics that are involved in a community of writers and thinkers that shape and construct our understanding of the ambiguous idea of the Medieval and how this in turn has shaped later imaginative texts. In authoring a number of scholarly works in this area, Lewis and his contemporaries restore importance to a literary and cultural tradition and validate the symbols and metaphors provided by this tradition in a contemporary context. For this reason, Cantor comments that the Middle Ages is specifically an invention of the twentieth rather than the nineteenth century, “The Middle Ages as we perceive them are the creation of an inter-active cultural process” (38) evoking a comparison between the modern and medieval worlds particularly as Lewis believed that medieval culture is both distinct from our culture and yet is still in communication with it, “In this way there is an ambiguous, tensile, and creative relationship between the medieval heritage of literature and art and
our own way of thinking and seeing” (214). Moreover, our present conception of the Medieval as a literary history is invented by these writers who recall certain elements and qualities that are valuable, and thus bridge the gap between the past and the present.

The Middle Ages is thus a collective construct, it is the product of an ongoing intertextual activity, which is perhaps why as Cantor mentions, Lewis’s work is also tempered by a modern as well as a medievalist spirit, the symbiotic relationship between the two is articulated in Owen Barfield’s proposal of the self-consciousness of the past in the present (23) in his study Speaker’s Meaning (1967). These writers valued ideals and textual practices that they saw fit for their own literary tradition. One aspect of this is that the power of the medieval iconography and imagery were versatile conduits to something transcendent, something “Other”. Chronicles retaliates against the effects of a “disenchantment” which proposes that there is no intention behind the world but everything, as Kalberg stated earlier, may be mastered by calculation with the world itself is subject to mechanical laws. Lewis remedies this by adopting the Medieval cosmological model conceived of as a great dance, inhabited by an assortment of supernatural figures, rather than an empty and vacuous space, lacking anthropomorphic life, as in the Modern conception. The metaphor of dance connotes both “discipline” which paradoxically furthers “freedom, almost for extravagance” (PPL 78). There is a “pattern deep hidden in the dance, hidden so deep that shallow spectators cannot see it, alone gives beauty to the wild, free gestures that fill it” (78).

Similarly, the Model itself is first appealing in design. It reflects man’s propensity to organise, codify and build an inclusive system which incorporates a wealth of information established by preceding auctors or authors. As a builder of systems, Lewis maintains that their greatest achievement is “the medieval synthesis itself, the whole organisation of their theology, science, and history into a single, complex, harmonious mental Model of
the universe” (*DI* 11). This is made possible by what Lewis identifies as “the essentially bookish character of their culture, and their intense love of system” (11). As the Medievals inherited a vast and heterogeneous collection of books, they were preoccupied with harmonizing all these contradictions (11), “by mediating its unity through a great, and finely ordered, multiplicity” (11). It was more importantly a syncretistic model which Chapter II will examine in reference to *Chronicles*. He suggests to the reader that this Model of the Universe “is a supreme medieval work of art” and which many works of literature were embedded and which they referred to: It is the ‘imagined universe’” (13).

Aside from the design, one may observe that unlike the modern conception of reality and its significance, the medieval Model, “had a built-in significance. And that in two senses; as having ‘significant form’ (it is an admirable design) and as a manifestation of the wisdom and goodness that created it” (204), namely the Primum Mobile or the “first moved”, that outer sphere from which all other spheres in the Ptolemaic system were moved, centring Earth. In his study on the sixteenth century, Lewis illustrates the methodological revolution which changed the astronomy depicting a world which could by degrees be calculated and measured as observable phenomena, “By reducing Nature to her mathematical elements it substituted a mechanical for a genial or animistic conception of the universe. The world was emptied, first of her indwelling spirits, then of her occult sympathies and antipathies, finally of her colours, smells, and tastes” (*OHEL* 3).

