‘The shifting perils of the strange and the familiar’: representations of the Orient in children's fantasy literature

by

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Summary

This thesis investigates the function of representations of the Orient in fantasy literature for children with a focus on *The Chronicles of Narnia* as exemplifying its most problematic manifestation.

According to Edward Said (2003:1-2), the Orient is one of Europe’s ‘deepest and most recurring images of the Other… [which]…has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.’ However, values are grouped around otherness\(^1\) in fantasy literature as in no other genre, facilitating what J.R.R. Tolkien (2001:58) identifies as Recovery, the ‘regaining of a clear view… [in order that] the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity.’ In Chapter One, it is argued that this gives the way the genre deals with spaces and identities characterized as Oriental, which in Western stories are themselves vested with qualities of strangeness, a peculiar significance. Specifically, new ways of perceiving the function of representations of the Other are explored in the genre of fantasy.

Edward Said’s concept of imaginative geographies is then introduced and the significance of this concept in light of the fictional spaces of fantasy is explored. Next, fantasy’s links to representations of the Orient in Romance literature are explained, and the way in which these representations are determined by the heritage of Orientalist discourse is examined. Finally, the issue of children’s literature as colonial space and the implications of this in a fantasy framework are discussed.

\(^1\) Otherness, signifying the Orientalist concept, is distinguished in this thesis from the otherness effected by the marvellous quality of fantasy by the use of a capital ‘O’.
Chapter Two begins by introducing C.S. Lewis and explaining the ideology at work in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The order in which *The Chronicles* should be approached is then established, and the construction of identity in the first three of *The Chronicles* is examined. Chapter Three focuses on *The Horse and His Boy*, the book in which the pseudo-Oriental space of Calormen most prominently figures. Chapter Four is devoted to the last two books of *The Chronicles* with emphasis on the role played by the Other in the destruction of Narnia in *The Last Battle*.

In Chapter Five, I sum up the essential problems of representing the Orient as illustrated by my study of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Representations of the Orient in *The Chronicles* are compared with pseudo-Oriental constructions in *Castle in the Air*, by Diana Wynne Jones, *Emperor Mage* and *The Woman Who Rides Like A Man* by Tamora Pierce and both *Voices* and *The Earthsea Quartet* by Ursula K. Le Guin. The similarities and differences evident in the representations of the Orient in all these works are traced and the implications of them are explored. Le Guin in particular is noted as an author who demonstrates some ways to break free of Orientalist paradigms of identity.

Key terms: children’s literature, C.S. Lewis, Diana Wynne Jones, fantasy, Narnia, orientalism, orient, Other, postcolonialism, Said, Tamora Pierce, Tolkien, Ursula Le Guin
Opsomming

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die funksie van uitbeeldings van die Ooste in fantasieletterkunde vir kinders, met die klem op *The Chronicles of Narnia* wat as voorbeeld dien vir die mees problematiese manifestasie hiervan.

Volgens Edward Said (2003:1-2) is die Ooste een van Europa se ‘deepest and most recurring images of the Other’ [diepste en mees herhaalde beelde van die ‘Ander’]… [which]… has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience’ [gehelp het om Europa (oftewel die Weste) te omskryf as ‘n kontrasterende beeld, idee, persoonlikheid, ervaring]. Waardes word egter sterker gekonsentreer op ‘Andersheid’ in fantasieletterkunde as in enige ander genre, en dit fassiliteer wat J.R.R. Tolkien (2001:58) identifiseer as ‘Recovery’ [herwinning], die ‘regaining of a clear view’… [in order that] the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity’ [herwinning van ‘n duideliker oorsig…[sodat] dit wat mens duidelik sien, vrygemaak kan word van die eentonige waas van alledaagsheid of bekendheid]. In Hookstuk Een word daar aangevoer dat dit ‘n besondere betekenins toeken aan die manier waarop die genre die plekke en identiteite uitbeeld wat as Oosters beskryf word, wat in Westerse verhale insigself as anderssoortig identifiseer word. In die besonder word daar gekyk na nuwe wyses om die funksie van uitbeeldings van die Ander waar te neem en te ondersoek in die fantasiegenre.

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2 ‘Otherness’ [Andersheid], wat hier verwys na die begrip Orientalisme, word in hierdie tesis deur ‘n hoofletter onderskei van die ‘otherness’ of andersheid wat in fantasiefiksie geskep word deur die eienskap van wonderbaarlikheid.
Edward Said se begrip van verbeelde geografieë word dan bespreek en die betekenis van hierdie konsep word in die lig van die fiktiewe ruimtes van fantasieletterkunde ondersoek. Vervolgens word fantasiefiksie se verband met uitbeeldings van die Ooste in die ridderroman verduidelik, asook die wyse waarop hierdie uitbeeldings deur ’n erfenis van Orientalistiese diskoerse geraak is. Uiteindelik word die kwessie van kinderletterkunde as koloniale ruimte en die implikasies hiervan in ’n fantasiefiksieraamwerk bespreek.

In Hoofstuk Twee word C.S. Lewis aan die leser voorgehou, en die ideologie in *The Chronicles of Narnia* word verduidelik. Die volgorde waarin *The Chronicles* benader moet word, word dan bepaal, en identiteitskonstruksie in die eerste drie *Chronicles* word ondersoek. Hoofstuk Drie fokus op *The Horse and His Boy*, die boek waarin die pseudo-Oosterse ruimte van Calormen die sterkste figureer. Hoofstuk Vier is aan die laaste twee boeke van *The Chronicles* gewy, met die klem op die rol wat die Ander speel in die vernietiging van Narnia in *The Last Battle*.

In Hoofstuk Vyf word die weselike probleme opgesom wat ondervind word in die uitbeelding van die Ooste soos dit in hierdie studie van die *Chronicles* daargestel word. Uitbeeldings van die Ooste in die *Chronicles* word vergelyk met pseudo-Oosterse konstruksies in *Castle in the Air* deur Diana Wynne Jones, *Emperor Mage* en *The Woman Who Rides Like A Man* deur Tamora Pierce en *Voices* en *The Earthsea Quartet* deur Ursula K. Le Guin. Die ooreenkomste en verskille tussen hierdie uitbeeldings van die Ooste in al hierdie letterkundige werke word nagegaan en hulle implikasies word ondersoek. Le Guin in die besonder kan uitgeken word as ’n
skrywer wat ‘n aantal wyses demonstreer waarop daar van Orientalistiese
identiteitsparadigmas weggebreek kan word.

Sleutel terme: Ander, C.S. Lewis, Diana Wynne Jones, fantasiefiksie,
kinderletterkunde, Narnia, Oosters, orientalisme, postkolonialisme, Said, Tamora
Pierce, Tolkien, Ursula Le Guin
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Bibliography
Frances Hodgson Burnett’s children’s story *The Secret Garden* (1983: 9) begins by telling us that its protagonist, Mary Lennox, was born in India and that she has never seen ‘familiarly anything but the dark faces of her Ayah and the other native servants’. Nevertheless, it is made clear in this story that India is not home to Mary, something that she instinctively understands:

“You are going to be sent home,’ Basil said to her, ‘at the end of the week. And we’re glad of it.’
“I am glad of it too,” answered Mary. “Where is home?”
“She doesn’t know where home is!” said Basil, with seven-year-old scorn. “It’s England, of course…” (Burnett, 1983:14)

At the same time, although England is ‘home’, this does not mean that England cannot be experienced by Mary as something unknown and new. Mary is introduced first as an arrival, an explorer of an unknown space (Kutzer, 2000:57), a crucial position that depends upon India as a familiar space. She then encounters England as a series of interlinked secrets, a labyrinth of mysteries, the most important of which is clearly the discovery of the forbidden garden of the title. The plot of the story is thus driven by a pulse of discovery that serves as the basis of the novel’s suspense and emotional development. India, although described as familiar (because it is where the protagonist was born and is the only place she knows), remains vague and obscure, for the most part only discernible in the dark, silent faces of Indian servants. The result is that, curiously,
this is a story about discovering ‘home’, that which ought to be the essence of what is familiar.

Burnett’s tale of a little girl who travels to a new world, which is in fact her own world, approaches what J.R.R. Tolkien sees as one of the essential functions of fantasy literature: Recovery. ‘Recovery…’ writes Tolkien (2001:57-58), ‘is a re-gaining – regaining of a clear view...so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity – from possessiveness.’ In telling her story from Mary’s point of view, Burnett effectively strips her native English setting of this kind of ‘familiarity’; making it ‘strange’ and thereby restoring to it a wonder as of things seen for the first time. Through Mary’s eyes, England becomes the familiar recovered as strange, a world whose Otherness has been rediscovered. And the Otherness of the Orient plays a vital and curious role in this estranging process.

In this thesis, I have chosen to examine the function of representations of the Orient in fantasy literature for children. The element of Recovery, which Tolkien argues is a special feature of fantasy literature, is the key to my decision to study such representations specifically within this genre. *The Secret Garden*, although a realistic children’s story, has been used as a point of departure because it yields some important insights into the operations of Recovery in relation to representations of the Orient, and to literature in general.
India, the Oriental space in this story, is far more than simply a plot device with which to position the protagonist as an explorer within the text. Mary’s journey from India imposes a shape on the very value system of the story. This contradicts Hourihan’s assertion that:

The enormous and enduring popularity of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden*…shows that children are able to construct satisfying meanings from stories which work symbolically, with a structure that focuses on a single place, and in which the essential movement of the plot is inward, rather than forward (1997:49).

Hourihan (1997:46) sees the forward movement common in narrative structures as indicative of a strong sense of linear progression, which enacts and confirms the Western reader’s pre-existing sense of superiority about cultural identity. Essentially what develops in these texts is a structure of adversarial duality, that is, a structure of duality that is based on conflict (Hourihan, 1997:3). Heroes encounter enemies that are systematically vanquished, since the hero always embodies the superior half of these dualisms (1997:2), which ascribe to the enemies of the hero all those qualities which are to be rejected or dismissed as evil or inferior. Inferiority and/or evil in these texts is thus equated with what is Other to the hero, and to his culture (Hourihan, 1997:32), and the Other is therefore understood as a constructed entity. As the hero meets with success after success, the narrative offers no challenge to the claims of superiority made for his culture, inscribing an assertion of the ego within the text that is instrumental in the encoding of adversarial duality. Hourihan proposes that *The Secret Garden* demonstrates the dispensability of this structure by suggesting that movement in the story, focusing on the
eponymous garden, enacts an internal development, rather than the confrontational development of cultural identity at the expense of constructed Others.

Hourihan’s choice of *The Secret Garden* as an example of a story that does not encode linear progression is erroneous, however, as it misses the point that *The Secret Garden* is, in fact, crucially shaped by a journey: Mary’s journey to England from India. Although, this journey takes place at the beginning of the novel, and, as I have noted, evokes India in barely any detail, it sets the terms for the spiritual journey which Mary goes through in her discovery of the garden. Kutzer (2000:59) argues that ‘Mary must play at colonizing and domesticating the wild garden in order that she may recolonize herself into English ways…In attempting to resurrect the garden, she resurrects her English self.’ There is thus a clear forward movement inscribed in this story, which enacts a model of linear progression similar to those Hourihan identifies in hero tales. It is not, however, a progression of vanquished enemies, but a steady journey of rediscovery which nevertheless presupposes the moral inferiority of the Oriental identity. Recovery here, as in Tolkien’s definition of fantasy, revitalizes the familiar, but exactly how is this accomplished?

*The Secret Garden* is fundamentally a redemption tale, chronicling the physical and spiritual regeneration of Mary Lennox. The opening of the novel, which takes place in India, makes great use of impenetrability and chaos to project a sense of inscrutability and profound alienation. Descriptions of India are hurried and vague, emphasizing an intense heat and haziness which repels interest, and its opaque density compares starkly
with the cool clarity of English characters and settings. As such the Orient in this story functions not so much as an inverse reflection, defining English identity by contrast, as it is a dark mirror in which the sober vividness of English identity emerges as a picture filling in an empty space. This effect is aided not so much by the shift in setting itself as by Burnett’s treatment of the material. India is vaguely defined, though not enticingly mysterious, until the chaos of the plague necessitates Mary’s hasty departure. In contrast England is described in detail, revealed in stages to Mary as she penetrates the mysteries of the house and the garden. In reflecting Mary’s view-point, these settings work to construct aspects of her character, for example her self-involvedness and spiritual retardation. During the course of the novel, Mary is transformed from a sickly, self-absorbed child into a healthy, pretty girl who is also capable of nurturing others. Themes of discovery and redemption go hand in hand in this way as Mary begins to take an interest in things outside herself, thereby becoming less selfish. But it is England and the secrets at home which allow for this change, not the mysteries of India. In this way the novel is driven by what I have called a ‘pulse of discovery’, which quickens in the English setting and culminates in the revelation of the secret of the garden. The garden then functions simultaneously as the primary redemptive space of healing and growth, and the antithesis of the Orient. As Hillel (2003:59) notes:

Discourses of racism and redemption intersect here; Mary needs to be deorientalized in order to be good enough to function as a redeemer…But the garden itself functions as a symbol of deorientalizing; Mary learns to appreciate English flora and fauna and to work in a way she never had to do in India, surrounded as she was by servants.
This reading of *The Secret Garden* raises some interesting questions about the significance of journeys, no matter how marginal, in the shaping of value systems in stories. This is doubly so in the case of children’s literature, with the act of ‘leaving home’ being so closely tied, at least in Western societies, to the end of childhood itself (Butler, 2006:104). However, what is even more interesting is the way Burnett manipulates ‘strange’ and ‘familiar’ spaces, reorganizing the values surrounding them and reworking their traditional connections to the Orient and the West. Burnett’s tale of empire has been reworked so that the fantasy of discovering the unknown has become a fantasy for recovering the known.