The rationalization and intellectualization of the world meant that, “Man with his new powers became rich like Midas but all that he touched had gone dead and cold. This process, slowly working, ensured during the next century the loss of the old mythical imagination: the conceit, and later the personified abstraction, takes its place” (3-4), language and metaphor becomes more abstract as Owen Barfield argues in *Poetic Diction*. As opposed to this mechanist world, the literature of this time simultaneously
reveals, “the older conception of Nature. Davies’s *Orchestra* gives us the right picture of the Elizabethan or Henrican universe; tingling with anthropomorphic life, dancing, ceremonial, a festival not a machine” (4). These are not metaphorical expressions by the poet but the “veritable *anima mundi*” (4) they are instead the literal. The hierarchy that the cosmological model of the medieval system espoused, is understood in the metaphor of the Great Dance and music, as aforementioned, which is emitted in the planetary movements. The harmony implicit in this cosmological system attests to the existence of a “Divine Artisan” (Sammons 74) who fashioned this. The cosmological system which the Medieval man adhered to is known as the Ptolemaic universe or the “geocentric model” (74) which is characteristically illustrated as a series of concentric circles with the Earth as it’s centre, around which the seven planets revolve, each planet in a “hollow transparent sphere[s]” (74). Beyond this, is the stellatum, “or stars which is then followed by the sphere known was the Primum Mobile (First Movable)” (74) and “beyond that, the Empyrean, the boundary of the *mundus*, the beginning of the infinite true ‘Heaven’” (SMRL 45). These movements, result from, “a compulsive force exercised by something immovable” (50). The “Unmoved Mover” is conceived of as the “Final Cause” and moves the Primum Mobile and, “all the inferior bodies in motion) by love” (50-1).

Importantly, “God, in Aristotle, moves the world by being loved, not by loving; by being the supremely desirable object” (51). This anthropomorphic view of the cosmos is contrasted with the modern understanding of *space* for the Medieval man, “There was no abyss. Man looked up at a patterned, populous, intricate, finite cosmos; a builded thing, not a wilderness; ‘heaven’ or ‘spheres’, not ‘space’” (SMRL 7).

The idea that the movement of these concentric circles emit a sound is known as the “The Music of the Spheres”, perhaps perpetuated by Boethius’s *De Institutione Musica* (Sammons 76) and one Lewis records in *Somnium* which transmitted this idea (DI 26).
Lewis illustrates, “a motionless Earth at the centre, transparent spheres [planets, moon and sun] revolving round it” (SMRL 45) and space, “perpetually filled with sweet, immeasurable sound” (52) created by the rotation of the spheres with each planet emitting a note and yielding, “a blended harmony” (52). Lewis explains that we do not hear this noise because it is perpetual, ceaseless, “with this positive we have no negative to contrast” (52).

Lewis writes of one picture that represents the Intelligence of the Primum Mobile itself, it is a “symbol” (60), “It is a picture of a girl dancing and playing a tambourine; a picture of gaiety, almost of frolic” (60) and thus the universe if not like a “machine” or “army”, “but rather as a dance, a festival, a symphony, a ritual, a carnival, or all these in one. They are the unimpeded movement of the most perfect impulse towards the most perfect Object” (60). The presence of music is palpable in the stories and indirectly hints at the Ptolemaic movement of the universe as a governing model. The magic rings that the children find in *Magician* is described as emitting a “a faint – a very, very faint—humming sound. . . .But it was a nicer sound than that, a more musical tone: only so faint that you could hardly hear it” (MN 13-14). These rings allow the children to travel between multiple worlds that lie outside space, “another Nature – another universe” (24). The reference to the cosmological model is apparent when Digory in his travel to Earth from the other world, sees “bright lights moving about in a black sky; Digory always thinks these were stars and even swears that he saw Jupiter quite close – close enough to see its moon” (40). The more prolific instant of this is the depiction of the leonine creator Aslan who is literally described as singing Narnia into existence, creating the stars and the sun via “a gentle rippling music” (112); the voice of Aslan is joined by “more voices that you could possibly count. They were in harmony with it, but far higher up the scale: cold, tingling silvery voices” (107) which are the voices of the stars. Rather than adhere to the Judaeo-
Christian model for the creation of the world, Lewis depicts Aslan as singing the Narnian world into existence as part of the image of the music of the spheres, which suggests life and intention in what is conventionally seen as dark, mechanical, vacuous space devoid of life and movement. A more indirect reference is made when Susan recollects the feasts and celebration held on their great ship the Splendor Hyaline, “Do you remember when we had the musicians up in the rigging playing flutes so that it sounded like music out of the sky?” (PC 113), a gesture to the music of the spheres.10

Participation in this dance as expressed in Lewis’s Mere Christianity (153) also refers to the metaphor of the Chain or “hierarchical ladder of beings” (Sammons 79), with God at the topmost descending to different creatures and inanimate objects. Examples of this dance is seen in Doctor Cornelius’s description of the conjunction of the noble planets Tarva and Alambil. When Prince Caspian asks if they are to collide, the Doctor replies that, “The great lords of the upper sky know the steps of their dance too well for that. Look well upon them. . . .the Lord of Victory, salutes Alambil, the Lady of Peace. They are just coming to their nearest” (49-50). This is reiterated by Ramandu, a “retired star” who describes himself as coming from, “a long way above the air, my son” referring to the Medieval progression of the Earth, Air and Aether. Ramandu, continues by saying that he is a “star at rest” who will become much younger in order to rise again, “(for we are at earth’s eastern rim) and once more tread the great dance” (VDT 188-9).