Far more common, especially in the adventure stories of the period, is the opposite. According to Kutzer (2000:2) in ‘adventure fiction, we appear still to be in the real world, but one that provides much more excitement and exoticism that can be found in dreary and domesticated England.’ This is the case in the work of Burnett’s near contemporary E. Nesbit. In Nesbit’s children’s fantasy *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904), the child protagonists are far more excited by foreign lands and treasures, and spend much of their days longing to escape the stifling mundanity of their English home. In strong contrast to *The Secret Garden*, these exotic settings invoke great interest in the children and Nesbit, though describing them briefly, highlights their appeal and wonder. Thus the unspecified southern shore to which the children wish themselves on the magic carpet ‘look[s] like a carpet of jewelled cloth of gold, for it [is] not greyish as…northern sand is, but yellow and changing – opal-coloured like sunshine and rainbows’ (Nesbit, 1994:67). And when
the children make up their minds to do a good deed using the wishing carpet, they insist that it has to be in a foreign land, ‘somewhere really interesting’ (Nesbit, 1994:140).

In *The Secret Garden*, however, while Burnett does not deny that India is a land of wonders, she is at pains to emphasize that they are wonders without spiritual value. For example, Mary tells the gardener Ben Weatherstaff that flowers in India ‘grow up in a night’ (Burnett, 1983:51), and these are contrasted with the English flowers in the secret garden that require the attention and nurturing Mary provides and that are a source of excitement and healing to her. Likewise the housemaid Martha is amazed that Mary has never enjoyed the simple wholesome pleasure of a skipping-ropes, and has never seen one before in India ‘for all they’ve got elephants and tigers and camels…’ (Burnett, 1983:56).

The different uses of strange and familiar space in these stories highlight the importance of the journey in the children’s novel. But more importantly, they alert us to the fact of the controlled nature of our response to these categories, the manipulation of which unleashes powerful implications. They reveal the functionality of representations of the Other, and the significance of such representations for identity construction, for example the recovery of English identity at the expense of the Orient in *The Secret Garden*.

Fantasy is a genre that also renegotiates categories that we have constructed such as ‘strange’ and ‘familiar’, and its values are significantly linked to the values it attaches to these. Frequently using narrative strategies remarkably similar to those in *The Secret Garden*, it is a literature which reorganizes values surrounding these qualities, offering
otherness conditioned by the narrative devices peculiar to the genre. It is thus a genre that is intimately involved with the constructedness of these categories. As such, fantasy provides a unique vantage point from which to examine the way such otherworlds are positioned imaginatively and textually in English-language stories.

Jackson (1981: 53) writes:

In its broadest sense, fantastic literature has always been concerned with revealing and exploring the interrelations of the “I” and the “not-I”, of self and other. Within a supernatural economy, or a magical thought mode, otherness is designated as otherworldly, supernatural, as being above, or outside, the human…

Fantasy is thus a genre fundamentally conditioned by otherness, but it is an otherness that expands the limits of what we know about ourselves and the worlds we inhabit. Whereas in realist fiction, the Other is likely to take the shape of a different culture, in fantasy the familiar itself is made other, transfigured by that which we know to be impossible (Attebery, 1992:15). This defining characteristic of ‘otherness’ has led to the genre being accused of promoting escapism (Lewis, 1980:214), or of being specially designated for children to the extent that Swinfen (1984:1) comments that fantasy writers ‘have too often been obliged to publish as children’s writers’. However, far from being escapist, fantasy rather distorts reality or otherwise changes it deliberately in order to accomplish a particular design. It is a deeply complex mode of art showing varying effects, depending on the author and each particular work. Accordingly, many different theories have been formulated concerning the function and value of fantasy literature.
For Tolkien, one of modern fantasy’s most successful and influential authors (Swinfen, 1984:1), the definitive feature of fantasy is the aspect of ‘Sub-creation’ (Tolkien, 2001:47). Authors of fantasy, to Tolkien, are not simply the creators of random, senseless visions; and the success of a good fantasy is not dependent on the degree to which it produces ‘strangeness’, but on the extent to which it produces an indescribable feeling, which Tolkien calls ‘Enchantment’ (Tolkien 2001:53). Thus, Tolkien (2001:22, 49) argues, ‘anyone… can say the green sun’; the creative powers inherent in language, which gave us no less a potent spell than that of the adjective (2001:22), allow for this. It is the ability to create a world which the mind can enter, a world in which we can not only imagine a green sun, but can in fact ‘believe’ in it on another, secondary level, which is the key to skilful fantasy. Such fantasies result in true ‘Secondary Worlds’ (Tolkien, 2001:52), and produce ‘Secondary Belief’ (Tolkien, 2001:53). And true Secondary Worlds are otherworlds in their entirety, though everything in them may not be fantastic; everything in them including things which we know to exist: ‘the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread’ (Tolkien, 2001:9) are touched by fantasy, because they are the things we are seeing while enchanted by the craft of the fantasist (i.e. while reading a fantasy novel).

It is important to note that Tolkien (2001:12) distinguishes such fantasy from traveller’s tales, even though they ‘report marvels’, because ‘they are marvels to be seen in this mortal world in some region of our own time and space; distance alone conceals them.’ In other words the marvels of the otherworlds present in our own realities, those worlds
which are strange for cultural reasons, cannot produce Enchantment. Their strangeness can be perceived without undergoing a change within oneself, only by resting one’s eyes on them. This is extremely significant, and is a point to which I shall return.

The feeling of being enchanted is the key to what Tolkien sees as one of the most important functions of fantasy, and to one of the questions he initially attempted to answer when writing his essay: what is the value of fantasy? In connection with the idea of Enchantment, there are two notions, both interrelated, which need to be considered: desire and Recovery. First Tolkien (2001:41) sees fantasy tales as being essentially concerned with desire: ‘If they [awaken] desire, satisfying it while often whetting it unbearably, they [succeed].’ Awakening desire is the thrust of what Tolkien means when he uses the word Enchantment. By this Tolkien primarily means what he calls ‘primordial desires’, satisfied through the fantastic possibilities inherent in the otherness of fantasy:

One of these desires is to survey the depths of space and time. Another is…to hold communion with other living things. A story may thus deal with the satisfaction of these desires, with or without the operation of either machine or magic, and in proportion as it succeeds it will approach the quality and have the flavour of fairy-story (Tolkien, 2001:13).

Such primordial desires are linked to a profound desire for otherness, in the sense of things beyond our knowledge of reality. But it is not the only sense in which Tolkien sees fantasy as satisfying desire. The Secondary Worlds of fantasy, enchanting everything within them while not only containing what cannot be attained (i.e. the fantastic), also invest the common and the ordinary with a sense of otherness; in enchanting the visitor they inevitably enchant all that is visited. Thus fantasy effects Recovery, restoring to the
ordinary and the common its inherent otherness, and reminding us that all we have is ‘dangerous and potent, not really effectively chained, free and wild; no more [ours] than they are [us]’ (2001:59). Essentially, this means that fantasy frees the familiar from ‘triteness’, the perception of the familiar as uninteresting and insignificant. This triteness is the cost of ‘appropriation’; as Tolkien (2001:58) says: ‘They are like the things which once attracted us by their glitter, or their colour, or their shape, and we laid hands on them, and then locked them in our hoard, acquired them, and acquiring ceased to look at them.’ Thus in fantasy, when we desire the other, we desire that which is ours already; by freeing the familiar of our possessiveness we begin to desire it again.

If we examine The Secret Garden, it is not difficult to see that Recovery, in Tolkien’s very specific sense, is one of the values of the novel, although it is not a fantasy story. Desire is what begins to stir in Mary when she arrives in England and hears about the enticing secret of the garden. And most importantly a sense of Enchantment pervades the story’s atmosphere, because of the spiritual change Mary undergoes. Clearly, Tolkien’s insights do not apply to fantasy alone, and by contrasting the way Recovery operates in a non-fantasy like The Secret Garden with a fantasy like The Phoenix and the Carpet, we can perceive the value of the narrative techniques which fantasy literature foregrounds for different kinds of literature, especially when investigating constructions of the Other.

Tolkien (2001:58) himself says that fantasy is ‘not the only means of [R]ecovery’, and that a sense of ‘[h]umility is enough’. In other words he acknowledges the operations of Recovery in contexts other than fantasy. But, he believes nothing achieves the release of
the familiar from triteness ‘so thoroughly as a fairy-story, a thing built on or about
Fantasy, of which Fantasy is the core’ (Tolkien, 2001:59). Whether this is true or not,
fantasy is, for many reasons, probably the best genre in which to study the renegotiation
of values around representations of the Orient. Fantasy is a literature of otherworlds, and
the Orient has historically been one of the most potent Otherworlds of the Western
imagination.


The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also
the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest
colonies, the source of its civilizations and
languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its
deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In
addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or
the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality,
experience.

It is the Orient’s position as a contrasting world, a contrasting Other, that makes it so
especially significant in fantasy. Firstly, fantasy, because of its sub-creative aspects,
necessarily derives much of its technique from the same imaginative processes that Said
(2003:55) identifies as being instrumental in our conception of the Other, Other lands,
Other peoples, Other cultures. Such processes essentially involve the imaginative
production and discrimination of space and play a vital role in the organization of our
world-view:

...the universal practice of designating in one’s mind a
familiar space which is “ours” and an unfamiliar space
beyond “ours” which is “theirs” is a way of making
geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary. I
used the word “arbitrary” here because imaginative
geography of the “our land-barbarian land” variety does
not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for “us” to set up these boundaries in our minds; “they” become “they” accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from “ours” (Said, 2003:54).

Thus, for Said (2003:4-5), all spatial designations of strangeness and familiarity (them and us, “Orient” and “Occident”) are imaginative geographies.

Imagining geographies is, in a related sense, what occurs in the construction of the Secondary Worlds of fantasy. Both processes (the conception of the Other and fantasy construction) involve ideas (values, notions of what makes ‘us’ different) figured as imaginatively produced and organized space, which necessarily invests the concept of journeys with all sorts of meanings and implications. Wood (1986:7) notes that ‘[l]andscapes are highly important in Marvellous Secondary Worlds and are closely related to the plot, which frequently consists of journeys, often taking the form of quests.’ Frequently, the landscapes of fantasy are symbolic, playing vital roles in metaphors and allegories. Fantasy thus provides a useful and rich framework for investigating the operation of imaginative geographies, as well as an interesting vantage point from which to consider such geographies in realist texts. For example, in The Secret Garden, a story about a little girl who rediscovers her national and racial identity, landscape plays an essential role as Mary makes the journey from India to England, symbolizing her spiritual journey from Oriental selfishness and despotism to her role as a redeemer and nurturer (Hillel, 2003:59). In this story, although not a fantasy tale itself, theories formulated about fantasy like Tolkien’s concept of Recovery, allow us to view figurations of the
Oriental and the familiar space in new ways which impact significantly on our understanding of the way the novel functions.

Secondly, fantasy derives in part from the same thread of aesthetic which historically has had a significant relationship with the Europe’s interest in the Orient, namely romanticism. ‘Modern fantasy’, says Rosemary Jackson (1981:4), ‘is rooted in ancient myth, mysticism, folklore, fairy tale and romance.’ According to Michael Ferber (2005:1-2), Romauns, derived from ‘the adverb Romanice, “in the Roman manner”, was the term

...applied to anything written in Gallo-Roman Old French and, even after “French” had replaced it as the name for the language, it remained in use for the typical kind of literature written in it, that is, what we still call “romances,” the tales of chivalry, magic, and love, especially the Arthurian stories.

Gillian Beer (1970:4) describes the history of the romance ‘as a shift from form to quality,’ so that we ‘tend to speak of “medieval romances” but of the “Elizabethan romance” and then of “romance in nineteenth century novels”,’ the last of which refers to a wider aesthetic movement which characterizes what is known as the Romantic period (1970:7). Basically we can see fantasy as a continuation of one thread of an aesthetic divide that begins with the medieval romance. This split essentially hinges on one hand on the impulse to give the imagination free reign and on the other to render reality in as ‘true’ a way as possible. Attebery (1992: x) writes that

Whereas once upon a time…storytelling was divided into things that were true – history and things that weren’t – romance – now the division comes at quite another point. Once the realistic novel was invented, it claimed kinship to history and denied its ties to romance. Hence, the gulf
opened between histories true or feigned, on the one hand, and fantasies, on the other.

However, romance literature since at least the time of the crusades has been ‘affected by the culture of the East, and from the eighteenth century…particularly by The Arabian Nights’ (Beer, 1970:6). Examples of Romantic works influenced by the idea of the Orient include numerous fictional works by Romantic writers such as Lord Byron (The Giaour [1813], The Corsair and its sequel Lara [1814]), Thomas Moore (Lalla Rookh [1817] and Robert Southey (Thalaba the Destroyer [1801] and The Curse of Kehama [1810]) (Saglia, 2005:470-475).

The influence of the Arabian Nights has also been supremely important to representations of the Orient, especially in children’s literature. This in itself has been a complex development having more to do with the functionality of these representations than the actual Orient. Stephens and McCallum (1998:232) note that:

The process of producing versions of the Arabian Nights for young readers has evolved under the influence of the Western metaethic, with little or no recourse to literary traditions in Arabic. In essence, the Arabian Nights is constituted by its nineteenth-century translations…and these have richly supplied modern redactors with the exoticism associated with the Orient, especially spectacle built around foreign settings, magical forces, alien customs and modes of [behaviour], the dealings of kings and sultans, passion, violence, and death.