Importantly, Eustace Scrubb relays that in his world a star is “a huge ball of flaming gas” to which Ramandu replies, “Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of” (VDT 188-9). The personality and life of the stars, rather than the mechanical reduction into their constituents is a worldview promoted by Lewis. Lewis was keen to adopt this aspect of the medieval model in order to initiate readers into an acceptance of an “intention” behind the world; the Other to which his longing for Joy
moved him and to restore the metaphoric power of language lost in its abstraction. This is a form of the “dead metaphor” (*SLE* 251). In his essay, “Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare” Lewis discusses the argument that language is replete with “dead metaphors” especially in Ogden and Richard’s *The Meaning of Meaning* that challenges that science may be dealt in “metaphorical terms” (251) which Barfield in his *Poetic Diction* observes that the language that both critics use is equally metaphorical. Lewis states that, “all language has a figurative origin and that the ‘scientific’ terms on which they piqued themselves . . . were not miraculously exempt. On the contrary, he maintained, ‘those who profess to eschew figurative expressions are really confining themselves to one very old kind of figure’” (251). Fossilization of metaphors may occur when one forgets or is ignorant of the metaphor, “forgetting its real content and its metaphorical nature” (257). Hence, Eustace forgets that a star may mean more than its elements. Similarly, readers have forgotten that metaphors may generate a meaning that has long been silenced, especially as an encounter of the Other.

Access to the “Other” is achieved locally in the festivity and romp, the movement of dancing and enjoyment which is tied to the appearance of what Lewis has termed *longaevi* or “long livers” (*DI* 122). Lucy witnesses and participates in the wakening and dancing of the trees, which are, “moving in and out through one another as if in a complicated country dance” (*PC* 138). There is an extended description of the trees half or still awakening and she dances among them wanting to “get beyond them to something else; it was from beyond them that the dear voice had called” (138) Getting through the “Great Chain with big dancers” (138) who form a ring in an open central place and finally in an expression of “oh joy!”, Lucy meets the “huge Lion” (138-40). The allusion to the Great Chain suggests the hierarchical Great Chain of Being as illustrated in Arthur O. Lovejoy’s *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (1933) and her
movement towards Aslan suggests her participation in the hierarchical Great Chain which has at its back, the presence of God. Those participating in the great chain are described in their “plurality” or “fine multiplicity”, namely in the collection of longaevi such as the wood nymphs, the river-god, the beasts of land and air, the giants and the movement of the dryads. All gather towards Aslan shouting his name (PC 157). More importantly, this collection is described as a “dance” approximating Bakhtin’s carnivalesque, “The crowd and the dance round Aslan (for it had become a dance once more) grew so thick and rapid that Lucy was confused” (157). In this dance is a youth who looks extremely wild bearing many names, “He seemed to have a great many names—Bromios, Bassareus, and the Ram were three of them. There were a lot of girls with him, as wild as he” and he is later identified as Bacchus by Lucy (158). He is soon accompanied by someone on a donkey, later identified as Silenus, who calls out for “Refreshments” making it more “complicated” while the donkey is under the impression that “the whole thing was a circus” and begins walking of his hind legs (158-9). This gathering is importantly described as “romp” (158) or to everyone playing a different game, “the laughter never ceased nor the yodeling cries of Euan, euan, eu-oi-oi-oi-oi, till all of a sudden everyone felt at the same moment that the game (whatever it was), and the feast, ought to be over” (PC 158-9).