The sense of spectacle is probably the most important aspect of representing the Orient that has been inherited by fantasy literature from the Arabian Nights. Constituted of a dense profusion of ‘signs of the Other’, spectacle emphasizes difference and evokes a
richly sensual world of whelming exotica, a world that is often ‘lush with heavy 
 perfumes, strange vegetation, and bright intense [colours]’ (Landow, 1982:128). As I 
 shall be showing in my thesis, the appearance of the Orient in fantasy literature, even in 
 the present day, still shows a strong emphasis on spectacle, for reasons I will explore in 
 detail.

Today the most obvious link between medieval romances and modern fantasy is the 
 preference for a medieval setting. Thompson (1982:215) writes that in ‘medieval 
 romance the testing of the chivalric ideal takes place in a medieval setting, regardless of 
 the context of the original material’. Thus heroes borrowed from Greek or Roman legend 
 are transformed into nobles from various stages of the Middle Ages demonstrating 
 knightly prowess and the ideals of chivalric behaviour. Similarly Hunt (2001:4) observes 
 of alternative world fantasy that there is ‘a tendency [in authors] to exploit pseudo- 
 medieval settings.’ In these kinds of fantasies, the Orient as an Otherworld is positioned 
 at a double remove from contemporary reality, which can be instrumental in facilitating 
 the Recovery of the familiar. Stephens and McCallum (1998:230) write that ‘[t]he Orient 
 depicted in the Arabian Nights is another medieval fantasy world, already constructed as 
 a fantastic Other by that medieval world itself subsequently reconstructed as a fantastic 
 [o]ther by the modern West.’ By including pseudo-Oriental worlds within secondary 
 universes structured as pseudo-medieval settings, fantasy writers can position their 
 alternative worlds not only in relation to contemporary reality but also in relation to 
 another Oriental Otherworld. This can result in a complex vacillation between the
categories of strangeness and familiarity in order to produce Recovery, to which I will be paying particular attention in my thesis.

The evident fondness for medieval settings in fantasy echoes an impulse particular to children’s literature. Hunt (2001:4) argues that in fantasy literature the prevalence of medieval settings ‘suggests a regressive element, a romantic yearning (by adults) for earlier “innocence”, for an alternative world where motivations, actions, needs and gratifications are simpler and more direct than in the desperately complex and subtle real world.’ In a similar vein, Kutzer (2000:xvi) writes: ‘The arcadian paradise of children’s fiction provides an imaginative space where social and cultural disruption is not only impossible, it is barely acknowledged.’

This brings me to an essential point, namely that much of this thesis reflects a preoccupation with imaginative constructions of space, and more specifically with textual figurations of space.

Space in the most abstract, theoretical sense, is pure extension – an open area without boundaries, a limitless expanse, and the contemplation of such a limitless space might seem extremely difficult. But as soon as we inhabit certain spaces, experience them, start telling stories about them, they are transformed into places with boundaries and associated with emotions and meaningful events (Viljoen, Lewis and van der Merwe, 2004:14).

We can distinguish between physical or geographical space and space that has been accommodated into the organized economy of our worldview: demarcated, labelled and invested with meaning. Invariably, the shift from the former to the latter is a narrative process as well as a differentiating one, involving story-telling and generating identity.
construction. ‘We can thus view the relationship between space and identity as a symbiotic relationship, a mutual dependency creating meaningfulness’ (Viljoen et al, 2004:12).

One of the most important reasons behind my decision to study representations of the Orient in fantasy is that fantasy literature foregrounds these constructions in a way no other genre does. In that sense, fantasy as a genre, more so than any other, is concerned with depicting the site where space is converted into meaning.

For some authors, most notably C.S. Lewis, author of The Chronicles of Narnia (1950-1956) the meanings articulated by their Secondary Worlds are transcendental in nature, embodying religious truths (Schakel, 2005:28-29). Other authors have used fantasy to express what they believe are truths pertaining to human psychology (Landow, 1982:127). What these different works have in common is that by deliberately disregarding the reality of material actuality, they direct our attention to the conceptual or ideological assumptions held by the authors. ‘The writer of fantasy goes beyond realism to reveal that we do not live entirely in a world of facts, that we also inhabit a universe of the mind and spirit where the creative imagination is permanently struggling to articulate meaning and values’ (Egoff, 1981:81). However, because fantasies make use of material reality in their construction of fictional spaces in ways that reflect the attitudes of authors towards physical geographical locations, the roles these spaces play in the expression of ideology are also telling in their assumptions about the spaces they are meant to evoke.
Furthermore, if fantasy literature is strongly ideological, then fantasy as children’s literature and as a descendant of the Romance represents a nexus of overlapping impulses to idealism that often serves conservative agendas. As Hunt (2001:4) suggests, as fantasy literature, children’s fantasy may function as the site of idealized pseudo-medieval constructions of reality. As children’s literature, it often manifests as an arcadian paradise where disruption can be ignored (Kutzer, 2000:xvi). Frequently, however, what is meant by ‘disruption’ is apparently a dislodging of essentialist constructions of identity, the purpose of which is to preserve the privileged position of the offered subject. However, it is not my view that fantasy is inherently conservative, encoding the simplistic notions of identity which conservatism often implies, anymore than I agree with Rosemary Jackson’s characterization of the genre as a literature of subversion.

To Jackson, fantasies like those of Tolkien and Lewis are in a sense failed fantasies (Attebery, 1992:21), precisely because of the tendencies I have just been discussing. According to Jackson (1981:9), they ‘move away from the unsettling implications which are found at the centre of the purely “fantastic”. Their original impulse may be similar, but they move from it, expelling their desire and frequently displacing it into religious longing and nostalgia.’ Kroeber (1988:7) contradicts this view, saying that ‘Romantic fantasy is not, as Rosemary Jackson thinks, nostalgic,’ and arguing (1988:9-10) that fantasy rather ‘turns inward rather than backward. Fantasy is a primary form of literary self-reflexivity.’ The answer to this is that fantasy has the immense potential for both self-reflexivity and the conservative nostalgia for a world of simplified identities, that the
fantasy tale ‘as given is not subversive, but…remains potentially so’ (Ruddick, 1992:xiv), and therein lies its immense significance as a site for postcolonial interrogation.

McGillis (2000:xxii) writes that postcolonialism ‘as an activity of mind is quite simply intent on…liberating the study of literature from traditional and Eurocentric ways of seeing.’ Eurocentric conceptions of identity manifest in literature as an aspect of neocolonialism, what McGillis (2000:xxiv) identifies as ‘a renewed drive on the part of the dominant social and cultural forces to maintain their positions of privilege.’

It is this view of identity construction that underlies what Said (2003:1) identifies as Orientalism, ‘a way [for Europeans] of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience.’ Underlying this, and crucially informing it on all levels, is the imagined contrast between the Subject (European) identity and the ‘Orient’ (Said, 2003:43). Furthermore, according to Said, the ‘Orient’ itself, defined by its difference from Europe, is an imagined entity, hence the term ‘imaginative geography’. Therefore a problem inherent in Orientalism is that the primary function of the Orient is not to be represented accurately, but to be Other, in other words, to subordinate peoples designated as Oriental to the needs of a dominant group for the purposes of the self-definition (Said, 2003:71). Such styles of thinking ensure that those designated as Orientals are only defined in terms of difference, and ‘the result is usually to polarize the distinction – the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western – and limit the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies’ (Said, 2003:45).
McGillis (2000:xxiv) writes that:

In books for children, neocolonialism manifests itself as both a depiction of minority cultures as inveterately [O]ther and inferior in some ways to the dominant European culture, or as an appropriation of [O]ther cultures – that is, an assimilation of minority cultures into the mainstream way of thinking.

However, if postcolonialism is essentially opposed to the notion that a superior group shapes an inferior group to its own desires and needs, the very identification of such a thing as children’s literature is immediately problematic. Children’s books are, for the most part, written by adults (Kutzer, 2000:xv). The identification of children’s literature is based on the ‘assumption that children are an identifiable group that requires a particular kind of text written for it by a superior group’ (Reimer, 2000:111). Children’s books are almost always more or less didactic, with adults, whether consciously or unconsciously, conveying morals and values which they deem acceptable to the child audience, in the hope of perpetuating those values (Kutzer, 2000:xv). In this sense children’s literature can be understood as a colonized space, and children as a colonized group. This concept has been explored at length by Perry Nodelman (1992), who notes the parallels between Orientalism and children’s literature in particular. Fantasy literature, with its ideology-based alternate realities, provides a useful venue for perceiving children’s literature as colonized space. If fantasy is a genre wherein authors may construct spaces to reflect ideology, then children’s fantasy can be understood as a way for authors to move children into a space particularly constructed to project ideology and, thus, already colonized.
What a postcolonial reading offers, however, is not to be understood as a ‘discourse for gathering in children and forming them in the image adults desire’ but ‘a discourse that allows for a greater variety in versions of history and social and cultural constructions than was available to earlier generations of children’ (McGillis, 2000:xxviii). My thesis represents a postcolonial impulse in this sense. This involves a resistance to simplified identities, without rigid demarcations of space and culture, and an appreciation for the role of historical context in the shaping of human experience. For this reason, it should be kept in mind that when I use terms such as Orient, West, Other and Same, these are used to ‘signify attitudes rather than realities’ (Sallis, 1999:5), attitudes that approach spaces and identities in the Orientalist mode of demarcating imaginative geographies, and represent them as such.

The focus of this thesis will be on *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, a collective narrative that I believe exemplifies the most problematic use of an Other-space in a fantasy. The textual evidence for this in *The Chronicles* is perhaps overt at the shallowest levels of descriptive detail, most notably in the author’s use of racial darkness to evoke fear and loathing. However, what I hope to offer is a thorough exploration of the meanings of Orientalist imaginative geography in a fantasy framework, involving a detailed investigation into the significance of the narrative strategies peculiar to the genre. I will be paying particular attention to the vacillations between ‘strangeness’ and ‘familiarity’, the values that determine their roles and demarcations, and the significance of this in fantasy. I will also be linking aspects of representation to the heritage of Romanticism, to which fantasy as a genre is so richly indebted, and the manifestation of
the politics of imperial writing that this heritage may occasion. In bringing my study to a subject of such overt Orientalist characteristics, I hope to most clearly demonstrate the problems occasioned by fantasy evocations of the Other. In addition the continuing popularity and prestige attached to these stories, as demonstrated by the recent re-issued publications occasioned by the Walden Media film adaptations (White, 2005:216), makes a study of these books of considerable contemporary relevance.

However, although my focus will be on a narrative chosen to demonstrate the problems of representations of the Other in fantasy, I do not wish to suggest, for example, that fantasy is inherently neo-colonial because of its narrative features. Therefore I will conclude this study with a brief exploration of the implications of fantasy for constructions of identity that break free of traditional binary ways of viewing the Subject in relation to the Other, as well as noting the problems of representation that seem to persist in contemporary fantasies. As such I will be laying a great deal of emphasis on the imaginative impulse as central to fantasy literature and the constructive implications of the genre, viewing fantasy as neither inherently conservative nor characteristically subversive. Instead my departure will be the simple conceptualization of fantasy as the site where space is converted into meaning, and I will end off by briefly investigating the manifestations of the terms of that meaning in fantasies by authors other than Lewis. As I will show, there are many different kinds of fantasies, and some of them have treated the Oriental space in complex and varying ways.
Chapter Two

C.S. Lewis and the Framing of Ideal Identity

*The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956), a series of seven books by C.S. Lewis, tells of the adventures of human children in a fictional Otherworld that can only be entered by supernatural means from the Primary World. The Narnia stories are often regarded as Christian allegory, although Lewis disliked this term, preferring to see it as a ‘supposal’ (White, 2005:133). In other words Lewis preferred the Narnia stories to be seen as a series of events that could occur *supposing* the existence of another world, in which the Christian concept of the spiritual saviour manifests in the form of a lion, Aslan, instead of a man, Jesus. With *The Chronicles* Lewis ‘wanted to bring [the] message and experience of Christianity to child readers…devoid of any negative or dull associations’ (Giardina, 2005:34). The fairy-tale, or fantasy form, suited Lewis’s purposes for a number of reasons which are pertinent to this study and will be discussed below.

Firstly the fantasy form afforded Lewis unique opportunities for invoking a sense of wonder in readers, a function closely related to J.R.R. Tolkien’s theory of Recovery. In the essay ‘On Three Ways of Writing for Children’, Lewis (1980:212) declares: ‘I hope everyone has read Tolkien’s essay on fairy tales, which is perhaps the most important contribution to the subject that anyone has yet made.’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* were published in the 1950s at about the same time as *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien’s influential work, was being written (Mendlesohn, 2008:30). Lewis was not only a contemporary of Tolkien, but a close friend (White, 2005:88). It is not surprising, then,
that many of Lewis’s ideas about the function and importance of fantasy echo Tolkien’s. Most importantly Lewis concurs with Tolkien in the matter of Recovery, agreeing that fantasy has a co-dependent and inextricable connection to reality, and that it can be instrumental in helping us to see our world in a new and enriched light, thus restoring its wonder.

Like Tolkien, Lewis sees fantasy as being primarily concerned with desire, choosing to express this as longing. ‘[T]aking Tolkien’s point further, [Lewis] says that the desire for an enchanted Other-world is in fact a longing for a spiritual Other-world, a “desire for our own far-off country,”…In longing for elves, dragons and the realm of Faerie, we are actually longing for God and the heavenly realm’ (Schakel, 2005b:28-29). By stimulating the desire for otherness, fantasy, in Lewis’s view, heightens our spiritual awareness, and thus touches all that we perceive with its lustre. Fantasy, Lewis (1980:215) says, ‘stirs and troubles [a child] (to his lifelong enrichment) 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.’

In The Chronicles of Narnia, the otherness of Lewis’s Secondary Universe inheres most obviously in the variety of mythical and fairy-tale creatures which populate it: its Fauns, Centaurs, Dryads, Witches, Dwarfs, Giants and Talking Animals. But an important source of its flavour and quality also comes from its evocation of the High Middle Ages, a time of ‘tournaments, pavilions, challenges issued in courtly speech and emphasis on concepts such as courtesy and chivalry’ (Wood, 1986:9-10). By contrasting the Primary
World with the pseudo-medieval setting, so beloved of fantasy writers in general, Lewis is able to direct criticism at ‘modern culture, a culture [he felt] that was successful in marginalizing, and almost in ostracizing, Christianity,’ (Kort, 2005:107).

Duriez (2005:299) notes that the central theme of Tolkien and Lewis’s ‘friendship and affinity – [is] that the rise of modernism, socially and culturally expressed in the creation of “the Age of the Machine,” was an unprecedented fracture in Western civilization’. A particular object of Lewis’s derision, which emerges quite clearly in The Chronicles, is the educational system of Lewis’s day, which he believed was ‘in danger of fostering “Men without Chests,” people who either live by their animal appetites or cold, compassionless reason (or an inconsistent combination of both)” (Starr, 2005:8).

Lewis decried certain trends in the educational system of his day for teaching that emotional responses to imaginative texts and beauty in poetry and nature were purely subjective and revealed no truth. Without emotional and imaginative elements in the teaching of morality, he argued, no philosophical arguments for virtue, however clear, would produce virtuous people (Starr, 2005:8).

Hilder (2003:12) states that Lewis believed imaginative fiction, and fantasy in particular, could be used to ‘train the child into having correct moral emotions so that when he grows rational he will be prepared to recognize and live out ethical principles.’ Moral imagination ‘…encapsulates the theoretical position that any effective life-changing ethical education must engage the imagination’ (Hilder, 2003:8). Defending Lewis’s view, Hilder (2003:8) makes the point that it is ‘one thing for the teacher to rationally impart a vision of the Good…But it’s quite another thing to have readers fall in love with
the Good and want it.’ By engaging the imagination, fantasy allows readers to love the Good by embodying virtue in positive imaginative experience.

This in part accounts for the strong didactic impulse in *The Chronicles*. ‘The little human animal’, Lewis says, ‘will not at first have the right responses. It must be trained to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likeable, disgusting and hateful’ (in Hilder, 2003:14). This can be seen in the way the narrator of *The Chronicles* is strongly insistent on attaching certain emotions to things which, objectively, might not inspire such emotions. For example the first mention of Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Lewis, 2001a:77) makes Peter feel ‘brave and adventurous’, Susan feels as ‘if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music [has] just floated by her’, Lucy has a feeling as of the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer, while Edmund, who is later corrupted, feels a ‘sensation of mysterious horror.’ The material of Lewis’s otherworld is therefore carefully described to both provoke and demand strong emotional responses from readers; Spufford (2002:102) remarks that the ‘seductive voice of the stories is also a bully, pushing you into feeling, overwhelming resistance with strong words.’ This has significant implications for Lewis’s deployment of the Orient. Since Lewis is concerned with re-igniting a sense of appreciation for the world his intended child audience inhabits, Lewis is tellingly selective about which elements he uses to give material shape to the negative and positive aspects of his Otherworld, and this has relevant implications for his construction of a ‘moral geography’ (Wood, 1986:21).
Zambreno (2005:254) argues that the otherworld geography in *The Chronicles* is not simply a reflection of medieval England; rather it reflects the ‘medieval worldview’ through the use of ‘medieval concepts of time and space…[that] shape his fictional universe and the narrative that occurs within it.’ In other words Lewis’s Secondary World is in many ways a reflection of the way medieval Europeans conceived of space and time. Borrowing the medieval worldview in his creation of a Secondary World informs Lewis’s structure of a ‘moral geography’ (Wood, 1986:21), in which spaces reflect certain moral stances. Narnia, the focus of Lewis’s narrative, is depicted as the centre of its world’. Likewise, Zambreno (2005:259) notes that in ‘medieval maps…Jerusalem is depicted as the [centre] of the inhabited world…’ ‘Like ‘Diana Wynne Jones, in *Castle in the Air* (1990), and Tamora Pierce, throughout her *Song of the Lioness* tetralogy (1983-1988), [Lewis] substitute[s the West and East for] a North-South distinction’ (Stephens and McCallum, 1998:247). This allows Lewis to locate Aslan’s country in the utter East, ‘which is where the Medieval Model locates the Earthly Paradise’, while ‘the forces of evil exist in the [north] and the [south], the latter containing the regions of hyper-sensuality and hedonism’ (Wood, 1986:21).

The Oriental space in *The Chronicles* is represented by the country of Calormen, which lies to the south of Narnia beyond its neighboring ally Archenland and across the harsh expanses of a desert. As a matter of interest, Lindskoog (2001:20) notes the similarities between Calormen and the non-fictional country of Uzbekistan in Central Asia, explaining that in ‘the nineteenth century the English had taken a great interest in the colo[u]rful culture of Central Asia and its history, which helps to explain Lewis’s interest
in it in the twentieth century.’ The similarities between Calormen and this country are compelling enough to suggest an incontrovertible link. Lindkoog (2001:20) writes: ‘Tashbaan is located on a fruit-growing island in a river at the edge of the great desert between Calormen and Archenland.’ Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan is located on a fruit-growing oasis on the Chirchik River in the midst of one of the largest deserts in the world… In 1950, when C.S. Lewis wrote *The Horse and His Boy*, Tashkent was populated by about a million Muslim or communist Uzbeks and Russians; many Koreans lived there also, brought there by Stalin. The native Uzbek people are a mixture of Mongol and Middle Eastern ancestry; thus their skin is light brown and their faces look slightly Asian (Lindskoog, 2001:20).

Calormen’s function in the narrative is complex and highly instrumental, not only in relation to Narnia, but to the many other spaces in the narrative, all of which play significant roles in the operations of Recovery within the text. This is because, as I will argue, all the positive aspects embodied in the series are linked, while at the same time there is, in opposition to it, a continuity of evil, embodied in Otherness. The most important example of the negative side of this system is embodied in the Oriental space, but this cannot be understood by examining it in isolation. Lewis’s representation of the Orient has a narrative position that is significant on many levels, involving not only its spatial location in Lewis’s Secondary World but also how and when we are meant to encounter it. This is also true of Narnia itself. To achieve these effects, Lewis uses the narrative strategies of a particular category of fantasy.

Aside from being a fantasy, Lewis’s narrative conforms to what Mendlesohn (2008:xix) categorizes as the ‘portal fantasy’, in which ‘a fantastic world [is] entered through a
portal’. This kind of fantasy has certain characteristics that particularly suit Lewis’s narrative, one of the most important of which is its ability to sustain a sense of wonder. It is characterized by the protagonist’s move ‘from a mundane life…to direct contact with the fantastic’ and ‘much quest fantasy…adopts the structure and rhetorical strategies of the portal fantasy: it denies the taken for granted and positions both protagonist and reader as naïve’ (Mendlesohn, 2008:2). This naïve position of the protagonist is, in part, necessary to the operations of Recovery in the narrative, in so far as that to comprehend a Secondary World’s wonder involves its presentation as new and entirely other.

A sense of wonder is crucial to the operation of Lewis’s didactic strategies, because it is instrumental in making readers feel correct moral emotions rather than simply learn lessons. ‘Fantasy,’ Mendlesohn (2008:5) notes, ‘relies on a moral universe: it is less an argument with the universe than a sermon on the way things should be, a belief that the universe should yield to moral precepts. This belief is most true of portal-quest narratives.’ In *The Chronicles of Narnia* is held up as an ideal version of the world from which Lewis’s English protagonists come. The supernatural means by which it is reached and its fairy-tale qualities only serve to enhance the appeal of elements which the children recognize from their own world. However, Narnia is in many ways richer than England because of ‘the spiritual experience which [it] offers’ (Wood, 1986:27). Lewis wishes to awaken in his readers a desire for this spiritually richer place, because it stands as a metaphor for a spiritually enriched state, which readers are then invited to take back with them. Using the narrative strategies of the portal fantasy allows Lewis to intensify this desire by contrasting Narnia with various frame worlds.
Frames are described by Attebery (1992:66) as ‘narrative devices that establish a relationship between the fantasy world and our own while at the same time separating the two’. However, Mendlesohn (2008:2) suggests that the frame world constitutes any space with which the protagonist is familiar and leaves to make direct contact with the fantastic. In *The Chronicles*, Lewis’s frame worlds also stand as representations of all that Lewis felt was wrong with the modern world around him. This is true of all *The Chronicles* except perhaps *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, for reasons which I will discuss below. The frame world’s contrast with Narnia is always present, much as India is always present in the form of memory throughout *The Secret Garden*, emphasizing England’s identity by its difference. In this sense the frame world is not necessarily the Primary World, but may be any space that is familiar to the protagonist, including those within the otherworld. Tracing the pattern of contrast between each frame world and Narnia in *The Chronicles* is crucial to my argument.

I want to begin my study by briefly considering the order in which the seven volumes should be approached. Currently, *The Chronicles of Narnia* are almost universally read according to the chronological order of their narratives, that is, the order in which the events of the books occur. This order begins with *The Magician’s Nephew* (1955), which tells of the creation of Narnia, and ends with *The Last Battle* (1956), which tells of its destruction. However, this is not the order in which they were written, or even the order in which they were originally published. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), which is currently numbered as the second volume in the sequence, was the first to be written and published. Moreover, Peter J. Schakel (2005a) also offers two arguments why
it is the most ideologically effective when read first: firstly, that it is instrumental in
drawing the reader in to the Otherworld, and secondly, that it most clearly impresses the
modern world’s need for redemption.

According to Schakel (2005a:96) a ‘key strategy in the book is the use of what reader-
response critics call “gaps.” All stories depend on gaps (details that need later to be
clarified, questions that a reader wants answered, and immediately begins trying to
answer by anticipating later events).’ Such gaps have been woven into the fabric of the
story in such a way that reading them in the order in which they were written has a direct
impact on the reading experience. In my introduction, I discuss the use of what I call a
‘pulse of discovery’ in The Secret Garden, which makes use of ‘gaps’ in a similar way. In
this children’s novel, we encounter gaps when we are introduced to several central
elements of the story, the most important of which is the secret garden itself. The gaps are
placed strategically in this story, but they facilitate a ‘drawing-in’ that directs our
attention to the focal space of the plot, while at the same time enshrouding it in a deep
sense of mystery. In this way they are essential to what I have identified as the operation
of Recovery in the story, investing the home space with an enticing secretiveness
instrumental in restoring to it its wonder.

‘The most important example of a gap in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, [should]
it [be] read first, is the buildup to the introduction of Aslan’ (Schakel, 2005a:96). The
protagonists first hear the name of Aslan without being told who or what he is, but his
name provokes strong emotional responses in the children, as I have discussed above.
When the children are told that Aslan is in fact a lion, they experience a mixed feeling of fear and longing, and their anticipation of their meeting with him increases. These gaps are paced significantly in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in such a way that the event of meeting Aslan is invested with a deep sense of mystery and excitement. However, when reading the first book in the chronological sequence, *The Magician’s Nephew*, the introduction to Aslan is very different. Polly and Digory, the child protagonists of *The Magician’s Nephew*, are not given any information about Aslan before seeing him, and so there is no feeling of anticipation building up to his entrance. This can be extended to the reader’s encounter with Narnia as well, especially since the meeting with Aslan is the pivotal Narnian experience. When Aslan tells Lucy in *The Voyage of the Dawn* (Lewis, 2001c: 271) that she is never to return to Narnia, she explains: “It isn’t Narnia, you know…It’s you. We shan’t meet you there. And how can we live, never meeting you?”

Schakel (2005a:106) notes that there ‘is also a theological issue at stake. It concerns the relation of the doctrine of Creation to the doctrine of Redemption. By altering the sequence a question arises about which of the two doctrines is primary.’ However, Schakel (2005a:108) does not believe that Lewis put *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* ahead of *The Magician’s Nephew* because ‘Lewis thought that the doctrine of Redemption was the more important of the two’ but because, and this is crucial, ‘of the effects of the White Witch’s spell’ which creates ‘a condition in Narnia of constant winter without any Christmas. In other words, the White Witch [turns] Narnia into a homogenous, [colourless] and joyless place.’ (Schakel, 2005a:108)
Narnia’s enchanted state is thus an image of modernity:

This homogenizing and deadening effect, this joyless world, is not unlike the world of contemporary Western culture that Lewis recognized around him. The principal effect of modern culture has been to disenchant and to homogenize the world. It has tried to limit the world we live in to a world that we understand and control. This means that we have little sense of wonder, of the unexpected and the possible. And anyone who lacks a sense of such things cannot begin to talk about or to understand religion, especially Christianity (Schakel, 2005a:108).

This observation is immensely illuminating with regard to the operation of Recovery in the series, because the contrast in this book is not between England and Narnia so much as it is between Narnia under the Witch’s spell and Narnia as Narnia is meant to be. Mendlesohn (2008:30) writes of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe that it ‘presume[s] a thinned world, one in which wrongness already exists’, but this is not immediately apparent. Instead the Primary world is not at all depicted as an undesirable place in which to be. The story begins with the four child protagonists’ arrival at the house of an ‘old Professor who lived in the heart of the country’. The Pevensie children have been ‘sent away from London during the war because of the air-raids’ (Lewis, 2001a:9). Far from being a place the children want to escape, the countryside and the big house the professor lives in afford numerous opportunities for adventure and are some of the first delights of the novel. The children immediately want to explore the woods, but rainy weather on the morning after their arrival restricts their games to the house. In this way, the youngest of the children, Lucy, stumbles upon Narnia through the back of a wardrobe during a game of Hide and Seek. There she meets a Faun, one of the Secondary
World’s mythic inhabitants, and discovers that Narnia is under the spell of a Witch who keeps it ‘always Winter and never Christmas’ (Lewis, 2001a:25).