The festivity, the movement, and the life that is described here are all gestures to the dance and anthropomorphic life of the movement of the universe. It is directed and presided over by the Great Mover as Susan says that she “wouldn’t have felt safe with Bacchus and all his wild girls if we’d met them without Aslan” (160). The multiple names that of the faun suggests the releasing of the “dead metaphors” (SLE 251) in language restoring metaphoric power to language that has become abstract. The order, synchrony, freedom and Joy which is illustrated in the movement of the spheres is
localized in the Dance and Romps that the Narnian inhabitants engage in, mirroring the movement of the planets. Jill Pole observes this from the Great Snow Dance of the Fauns, Dryads and Dwarves who throw snowballs “through the dance in such perfect time with the music and with such perfect aim” (SC 239), accompanied by music “wild” and “intensely sweet and yet just the least bit eerie too” (238). The powerful associations which these metaphors evoke were instrumental to Lewis’s plan to provoke the Joy and desire for the Other in order to enlarge the world of the self which is limited by perspective and is one-dimensional as projected in Edward Abbott Abbot’s romance Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions (1884) which greatly influences Chronicles in an understanding of the existence of greater dimensions of reality. Chronicles foregrounds similar questions of ontology seen especially in its heterogeneous entities from different sources and ontologies for one is reminded that the “ontological poetics” (McHale 60) of postmodernist fiction is found to govern both the genres of science-fiction, and fantasy fiction (74). Todorov describes the recognition of the “fantastic” as a hesitation between two genres but McHale notes that this is arguably epistemological and Todorov fails to see how postmodernism, “pluralizes the ‘real’ and thus problematizes representation” (75). Todorov’s hesitation can then be extended to a state between two adjacent worlds (76).

Reading between Todorov and McHale, this dissertation finds that the genres and tropes may actualize this encounter between two different worlds. Hence, one may adopt the term “ontological” and world supposition with more license than previous critics of Fantasy Fiction or C.S. Lewis’s series would otherwise have adopted. For one may see that the free-borrowing from diverse sources may constitute ‘worlds’ for Lewis and more importantly, according to his theory of Transposition, discussed later, these fragments or worlds constitute imperfect pictures of the an absolute reality to which Lewis subscribes.
Both epistemological and ontological questions are more importantly, not sequestered from one another but one may “tip over” into the other thus the relation is, “bidirectional and reversible” (11). Building on this, this chapter observes that the reader’s “epistemological quest” (21) for the Christian God of Aslan involves multiple ontologies to further this quest so that the epistemic question is mediated through prioritizing ontological questions that draw attention to the different orders of reality or myth that Lewis uses.

*Chronicles* and the poetics of its genre includes mythological tropes and other literary strains which may reflect the “ontological complexity” of Lewis’s story as, “polyphonic, stratified. Each of its layers has a somewhat different ontological status, and functions somewhat differently in the ontological make-up of the whole” (30). These literary tropes and characters may be representative of Pavel’s “narrative domains” representing multiple ontologies such as the “bi-planar, other-worldly ontology” (34). McHale notes that for Pavel, there may be a “complex ontology” (36) or “ontological landscape” (36) which involves different beings and thus different domains such as “sacred and profane levels of reality” (36). In applying this to Lewis’s *Chronicles* one may begin to see how Lewis’s series, draws on multiple ontologies by following different models, such as the one described in chapter II. Rooted in the Christian world however, one may ask what kind of world is this which seems to actualize the “many in the little”? What kind of world is Lewis projecting that indulges in the free-play of so many different kinds of sources? In his reading of Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the novel, the multiple discourses or “the metaphor of ‘worlds’ of discourse” (165) is to McHale “literalizes[d]” (165) in postmodernist fiction which is applicable to Fantasy Fiction in the construction of actual worlds with different entities belonging to these worlds, demonstrating a play of worlds. Lewis has stated that Edward Abbott Abbott’s *Flatland* gives rise to the emotion that,
“our own human awareness of the world is arbitrary and contingent. Sometimes such play gives pleasure analogous to that of conceit” (“On Science Fiction” 69). Lewis’s compositional endeavour licenses a number of worlds that is rooted also in his Christian Platonism that pictures the soul’s search for the “real and perfect world” (SMRL 145) only ever finding shadows, “dim premonition” and “blurred images” (144). For Lewis, mediation of the Christian faith in a changing reality means that Fantasy Fiction allows for an incorporation of different other-worldly ontologies and one must not, “attempt novelty in respect of its ingredients” for the, “giants, dragons, paradises, gods, and the likes are themselves the expression of certain basic elements in man’s spiritual experience” (PPL 54) as per the quality of “myth” (AEC 41 – 44) which Lewis find as a central feature of diverse genres, both classical and modern. Here the dance and the music of the spheres outlined are also metaphors that function at the analogical level stressing the ludic possibilities of a fantasy world. The heterogeneity of the sources is modelled in Lewis’s two metaphors and also speaks to how literary tropes are employed to foreground ontological questions so that the reader and characters begin to question the governing conception of accepted reality in a transposition of the full variety of a higher reality that Lewis subscribes to.