Thus far, the story introduces three contrasts which are noteworthy. The first is the contrast between London and the countryside, although this one is hardly dwelt on and is more fully developed in *The Magician’s Nephew*. The second is between the fantasy land of Narnia, which is under the control of the White Witch and made a joyless, homogenous place, as noted by Schakel, and the world from which Lucy has come, which, at least superficially, is in a much more desirable state. ‘It is summer there,’ Lucy explains (Lewis, 2001a:18), and the freedom of the holidays combined with the delights of the old house in the countryside seem exactly opposite to Narnia, which is under oppressive rule and caught in the joyless stasis of perpetual winter. The third contrast is between Narnia under the Witch’s spell, and Narnia as depicted before the Witch’s reign in its natural state by the Faun:

He had wonderful tales to tell of life in the forest. He told about the midnight dances and how the Nymphs who lived in the wells and the Dryads who lived in the trees came out to dance with the Fauns; about long hunting parties after the milk-white stag who could give you wishes if you caught him; about feasting and treasure-seeking with the wild Red Dwarfs in deep mines and caverns far beneath the forest floor; and then about summer when the woods were green and old Silenus on his fat donkey would come to visit them, and sometimes Bachus himself, and then the streams would run with wine instead of water and the whole forest would give itself up to jollification for weeks on end. (Lewis, 2001a:22)

Narnia, as described by the Faun, inspires wonder and is also linked to the English countryside in its evocations of natural beauty and wholesome pleasures. As such, Narnia
becomes a metaphor for a spiritually enriched state, reflected in the English countryside, which Lewis wishes to champion against the excesses of modernity. For this reason Narnia is posited in each Chronicle as a country that is under threat in some way, involving the protagonists as crucial players in its defence. Mendlesohn (2008:xix) writes that ‘the portal fantasy allows and relies upon both protagonist and reader gaining experience. …[They] lead us gradually to the point where the protagonist knows his or her world enough to change it and enter into that world’s destiny.’ In the *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* this is achieved when the children eventually learn of their destiny to reign as kings and queens in Narnia, as their coronation will also mark the end of the Witch’s spell (Lewis, 2001a:90). But it also serves to ensure that the fate of Narnia is made a principal concern to the children, who will inherit the kingdom to rule. In this way, the protagonists are put in a position to fight for the spiritual state that Narnia both inspires and embodies.

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is the only one of *The Chronicles* in which the initial contrast between Narnia and the frame world seems to posit Narnia as less desirable. However, Narnia in this novel is not so much a less desirable place as it is a desirable place which is *under threat*. As the protagonists enter into its destiny as its prophesied kings and queens, they learn to fight for the spiritual state for which it stands, metaphorically achieving that state in the process. This is most apparent in the two boys, who fight the decisive battle against the White Witch. Peter begins looking ‘pale and stern’ and his spiritual growth is signified by the fact that he seems older to Lucy (Lewis, 2001a:192). Similarly Edmund is ‘not only healed of his wounds, but looking better than
she had seen him look – oh for ages; in fact ever since his first term at that horrid school which was where he had begun to go wrong’ (Lewis, 2001a:194). Narnia’s ability to heal the wrongs committed by modernity, specifically the wrongs inflicted by modern education, is apparent here.

However, this is not the essential reason why I believe *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is meant to be read first; all *The Chronicles* depict a Narnia which has to be saved. The reason *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is meant to be read first is because it establishes very clearly that everything the children must defend is to be found in their own world, in England. This is most apparent in the depiction of natural beauty in the novel. It is summer in England, when the spiritual space embodied in the countryside is at its most idealized, but it is after they experience the enchanted thaw in Narnia that the children rediscover their appreciation for nature as they see ‘the whole wood passing in a few hours or so from January to May’. (Lewis, 2001a:132) In this way Lewis restores the wonder to something ordinary (Spring) with magic, something the children have already experienced in their own world, and more specifically, in their own country.

Thus *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* most clearly impresses the purpose of Recovery, which is to restore a sense of wonder to that which is supposedly to be found at home. And understanding this is crucial to fully appreciate the extent to which the Otherness of the Orient has been deployed in *The Chronicles*. From this point of view the countryside depicted in the beginning of the novel is probably the most important space of the series, as it is meant to embody everything Lewis wishes to champion in his
readers’ own world, although the actual battle is staged in Narnia. This brings me to a salient point, namely that Narnia’s redemptive qualities are, as in the other *Chronicles*, clearly apparent in this novel, and they are not solely involved in restoring a sense of wonder to nature. They also restore a sense of morality to the protagonists, which, the text suggests, modernity has dulled.

Narnia in its natural state is the antithesis to modernity, ‘socially and culturally expressed in the creation of “the Age of the Machine,”’ (Duriez, 2005:299) and so is the English countryside. The homogenous state brought on by the Witch’s winter is an image of modernity, as Schakel (2005a:108) points out, but Lewis also links the Witch to modernity through Edmund, whose predisposition to evil, it is suggested, is due to the effects of modern education.

The first half of the novel gives readers a contrast between two visits to Narnia: Lucy’s and Edmund’s. Lucy’s is positive, and establishes her as the character least in need of spiritual correction. This is later confirmed by repeated reminders of her close relationship with Aslan, indicated by the fact that it is Lucy who sees Aslan ‘most often’ (Lewis, 2001c:125). In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Lucy is the first to discover Narnia and the first to ally herself with Aslan’s side against the White Witch. Edmund’s experience is in clear contrast to this. His first meeting in Narnia is with the White Witch, and his subsequent alliance with her signifies his alliance with evil. In an image of seduction (Alston, 2004:81), the White Witch flatters and bewitches him into betraying his family, but Edmund’s fall into error here is not solely due to the Witch’s
influence. As it is later explained, Edmund has begun to go wrong ‘ever since his first
term at that horrid school’ (Lewis, 2001a:194), and his alliance with the Witch is
therefore another link between the evil occurring in Narnia under her reign and another
evil regime in England, that of modern education. Molson (1982:97-98) notes that just as
fantasy effects Recovery, restoring to ‘basic human situations or emotions the original
sheen and importance overfamiliarity or cynicism has eroded’, so:

through an analogous form of displacement – ie. translating
certain assumptions concerning good and evil and their
several interrelationships into various story
patterns…ethical fantasy can restore to the pressing
concern with good and evil and to ethical decision-making
some of their [lustre] and their challenge, which have
gradually been dimmed by peer pressure, rote conventional
presentation, and uncomfortable…proselytizing.

In Lewis’s narrative, the Primary World is clearly in need of a renewed desire for
redemption. And the need for redemption needs to be displaced to an otherworld where it
can be viewed with a new urgency. But the most important point that the contrasts
between Edmund and Lucy impress is that Narnia’s natural state is linked to the positive
aspects still evident in the Primary World, while the negative aspects demonstrated by
Edmund’s behaviour are linked to the notion of enchantment. And both these contrasts
underline the central point inherent in the concept of Recovery: namely, that natural state
of the home space is a positive one. When Edmund is transformed by his experience in
Narnia, Lucy notes that he has begun to look like ‘his real old self again’ (Lewis, 2001a:
194), and this can be extended to the Primary World. England’s true (though lost) self is
an already redeemed one, which Lewis’s narrative suggests is most clearly reflected in
the Christianity-centred Middle Ages, the “‘Old West’”, as Lewis called it (Duriez, 2005:301). It is this true self which needs to be rediscovered in Narnia.

The true identity signified is, however, (and this is my main point) culturally specific: it is the ‘Old West,’ (Duriez, 2005:301) or Western, identity. While *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* most clearly impresses that a state of redemption needs only to be recovered, Lewis’s treatment of the Oriental space suggests that the very location of redemption is in the Western identity. While this is more evident in the later Chronicles, it is prefigured in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in the function of the Oriental sweet, Turkish Delight, within the Recovery function pertaining to food in *The Chronicles*.

The first sign of the Oriental in *The Chronicles* appears in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, taking the form of the Turkish Delight the witch uses to enchant Edmund. Superficially, the appearance of this Oriental confection seems unrelated to Lewis’s pseudo-Oriental Calormen culture but, in fact, as I have noted, Lewis’s treatment of Oriental food prefigures his use of the Oriental space.

Lewis’s use of the Oriental here is significant because an important aspect of the Recovery function in *The Chronicles* involves restoring a sense of delight to food and eating, which is one of those things which modernity has over-rationalized. Lewis (2001c:23) later mocks the over-rationalization of eating in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* through the character of Eustace Scrubb, whose requests for ‘Plumptree’s
Vitaminized Nerve Food’ made with ‘distilled water’, are examples of food reduced to joyless, perfunctory materials. Meals in Narnia, by contrast, are rendered with sensuous detail, such as Lucy’s tea with the Faun and the children’s meal at the Beavers’. Food is in any case an important signifier in children’s literature. Alston (2004:81) notes that food ‘penetrates the child’s body and thus who feeds the child and what they feed him/her become important, for it appears that the child should only take good things into his/her body.’

Specifically Lewis is concerned with restoring the delight to ‘good, ordinary food’ (2001a:98) which he equates with ‘traditional, national’ (Alston, 2004:79) food. Edmund, who has fallen into error by eating the Witch’s food, cannot really enjoy his meal with the Beavers because, the narrator comments: ‘There’s nothing that spoils the taste of good ordinary food half so much as the memory of bad magic food.’ (Lewis, 2001a:98)

The exotic of the Oriental here is conflated with the otherness of magic, and both are indicators of moral danger which, the narrative suggests, the child should recognize as a given truth. As Giardina (2005:41) comments:

As The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe teaches, sin occurs when you know something is bad and you do it anyway…The confectionary itself [is a]…dead giveaway: while Lucy [eats] wholesome and prosaic foods for her first meal in Narnia, the sugary stuff tempting Edmund [is] a mysterious and unnatural concoction, product of the decadent and ungodly Orient. Its appeal [lies] precisely in its dark, guilty, sensual pleasures, its rich, exotic and emphatically un-British flavours and its improbable magical origin.

Consequently Edmund is unable to think of anything but eating more Turkish Delight, and he agrees to bring his siblings to the Witch’s house where, she promises him, he will
be made a prince and ‘eat Turkish Delight all day long’ (Lewis, 2001a:45). Unable to accomplish this as the other three children quickly ally themselves with Aslan’s side, Edmund sneaks away to the Witch’s house to reveal their whereabouts and plans. His siblings do not at first grasp the gravity of this. “‘Don’t you understand? [says] Mr Beaver. “He’s gone to her, to the White Witch. He has betrayed us all!’” (Lewis, 2001a: 94) It is later revealed that ‘two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve’ are destined to reign as kings and queens in Narnia, and that the White Witch is determined to kill any humans she finds. It is Edmund’s treachery that necessitates Aslan’s sacrifice in a Narnian version of the crucifixion. The White Witch tells Aslan:

“…You know…the Magic which the Emperor put into Narnia at the very beginning. You know that every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have a right to a kill.” (Lewis, 2001a:153)

Edmund’s betrayal is directly linked to his ingestion of the Oriental sweet. Mr Beaver tells the children: “‘…the moment I set eyes on that brother of yours I said to myself ‘Treacherous’. He had the look of one who has been with the Witch and eaten her food.’” (Lewis, 2001a:94-95) Considering ‘the context of this story, its wartime setting…this betrayal can be linked to that of a war-time traitor…[Edmund] has betrayed his nationality as he rejects traditional food for the foreign, a convention…well established in the English psyche.’ He has ‘taken on a look of a member of her regime as opposed to one of his own family/country’ (Alston, 2004:82).

The treatment of the Oriental here underlines an important point about the Recovery function: The otherness of magic found in fantasy literature is redemptive and
transformative if its substance is ordinary and normal, which amounts to being culturally familiar. Desiring otherness for the sake of otherness is dangerous and unnatural, and conveying this, for Lewis, involves otherness taking on a foreign meaning as well as a magical one.

The foreignness of the Oriental also solidifies the contrast between what is wholesome and ordinary and what is magical. Sardines and toast, and any other food Lewis includes in the ‘good, ordinary’ category might seem less wholesome if the White Witch were to dole out enchanted versions of the same meals. The foreignness of Turkish Delight emphasizes the contrast required for the maximum effectiveness of the Recovery function. The Oriental here is used simply to signify Otherness, the opposite to everything that Lewis wishes to attach to the Western identity. This, as I will discuss, is the exact way the Oriental is deployed in the form of Calormene culture.

*Prince Caspian* (1951) is the second volume of *The Chronicles* to be published after *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. If the preceding novel is largely concerned with establishing Narnia as a redemptive space, *Prince Caspian* functions to rework the desirability of Narnia as sentimental reminiscence, with almost three chapters describing the child protagonists remembering their previous adventures in the otherworld. Moreover, using the different time of the otherworld allows Lewis to heighten sentimental memories of past experiences into a longing for a time that is long past.
Time in Narnia, as all the English protagonists of *The Chronicles* discover, runs at a different pace from time in the Primary World. The narrator of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* explains:

> If you spent a hundred years in Narnia, you would still come back to our world at the very same hour of the very same day on which you left. And then, if you went back to Narnia after spending a week here, you might find that a thousand Narnian years had passed, or only a day, or no time at all. You never know till you get there (Lewis, 2001c:22).