1.9 Conclusion
Ontological self-consciousness in reading a work of Fantasy Fiction has been examined in reference to Chronicles and Lewis’s non-fictional texts. It demonstrates how the modes of the Fantastic have become an important and popular form of expression and suggests that the importance of the genre lies in its tendency to propound new realities while paradoxically being aware of its imaginative enterprise. Writers such as Lewis and Tolkien adopted Fantasy to evoke a world of wonder and enchantment as a medium to refute the conclusive finality of Modernist thought-systems, giving credence or possibility
for safeguarding not only their Christian faith but also ensure that their created worlds remain valid in a postmodern context. Lewis captures an Otherness long removed from our conception of the universe as seen in the Medieval cosmological system and from Lewis’s free incorporation of pagan deities and iconography, Lewis confirms that mythological or pagan thinking could initiate a greater return to the Joy of the Christian God. This is evaluated in terms of the poetics that postmodernist fiction offers.

Nodelman observes the paradox inherent in Fantasy, “Fantasy does not really persuade us of the existence of the world it describes; it only allows us to pretend it exists” (6). In this agreement to indulge in a world evidently different from the “real world”, there is an enjoyment in the, “consciousness of otherness, a revealing penetration of the limited vision imposed upon us by our own inevitably unique readings of reality—a freeing from solipsism” (6). Lewis’s Chronicles thus works towards achieving this with the encounter of different myth, and beings from different orders of reality which Lewis himself saw as possessing facets of truth.
Notes

1. I adopt the term “unreal” from Christine Brooke-Rose’s study to suggest the instability of the terms “real” and “unreal” and the growing acceptance of the “unreal” as, “another equally valid’ reality” (4).

2. Stableford notes that for many critics, Fantasy Fiction is relatively new and did not exist before the Age of Enlightenment since the genre is formed in opposition to ‘realistic’ or ‘naturalistic’ literature. Stableford disagrees in the erroneous assumption that earlier storytellers could not distinguish, “between the naturalistic and supernatural elements of their stories” (xliii). This kind of confusion in terms of the status of Fantasy Fiction as a fairly recent genre is better explained not in terms of an opposition between realistic and Fantasy Fiction, but in the change in the reader’s ontological self-consciousness.

3. This term is taken from Eric S. Rabkin’s structuralist study of Fantasy. I use the term to indicate the ways in which Fantasy Fiction serves as one example of a new “real”, “The ‘impossible’ becomes ‘possible’ in fantasy. Hence fantasy is not a rejection of reality but it serves as an alternative reality” (25). C.N. Manlove makes a similar observation, “The making of alternative realities is in some degree an expression of the new relativism in scientific thought” (53).

4. “The Narnian books are not as much allegory as supposal. Suppose there were a Narnian world and it, like ours, needed redemption. What kind of incarnation and Passion might Christ be supposed to undergo there?” See, James E. Higgins.

5. For a more detailed study of Fantasy a collusion between author and reader in order for the fantasy to achieve credibility one may refer to Lucie Armitt’s study where she identifies the reader as the main protagonist, 32; Eric S. Rabkin and Tzvetan Todorov, in their respective works, study how the fantastic is realised and achieved by drawing
attention to the reader and his willing participation in the author’s fictional world.
Perry Nodelman’s essay identifies that we only accept the created world via a believable narrator, 5.

6. For more on the beginning of Modern philosophy, one may look at Scruton’s comprehensive survey of key texts and developments in his second chapter “The Rise of Modern Philosophy.”

7. See Michael Drolet’s study with excerpts from Jean-Francois Lyotard’s “The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.”

8. For more on Saussure’s theory of language and our apprehension of reality, one may look to Colin Falck’s chapter on “Saussurian Theory and the Abolition of Reality”, 4-33.

9. See Martha C. Sammons’s for a concise summary of the medieval metaphor of the Great Dance to be found in Lewis’s science fictional series, especially in his book *Perelandra* (75).

10. Roland M. Kawano discusses the “images of play and dance” (198) in Lewis’s fiction but with no correspondence to the spatial dynamics of the multiple ontologies of the Fantasy world.
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