In *Prince Caspian* the children discover that a thousand years has passed in Narnia during the one year since they were there. As Peter puts it: ‘…now we’re coming back to Narnia just as if we were Crusaders or Anglo-Saxons or Ancient Britons or someone coming back to modern England!’ (Lewis, 2001b:41) Consequently the children’s encounter with the sites of their memories is ‘simultaneously presented as remembering a past world’ (Lovell-Smith, 2003:36) complete with ancient ruins and entire landscapes altered by the passage of time, such as the island on which the children find themselves, which they remember being a peninsula. This ‘effect’, as Lovell-Smith (2003:36) points out, ‘is analogous to the encounter with Christianity that Lewis… is engineering for the reader: Lewis’s idea of faith is very much a matter of recovering a past (and better) state of things.’ It is further given a deeper meaning because the children are also remembering a time when they were in positions of power, not only as adults but as kings and queens. Molson (1982:95) discusses how for young readers the idea of a destiny for children as independent from adult intervention is one of fantasy’s most fundamental appeals: ‘achievement, recognition, status – all earned and not just given by an accommodating or patronizing adult!’ As child readers identify with the protagonists, Lewis is able to
capitalize on their desire for empowerment and thus enhance the fantasy’s ‘appeal and didactic effectiveness.’

Narnia’s appeal, however, is not simply a matter of remembering an older time. It is repeatedly emphasized in *The Chronicles* that Narnia at its most appealing is in its true and natural state. Furthermore, Narnia’s natural state is reflected in those aspects of Western culture which Lewis wishes to defend against what he sees as the damages inflicted by modernity. These aspects also manifest in *The Chronicles* as a true and natural English identity. The purpose of removing his protagonists to a fantasy otherworld is so that they will learn to identify and defend that which is under threat at home. As I have discussed with reference to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, because this has important implications for the construction of national and racial identity, understanding it is necessary to understanding the use of the Oriental space in *The Chronicles*.

The development of these themes in *Prince Caspian* is significant. If Narnia is representative of an ideal identity, then in many ways Narnia during the reign of Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy, described as the ‘Golden Age’, (Lewis, 2001b:63) represents the epitome of that identity. Considering this, it is significant that *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), in which the Oriental space prominently figures, is set during this time, and I will further discuss this later. But first, in order to fully grasp the way the Oriental space has been employed in *The Chronicles*, it is necessary to understand the meaning Lewis attaches to the Golden Age of Narnia’s history.
The narrative of *Prince Caspian* is achronological, involving lengthy flashbacks to previous events and the viewpoints of other characters. This allows Lewis to position Narnia in contrast with, not one, but two frame worlds. In *Prince Caspian* this applies most obviously to the Primary World from which the four protagonists from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* find themselves suddenly pulled back into Narnia. The transition occurs when the children are waiting at a train station before they go away to school. The dismal atmosphere that any child would attach to these events allows Lewis to emphasize the desirability of the otherworld and the spiritually stimulating experience it offers:

> The first part of the journey, when they were all together, always seemed to be part of the holidays; but now when they would be saying goodbye and going different ways so soon, everyone felt that the holidays were really over and everyone felt their term-time feelings beginning again, and they were all rather gloomy… (Lewis, 2001b:12)

This is contrasted with the natural beauty of the beach in Narnia where the children suddenly find themselves and the enjoyment they experience ‘splashing and looking for shrimps and crabs’ in the ‘cool clear water’ under a ‘cloudless sky’ (Lewis, 2001b:14).

However, Mendlesohn’s definition of a frame world also applies to Narnia itself, which the children discover, has been conquered by a human race, the Telmarines, who have driven the Talking Beasts and other fantastic creatures into hiding, and suppressed even the memory of them. It is this Narnia in which the other protagonist of the novel, Prince Caspian, has grown up, and it is his story which accounts for why the children have been called out of England. Caspian first learns of the old days of Narnia from his nurse. The
idea he forms of Old Narnia is radiant with the wonder of fantasy: ‘When all the animals could talk, and there were nice people who lived in the streams and the trees. Naiads and Dryads, they were called. And there were Dwarfs. And there were lovely little Fauns in all the woods’ (Lewis, 2001b:51). However, his nurse is quickly sent away by Caspian’s uncle Miraz, who wishes to suppress the memory of the Old Days. As Caspian grows up, he learns more from his tutor, Doctor Cornelius, who also teaches Caspian that the ‘royal family [are] newcomers to the country’ (Lewis, 2001b:55), and that the forces the Telmarines have conquered in order to take over Narnia are not human. Caspian is told: ‘It is you Telmarines who silenced the beasts and the trees and the fountains, and who killed and drove away the Dwarfs and Fauns, and are now trying to cover even the memory of them’ (Lewis, 2001b:61).

Like Narnia under the spell of the White Witch in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, this Narnia is an image of modernity. Explaining why Lewis was critical of modernity, Schakel (2005a:108) writes that modern culture ‘has tried to limit the world we live in to a world that we understand and control…’ In Prince Caspian the Telmarines have suppressed the wildness of Narnia, embodied in its enchanted trees and Talking Beasts, in order to control it. Telmarine Narnia thus functions as a frame world for Prince Caspian’s story much as England is the frame world for the Pevensie children’s. Although Caspian is an inhabitant of the otherworld, his encounter with Old Narnia conforms to the portal-quest fantasy structure; he leaves his familiar surroundings to make contact with the fantastic. In Caspian’s case, the fantastic takes the form of the remnants of Narnia’s magical creatures that he finds hiding in the woods. As with the Pevensies’ first
encounter with Narnia, Caspian’s reaction on first meeting fairy-tale creatures like Talking Badgers and Dwarfs is wonder, and as with the children, his experience with Narnia’s true self (Old Narnia) results in personal growth: we are told that ‘he began already to harden and his face wore a kinglier look’ (Lewis, 2001b:95).

The significance of the odd narrative structure of *Prince Caspian* is twofold. Firstly, it allows Lewis to play on the concept of belief, which is informed by Lewis’s desire ‘to bring [the] message and experience of Christianity to child readers…’ (Giardina, 2005:34). Lewis plays with the issue of believability in several ways: The Telmarines suppress belief in the Talking Beasts, Dwarfs and Narnia’s other fairytale creatures, in the ancient Kings and Queens, and in Aslan. Caspian encounters creatures he has been brought up to believe are only myth, but some of these creatures themselves, like Trumpkin the Dwarf, do not believe in Aslan or the Kings and Queens of old. Trumpkin encounters the ancient Kings and Queens themselves (i.e. the children) when he is rescued by them from Miraz’s soldiers, but remains sceptical about Aslan and the enchanted trees.

Noting the achronological structure of *Prince Caspian*, Schakel (2005b:52) argues that ‘beyond allowing the action to begin “in the middle of things,” [this] structure has a purpose. The opening three chapters provide readers a touchstone by which to judge the stories of the past referred to in the following four chapters.’ These chapters firstly establish the viewpoint of the Pevensie children as the primary perspective with which to identify and this is given weight by the fact that Caspian’s story is related as a story that...
is being related to the Pevensies. The immediate effect of this is that the reader is aware that certain things some characters dismiss as ‘fairy tales’ and ‘old wives’ tales’ are true. Thus:

Lewis confronts head on the issue of believability, not just for the Narnians and their stories of the past, but also for us as we read this story (the credibility of its Secondary World) and as we encounter the stories of our own past, such as the biblical stories that some people dismiss as fairy tales or old wives’ tales (Schakel, 2005b:52).

The narrative structure of Prince Caspian also has implications for identity construction. In the first place returning to Narnia awakens for the Pevensie children memories of being, which I have noted, represent an ideal identity. This identity, as the kings and queens of a magical country, acquires a mythic sheen as they learn what their reign has come to mean in Narnia to others. To the orphaned prince of a fantasy otherworld, in exile and in danger, they represent the very standard to which he must aspire. Dr Cornelius expresses the hope to Caspian that ‘at least you can try to be like the High King Peter of old, and not like your uncle’ (Lewis, 2001b:95). The awareness of the reader that these words apply to protagonists with whom they are identifying, that is, children not unlike themselves, is an electrifying pleasure, and probably the most appealing aspect of the identity to which Lewis wishes readers to aspire. Prince Caspian is thus instrumental in developing the appeal of an identity which is only directly portrayed in The Horse and His Boy (1954), and it is this identity which is contrasted with the Oriental space.

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader (1952) is the third chronicle to be published and the first to portray Lewis’s pseudo-Oriental Calormen culture, providing a glance at the
Oriental space. It also links Calormen to the clearest example of a protagonist damaged by modernity, and in need of the spiritual guidance which adventures in Narnia afford. The story begins by introducing ‘a boy called Eustace Clarence Scrubb, and he almost deserved it’ (Lewis, 2001c:11). The reader is thus immediately informed that the character Eustace is unlikable. Schakel (2005b:63-64) notes that to ‘show that [Eustace] needs to change, Lewis depicts him as someone absorbed completely in modern, materialistic culture and values.’ Eustace, we are told, ‘didn’t call his Father and Mother “Father” and “Mother”, but Harold and Alberta. They were very up-to-date and advanced people…’ (Lewis, 2001c:11). Eustace is thus portrayed as a direct product of modernity and is thus marked as spiritually lacking.

A further indication of Eustace’s spiritual impoverishment is his ‘dislike… [for] his cousins, the four Pevensies – Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy’ (Lewis, 2001c:12). Since readers have already identified with the Pevensies in the preceding Chronicles, and know them to have been spiritually benefited by their experiences in Narnia, this immediately sets them in opposition to Eustace. This also applies to Eustace’s home, which functions as the frame world for The Voyage of the Dawn Treader and which the protagonists leave in order to reach Narnia. In this way, Lewis contrasts Narnia with a clear example of a Primary World space transfigured by modernity, while at the same time depicting modernity as an extremely undesirable state. We are told that although Eustace disliked the Pevensies, ‘he was quite glad when he heard that Edmund and Lucy were coming to stay. For…he knew that there are dozens of ways to give people a bad time if you are in your own home and they are only visitors’ (Lewis, 2001c:12). It is not surprising then
that ‘Edmund and Lucy did not at all want to come and stay with Uncle Harold and Aunt Alberta’ (Lewis, 2001c:12) and that the story begins with the two children ‘stealing a few precious minutes alone together…talking about Narnia.’ (Lewis, 2001c:12-13). Like the railway station at the beginning of *Prince Caspian*, the frame space of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* is depicted as a site of longing, anticipating the spiritual fulfilment that Narnia offers.

Lucy and Edmund’s longing for Narnia then becomes focalized in the picture hanging in Lucy’s room, which reminds them of a Narnian ship (Lewis, 2001c:15). Their Aunt Alberta’s and Eustace’s dislike of the picture, and the fact that it is the only picture in the house that Edmund and Lucy like, are the first indications that the picture will be the means of the children’s re-entry into the otherworld (Lewis, 2001c:14). In a further development of focalized longing and contrast, the picture is described by Lewis with a deep richness of colour in the midst of his dreary depiction of modern life. The ship’s allusion to the realm of fairy, with its dragon-shaped prow, further emphasizes the contrast Lewis wishes to underline between the wonder of fantasy and the over-rationalized dullness of modernity. The picture’s transformation into a portal before the children’s eyes, as the ‘things in the picture [begin] moving’ (Lewis, 2001c:17) then enacts the narrative’s development into a portal fantasy, as the frame imaginatively swallows the story by drawing the characters into its world. Thus Edmund, Lucy and Eustace find themselves forcibly cast into a Narnian sea, and soon pulled on board what is revealed to be the ship of King Caspian, ‘whom [Edmund and Lucy] had helped to set on his throne during their last visit’ (Lewis, 2001c:21).
Schakel (2005b:62) writes that as is ‘typical of voyage stories, [The Voyage of the Dawn Treader] is in episodic form, a series of linked but unrelated adventures held together by the ship, the quest, and the characters.’ The quest Schakel refers to is Caspian’s desire to find the seven friends of his father who were sent away by his Uncle Miraz as part of Miraz’s scheme to usurp the throne. Caspian explains to Edmund and Lucy: ‘I swore an oath that, if once I established peace in Narnia, I would sail east myself for a year and a day to find my father’s friends or to learn of their deaths and avenge them if I could’ (Lewis, 2001c:29). The quest thus shapes the narrative by affording a purpose and a trajectory, but, as Schakel (2005b:61-62) notes, ‘the voyage [also] turns out to be an occasion for growth and learning…Some of the adventures on the journey are described briefly, but each of those treated at length focuses on the growth and maturation of one of the main characters.’ It is during the first of these adventures, on the Lone Islands, that Lewis’s pseudo-Oriental Calormen culture initially appears.

The Lone Islands, the narrator explains, are ‘attached to the crown of Narnia’ (Lewis, 2001c:47), and are in fact imperial assets of Narnia. In Prince Caspian, one of the titles Peter claims in his letter to Miraz is ‘Emperor of the Lone Islands’ (Lewis, 2001b:192). Caspian mentions that he has never understood how the Lone Islands came to belong to Narnia and Edmund informs him that it was so before the Golden Age of the Pevensies’ reign, ‘in the days of the White Witch’ (Lewis, 2001c:47). It is later told in The Last Battle how dominion over the Lone Islands was willingly given to the Narnians after they had ‘delivered’ the Islanders from a dragon (Lewis, 2001g:110).
The issue of imperialism is thus delicately resolved. This is significant because an important aspect of Narnia’s identity is that it is the land of the free, and its natural opposition to notions of forced domination is clearly defined in *The Silver Chair* (1953), where the Narnian prince, Rilian, makes this speech to the Lady of the Green Kirtle:

…as for your Ladyship’s design of putting me at the head of an army of Earthmen so that I may break out into Overworld and there, by main force, make myself king over some nation that never did me wrong – murdering their natural lords and holding their throne as a bloody and foreign tyrant – now that I know myself, I do utterly abhor and renounce it as plain villainy (Lewis, 2001d:191).

The Lone Islands, however, are depicted as a site in need of the imperial control of Narnia, not only for their protection, but in order that unsavoury, un-Narnian influences may not creep in. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the Lone Islands have fallen into a reprehensible state because, up until the reign of Caspian, the Telmarines have long discouraged sea-faring; consequently the Lone Islands have not been under Narnian control for a long time. Or rather, as Bern, one of the lost lords whom Caspian finds there explains: ‘All is done in the King’s name. But [the Governor] would not be pleased to find a real, live King of Narnia coming in upon him’ (Lewis, 2001c:58). Thus, as the narrator states: ‘In those days everything in the islands was done in a slovenly, slouching manner’ (Lewis, 2001c:64). However, the worst consequence of Narnia’s neglect is clearly the introduction into the islands of slavery, which Lewis simultaneously links to Calormen and sets up as fundamentally opposed to Narnia’s identity as a land of the free.

The reader first encounters the mention of slavery when Caspian’s ship is being described. Lewis’s introduction of the term foreshadows its later appearance and also sets
it up as being, in essence, antithetical to everything the Narnian identity stands for. The narrator assures the reader: ‘Of course Caspian’s ship was not that horrible thing, a galley rowed by slaves’ (Lewis, 2001c:34). The four children are then unexpectedly captured by slave traders as they step ashore on the Lone Islands. Lewis almost immediately makes the link between slavery and Calormen, as the slavers realize that one of Caspian’s companions, Reepicheep, is a Talking Mouse: “Whew!” whistled the slave merchant (for that is what he was). “It can talk! Well, I never did. Blowed if I take less than two hundred crescents for him.” The Calormen crescent, which is the chief coin in those parts, is worth about a third of a pound’ (Lewis, 2001c:52). Later, when Caspian demands of the Governor, Gumpas, ‘why [he has] permitted this abominable and unnatural traffic in slaves to grow up…, contrary to the ancient custom and usage of [Narnia’s] dominions’ (Lewis, 2001c:69), Gumpas explains that slaves are needed to export to Calormen.

Slavery in The Chronicles may be construed as the most extreme form of an over-rationalized view of reality, since it involves seeing people only in terms of use. Thus, despite its evocations of archaic cultures, Lewis portrays slavery as an eventual consequence of modern thinking, linking the evil of an older time to modernity by underlining a dangerous similarity of mindset between the two. This is made clear by Gumpas’s arguments in favour of its continuation. In answer to Caspian’s demand that the slave trade must be stopped, Gumpas replies: “But that would be putting the clock back,”…“Have you no idea of progress, of development?” (Lewis, 2001c:70) As I have
already established, turning the clock back is, in one sense, exactly what Lewis wishes to accomplish with *The Chronicles*.

Modernity, for Lewis, signifies a spiritually impoverished state, a marginalizing of Christianity and an over-rationalized view of the world. In this worldview, according to Lewis, nature and even people become commodities. An extension of this theme can be seen in Lewis’s depiction of the Talking Beasts in Narnia. Kroeker (1988:3) writes: ‘Fantasy becomes necessary…when, with the dismantling of all supernaturalism men find themselves imprisoned in a totally rationalized humanism, one that threatens them with self-dehumanization.’ In this sense, Lewis’s humanization of animals apparent in his depiction of Narnia’s Talking Beasts can be seen as a metaphor for recovering the humanity that modernity has lost by depicting it in a fantastic form. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the slavers are unable to experience true wonder at Reepicheep’s ability to speak and think only of how they can profit from it. They are also unable to see behind the marvel of the mouse’s speech to the fact that he is insulting them, and only say things like, “‘It’s as good as a play!’” and “Blimey, you can’t help almost thinking it knows what it’s saying!” (Lewis, 2001c:53). Their lack of respect for the humanity exhibited by him thus acts as a metaphor for being unable to appreciate the humanity in human beings.

Lewis also links Calormen to modernity through Eustace, whose disagreeableness is a product of his up-to-date upbringing. Like the slavers, Eustace does not respect Reepicheep as a person, referring to him as a ‘kind of Mouse thing’ (Lewis, 2001c:101). Later, when Eustace finds a dragon’s cave full of treasure, he decides he could have
‘quite a decent time’ in the Otherworld if he went to Calormen, which he considers ‘the least phoney of these countries’ (Lewis, 2001c:101). This is a clear example of how respect for another culture functions as an indicator of a deeply destructive way of thinking.

Lewis thus suggests that slavery is an eventual consequence of modern thinking while, at the same time, linking it to the pseudo-Oriental space, thereby laying groundwork for Calormen as an image of modernity. In this way he sets up the position of Calormen as the frame world for *The Horse and His Boy*, one of the only two Chronicles which does not open with the modern world. (The other exception is *The Last Battle*, which opens in Narnia for reasons I will later discuss.) However, the primary significance of the Lone Islands is not that they are instrumental in linking Calormen to modernity. Their significance lies rather in Lewis’s portrayal of them as a site of Oriental infection, a concept which plays a decisive role in the destruction of Narnia depicted in *The Last Battle*.

The notion of the Oriental as a threatening Otherness that may infect and corrupt a Subject identity is well established in Romantic writing. Leask, (1992:7) writes that the ‘fear of contagion…can be regarded, along with a mounting fear of cultural and racial degeneration, as one of the permanent anxieties of empire…’ It is significant then that the Lone Islands form an imperial space, equally susceptible to the redeeming Narnian/Western influence and to the influence of the corrupt Calormene/Oriental. As in the examples drawn by Leask (1992:2) from Romantic writing, the Lone Islands carry ‘the
threat...[of] being taken over by [signs of] the Other.’ In this case, the signs are signs of the Oriental, first the crescent currency that the narrator says is the chief currency of the Lone Islands, and then the exotica that attends the description of the Calormenes themselves. Caspian encounters the Calormenes as buyers at the slave auction where he buys back the freedom of his friends. The narrator then introduces them to the reader: ‘The Calormen have dark faces and long beards. They wear flowing robes and orange-coloured turbans, and they are a wise, wealthy, courteous, cruel and ancient people’ (Lewis, 2001c:73).

If the books are read in the order of publication this is the first description given in The Chronicles of the Calormenes. The description is, in a sense, a summary of their history and their culture. The first part conveys their difference in a listing of material aspects that fall into the category of what Leask (1992: 2) calls ‘signs of the Other’, signs that identify the Calormenes and differentiate them from the Narnians: dark faces, beards, robes and turbans. The second sentence establishes the Calormene identity as a contrasting mirror image of Narnia: on the one hand the space they move in, like Narnia, is an image of a medieval world and the Calormenes are ‘wise’ and ‘courteous’. On the other they are cruel and the possessors of a material wealth that Lewis has already linked to slavery. This idea of a contrasting mirror image dictates the prevailing structure of The Horse and His Boy, wherein the conflict is most clearly between the pseudo-Oriental and Western/Narnian identity.
The most significant aspect of Calormen is that it appears with no explanation of its origins or how it came to be so reprehensible. Watt-Evans (2005:28-29) raises this question in his discussion of the origin of evil in the otherworld of the Narnia books, proposing that ‘the [Calormenes] wandered in from other worlds, just by happenstance, and stayed, either because they liked the world they found themselves in, or because they couldn’t find their way back.’ There is, however, no explanation for the appearance of the Calormenes or their cruel nature given in the books themselves. In addition to being ‘cruel’, they are also described as ‘ancient’. Thus in addition to the narrator telling us what they are, the narrator also tells us that they are, timelessly and changelessly. The effect of not accounting for the origins of the Calormenes is that it enables the portrayal of the pseudo-Oriental space as an essentialized opposite of Narnia, and, by implication, the opposite of the identity he wishes his readers to adopt.

The portrayal of the Orient as an essentialized identity is important because it underlies the concept of infection, the notion of Otherness as a corrupting entity. As shown in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, England too, is infected, not with the Orient, but with modernity, which Lewis links to Calormen. In *The Chronicles*, Lewis’s protagonists discover that modernity does not reflect their true identities, or England’s; rather their true selves are to be found in Narnia’s natural state. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the metaphor for modernity portrays it as a spell creating a world of oppressive unending sameness, a world without wonder. In *Prince Caspian*, it manifests as the wrongful rule of the usurper Miraz, who, likewise, suppresses wonder by suppressing Narnia’s true identity as a land of Talking Beasts and waking trees. Narnia is
only restored to its true state with the coronation of the rightful ruler, Caspian. Both these threats, enchantment and usurpation, embody Otherness; they are examples of threats than can corrupt Narnia, but only by imposing influences on it that do not stem from its true self. They are thus examples of identity infection, like the corrupting Otherness of Calormen.

In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, however, the Calormenes function as a source of infection that is not a spell or simple erroneous behaviour, but an identity. As I will show with reference to the following volumes, they constitute a threatening corruptness in *The Chronicles* that cannot be redeemed by a restoration of its true self. A more positive example of the Calormene identity is never portrayed, since positive Calormene characters are forced to reject their Calormene identities, as I will later show. The effect of this is therefore to instantiate Calormen’s reprehensible manifestation as its true state.

*The Silver Chair* (1953) is the fourth volume of *The Chronicles* in the sequence of publication. Themes of imperial control and the infection of modernity, introduced in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, take on new meanings in this story with the introduction of a progressive school.

In my introduction, I discussed the issue of children’s literature as colonized space, wherein the ideology of adult authors is encoded, whether consciously or unconsciously, to form children according to their (the adult author’s) own values. I also suggested that with fantasy literature, authors are able to freely shape realities in order to do this,
perhaps more effectively than is possible in realist literature. This is certainly the case with *The Chronicles of Narnia*, since Lewis is explicit about what he wants to achieve with these stories: to embody his own values in positive imaginative experience, thereby training children into having ‘correct moral emotions’ (Hilder, 2003:12).

In *The Chronicles*, it is Narnia which most clearly represents the values Lewis wishes to inculcate in readers. Narnia is thus usefully understood not only as colonizing space, as Lewis’s protagonists invariably adopt these values through their experiences in Narnia, but as a space ideologically colonized by an adult author.

In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, I have discussed how the positive influences of Narnia manifest as the imperial control of the Lone Islands. The underlying message is that without the ideological conditioning of Narnia as controlled by Lewis, negative foreign practices, most notably the tyranny of slavery, take root. As such there is an analogical relation between the Lone Islands and the progressive school which functions as the frame space of *The Silver Chair*.

*The Silver Chair* picks up where *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* ended, introducing a Eustace who has been reformed as a result of his experiences in Narnia and who, the narrator informs us, is not ‘a bad sort’ (Lewis, 2001d:13), along with the other protagonist of the novel, a girl called Jill Pole. The story opens with the school Jill and Eustace attend, a modern institution called Experiment House, which, the narrator remarks, is ‘not a pleasant subject’ (Lewis, 2001d:11). Like the inhabitants of the Lone...
Islands, the children of Jill and Eustace’s school have been left to manage themselves, which has allowed immoral forms of rule to rise up in the absence of control by their superiors. The narrator states that the people who ran the school ‘had the idea that boys and girls should be allowed to do what they liked. And unfortunately what ten or fifteen of the biggest boys and girls liked best was bullying the others’ (Lewis, 2001d:11). Bullying, like slavery in the Lone Islands, is an example of tyranny, and provides another link between Calormen and modernity. But it is also an indicator that, like the islanders, children are in need of control by their superiors. In this case, superior control refers specifically to Lewis, whose values shape the reality of the otherworld into which his protagonists enter.

Myers (1994:150) argues that even though the third sentence of The Silver Chair promises, “This is not going to be a school story…”, it is...Whereas the first three chronicles enact the education of the feelings, The Silver Chair is about education, especially the conflict between...modern education...and the traditional education of Christian humanism, which...was meant to produce moral virtue [my emphasis].

In The Chronicles, modern education has ceased to be effective, and children need to be displaced to an otherworld where they can be educated in a way which engages the emotions. However, education in Lewis’s otherworld, unlike the policies of the progressive school, restricts the ability of boys and girls to do as they like, and also to feel as they like. As Lewis intends, children who go to Narnia are ‘trained to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which...[for Lewis] really are pleasant, likeable, disgusting and hateful’” (Hilder, 2003:14). This has implications for identity
construction, as, in doing so, the children learn to be their ‘true selves’ and so return to England able to identify and reject what has corrupted it. At the end of *The Silver Chair*, Aslan allows Eustace and Jill to appear to the bullies at their school ‘as figures in glittering clothes with weapons in their hands rushing down upon them’ (Lewis, 2001d:256). In the resultant uproar, there is an inquiry and, we are told, ‘in the inquiry all sorts of things about Experiment House came out…And from that day forth things changed for the better…and it became quite a good school’ (Lewis, 2001d:256-257).

Experiences in Narnia thus enable the child protagonists of *The Chronicles* to restore their national home to its true state, by doing away with the harm which modern thinking has done to it. In effect they learn to recognize modernity as an infection of their true identities, and so are able to take a stand against it and restore their world to the way it is meant to be. In allowing this, Lewis’s otherworld prescribes an ideal cultural identity, which he emphasizes by contrasting it with another cultural identity, the Oriental, whose true self is the ideal identity’s moral opposite. The Orient is thus instantiated as the source of cultural infection. This is most clearly portrayed in the fifth volume of the sequence of publication, *The Horse and His Boy*. 
Chapter Three

Lessons in Leaving the Orient Behind

*The Horse and His Boy* is the fifth volume of *The Chronicles* in the sequence of publication. As the first of *The Chronicles* to prominently feature a culturally Other space, it is significant that, as Schakel (2005b:82) suggests, it is the one that deals most explicitly with themes of identity and home. In this way, *The Horse and His Boy* more clearly pushes the development of Lewis’s ideal identity along racial and cultural lines.

*The Horse and His Boy* is also ‘the only Chronicle in which there is no movement of characters between [the Primary World] and Narnia and in which the main characters are inhabitants of the [otherworld]’ (Schakel, 2005b:82). However, as is evident in *Prince Caspian*, this does not preclude the use of a frame space. In *The Horse and His Boy*, Calormen, the pseudo-Oriental space, takes the position of the frame world. As such it is characterized by a lack of fantastic elements, and there are no Talking Animals, or mythical creatures to be found in Calormen. As Schakel (2005b:83) remarks, it just may as well be a ‘Middle Eastern area of our world’, and it is worth noting that the one aspect of the Primary World Lewis is not concerned about illuminating with the otherness of fantasy is culturally Other. Lewis’s characterization of this space as mundane (i.e. not a fantastic space) enables its function as a representation of the dullness of modern life and modern thinking, which must be rejected. Calormen’s cultural difference from Narnia allows Lewis to intensify the definition of the ideal identity through contrast. Furthermore, the difference between the Narnian identity and the Calormene identity is
emphasized throughout the novel. Indeed, contrast provides the prevailing structure of the narrative, and the themes of identity and home, which are central to the plot, depend on it.

*The Horse and His Boy* tells the story of Shasta, who has been raised as a Calormene fisherman’s son, but later discovers he is in fact Cor, the son of the King of Archenland. Archenland is a country which neighbours Narnia and is similar to Narnia in almost all respects. The Archenland identity can thus be seen as an extension of the ideal identity that Narnia represents. At Cor’s birth, a prophecy is made that he will one day save Archenland from the deadliest danger the country will ever face. Cor is later kidnapped by an enemy and taken to Calormen. The king of Archenland discovers Cor’s abduction and gives chase. In the confusion of the battle that ensues, Cor is given over to a soldier who escapes with Cor in a boat; however, the soldier dies of starvation before he reaches Calormen. Eventually, the boat in which Cor is hidden is pushed ashore by Aslan to a place where a Calormene fisherman finds him.

Shasta is raised by the Calormene fisherman, a man called Arsheesh. However, it is clear that Arsheesh uses Shasta as little more than a slave, ‘getting ten times the worth of his daily bread out of him in labour’ (Lewis, 2001e:17). Therefore, when a stranger arrives one night with a Talking Horse called Bree, Shasta is convinced by Bree to flee Calormen for Narnia, which is Bree’s homeland. They are later joined by a young Calormene noble, a girl called Aravis, and a Talking Mare called Hwin, who are also escaping to Narnia. Their journey takes them through the very heart of Calormene culture, into the city of Tashbaan, where they learn of a Calormene plot to invade Archenland. In this way Shasta
comes to fulfil the prophecy that was made at his birth, and saves Archenland by warning the kings of Archenland and Narnia of the invading Calormene army.

Schakel (2005b:83) notes that in ‘constructing the plot, Lewis uses several motifs that in legend and literature have long been associated with themes of identity’. The first of these is the “lost child” motif, in which a child is separated from his or her parents by being sold, kidnapped, or put away, then later reunited with them’ (Schakel, 2005b:83). The story is thus essentially about self discovery, since the protagonist leaves behind his false identity as Shasta, the Calormen fisherman’s son, and discovers his true identity as Cor, the crown prince of Archenland. As with the Pevensie children, the majesty and empowerment signified by his true identity reflects the dignity of a deeper spiritual state, but this is a state which Shasta attains in the very act of making the journey from fleeing one identity (as Shasta of Calormen) to discovering another (as Cor of Archenland).

A journey is ‘a traditional image of growth and experience’ (Schakel, 2005b:83). Through the hardships Shasta experiences in his journey, he attains personal growth, and thus earns as well as discovers his new identity. This involves, amongst other things, learning about the person he ought to be, in accordance with his true identity. Like the Pevensies, Shasta’s true identity (as Cor of Archenland) represents the ideal Christian, Western identity endorsed by The Chronicles. Conversely, his journey involves understanding that the person he has been brought up to believe he is, i.e. a Calormene, represents an identity that must be rejected. In the process he experiences the kind of education which Lewis upholds as superior to modern education, one which engages the
emotions through positive and negative experience, embodied in Narnian and Calormene culture respectively. As Myers (1994:165) puts it, ‘[all] the senses are engaged to influence the reader to hate Calormen and love Narnia.’ Because Lewis simultaneously engages the senses to evoke an Oriental imaginative geography in his depiction of Calormen, a result of this is to instantiate the Other-space as inferior and repulsive. Furthermore, engaging the senses for Lewis involves emphasizing the differences between Narnia and Calormen, and the looks, smells, and feelings associated with his evocation of the Orient contrast starkly with those linked to Narnia and Archenland, negating any traffic of humanity between West and Orient.

The journey which Shasta makes from Calormen to Narnia thus serves as a metaphor for the transformation which Lewis wants to encourage readers to go through. Like Mary’s journey from India to England in The Secret Garden, it reflects ‘a journey of redemption and self-discovery’ (Bumbaugh, 2005:252). An important indication of this is the difference Lewis makes to the quest structure in The Horse and His Boy. In The Chronicles, conforming to the pattern identified by Joseph Campbell (1968), quests are usually circular, ending with the protagonist returning home enriched by the lessons and spiritual growth acquired on the journey. However, the quest to reach Narnia in The Horse and His Boy is linear, and neither Shasta nor his companions are meant to return to Calormen, which thus comes to represent an irredeemable space that stands as the ultimate contrast to Narnia. Rather than journeying to Narnia in order to recover a sense of wonder and humility to take back to Calormen, Shasta journeys there to recover the essential nobility of his true identity as a prince of Archenland. Like Mary, he must leave
all traces of the Oriental behind him in order to be redeemed and thus recover his true self.

In order to depict the desirability of this transformation, Lewis uses some strategies used by Burnett in *The Secret Garden*, deploying the Orient to create a vacuum of unfulfilment which anticipates Narnia’s wholesomeness and spiritual enrichment. The most significant of these strategies involves Lewis’s depiction of a society, which, while emphasizing Narnia by its difference, is still mundane and ordinary enough to sustain Narnia’s wonder through the perspective enabled by contrast.

It is illuminating here to compare Lewis’s representation of the Orient with Burnett’s in *The Secret Garden*. In both cases, the author’s principal concern is not the Orient, but a re-illuminated portrayal of home, for which purpose a representation of the Orient is used as a frame to restore a sense of Otherness to the home space. However, both authors are forced to deal with the dilemma that a reversal of Othering immediately presents, namely that the intended audience of both stories is familiar with the culture of the Other-ed space, while the Orient possesses a quality of strangeness (to Western child readers) inherent in the difference of its culture. As discussed in my introduction, Burnett’s solution is to dismiss the frame world as impenetrable, a hazy profusion of alienating density that repels interest. Lewis’s, on the other hand, is to expose his pseudo-Oriental world to plain sight, to penetrate its mysteries and reveal its concealing agents in order to simulate an Orient whose core is corrupt and empty both of meaningful values and of wonder.
Positioning the Oriental world as a frame space is also an important strategy Lewis uses to mute its strangeness. It allows Lewis to portray this world through the eyes of a protagonist (Shasta) to whom it is familiar, and, more importantly, mundane and without wonder. Lewis deftly reinforces this impression by repeatedly and subtly reminding the reader that, however strange the world described is to the reader, it is familiar to Shasta and devoid of interest:

Shasta was not at all interested in anything that lay to the south of his home because he had once or twice been to the village with Arsheesh [Shasta’s adoptive father] and he knew that there was nothing very interesting there. In the village he only met other men who were just like his father – men with long, dirty robes, and wooden shoes turned up at the toe, and turbans on their heads, and beards, talking to one another very slowly about things that sounded dull (Lewis, 2001e:12).

In this passage, details describing a culturally-Other world are paired with adjectives that characterize this world as degraded and uninteresting. The clothes the men wear, though exotic (to Western readers, but not to Shasta), are ‘dirty’ and the things they talk about are ‘dull’. Furthermore, to Shasta, this world represents an existence of misery in addition to one of mundanity. The man Arsheesh, whom Shasta calls father, overloads him with work, and, depending on whether his fish sells well, either ignores Shasta or, finding fault with Shasta, abuses him. We are told that there ‘was always something to find fault with for Shasta had plenty of work to do, mending and washing the nets, cooking the supper, and cleaning the cottage in which they both lived’ (Lewis, 2001e: 11-12). Overworked and receiving no affection, Shasta’s ‘home’ is a travesty, offering no solace, comfort, or love. It is the antithesis of that which Archenland offers, and Archenland comes to
represent the true homeland in the story. Furthermore Archenland signifies a homeland of spiritual as well as emotional resonances.

Schakel (2005b:84) writes that the:

“lost child” motif blends very naturally into the quest for one’s homeland… Poets of all times have written about people’s concern with their origins, with the community in which they were born, with a place that gives them a sense of their beginning and thus helps give them a sense of their identity…For Lewis this natural longing for home reflects something more than a natural origin. It suggests, and The Horse and His Boy illustrates, the longing a soul has for its real heavenly home. This deeper dimension of the search for one’s home and thus for one’s identity is conveyed by the symbolism of the North.

In a reflection of the Orientalist imaginative geographies of east and west, The Horse and His Boy spatially distinguishes very clearly between Calormen and Narnia by demarcating one space as the ‘south’ and one as the ‘North’ [the word is always capitalized]. The idea of the North was very important to Lewis. According to White (2005:30) the idea of the North expressed ‘an embracing of an imagined world, a place peopled by ancients, a vision of a place and a time that had never actually existed, a realm of legend’ inspired by Norse mythology and literature. The North as a realm of legend is reflected in the depiction of the lands that lie far to the north of Narnia in The Silver Chair as a land peopled by Giants and Witches, and steeped in mysterious history, but the lands to the north of Narnia are also the spaces of evil. It is significant, then, that the good/evil symbolism of North and south is rather peculiar to The Horse and His Boy, a book in which the south designates the Oriental space, enabling the designation of Lewis’s beloved North his ideal space, Narnia. In The Horse and His Boy, Lewis’s love
of ‘Northernness’, as he called it, resonates in references to ‘Narnia and the North’; conversely, the south and Calormen, which enable Narnia’s northern designation, are constructed to give Oriental shape and form to those things which inspire intense disapproval in Lewis. We are told that although:

Shasta was not at all interested in anything that lay south of his home…But he was very interested in everything that lay to the North because no one ever went that way and he was never allowed to go there himself. When he was sitting out of doors mending the nets, and all alone, he would often look eagerly to the North. One could see nothing but a grassy slope running up to a level ridge and beyond that the sky with perhaps a few birds in it (Lewis, 2001:12).

This passage, in which the North is explicitly compared with its opposite, Calormen and the south, illustrates the narrative strategies Lewis uses to inspire longing in the reader for Narnia and the North, and conversely, a dissatisfaction with the Oriental world described. Calormen is familiar and dull, signifying a life of drudgery without meaning. The North is the Subject space Recovered (i.e. made Other), mysterious and forbidden, associated with ‘images of lushness and rural life’ (Schakel, 2005b:85), although here Otherness is the Same Recovered, since Shasta is truly a Northerner.

Longing to see the North establishes Shasta as a character with a capacity for spiritual feeling. Furthermore Shasta is described as having this longing even though upbringing in the south has given him foreign, reprehensible habits, like eavesdropping on his adoptive father’s conversations, which the narrator remarks, Shasta had never learned it is wrong to do (Lewis, 2001e:15). Shasta is contrasted with Arsheesh, who has no interest
in the North whatsoever. The narrator remarks that the fisherman ‘didn’t know what lay
to the North. Nor did he care. He had a very practical mind’ (Lewis, 2001e:15).

In *The Chronicles* this kind of mindset is a sign of the spiritual poverty that results from modern thinking, the inevitable result of valuing cold logic over imaginative experience. It is also linked with explicit evil. The narrator of *The Magician’s Nephew* points out that Jadis the White Witch thinks in this way, remarking: ‘I expect most witches are like that. They are not interested in things or people unless they can use them; they are terribly practical’ (Lewis, 2001f:91). One of the principal indications of Calormen’s spiritual poverty is that this mindset defines its culture. As I have discussed with reference to *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, its most visible and reprehensible consequence is slavery, which involves seeing people only in terms of use, and is, in *The Chronicles*, a defining feature of Calormene society. This, as portrayed in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, allows Lewis to portray slavery as anathema to the Northerners. The result is that conversely, slaves in *The Chronicles* are Calormene, and thus Oriental, by definition. Calormen is the ‘land of slaves and tyrants’ (Lewis, 2001e: 231); Bree refers to ‘southern jargon’ as ‘slave and fool’s talk’ (Lewis, 2001e:22); later Shasta is rebuked by King Edmund for hanging his head ‘like a Calormene slave’ (Lewis, 2001e:71).

Shasta’s longing for the North is the earliest sign that he does not belong in Calormen, which is soon confirmed by the conversation Shasta overhears between his adoptive father and the wealthy stranger who stays the night at the beginning of the story. The stranger, the Tarkaan Anradin, in some ways represents another world that is strange to
Shasta and Arsheesh, a world of wealth. More specifically, the stranger represents the world of Tashbaan, the great city capital of Calormen. Shasta has never seen Tashbaan, as he has always lived in a seaside village. During the course of the novel the city world of Tashbaan is penetrated and exposed on various levels, and it represents the essence of Calormene culture.

However, the difference between Anradin and Arsheesh is one of gradation, not one of quality, as both Calormenes exhibit the same moral deficiencies. Both Anradin and Arsheesh are self-serving and cruel, interested in exploiting Shasta as a slave. There is thus no perceptible moral difference between the Calormenes that live in the natural beauty of the countryside and the Calormenes that inhabit the city capital. Rural Calormen, as represented by Arsheesh’s home, does not inspire the spiritual stimulation that Narnia does, not because it does not have these qualities, but because Calormenes, having practical minds, are not affected by it. Furthermore, for Shasta, scenes depicting the beauty of the Calormene countryside hint at the promise of Narnia, not a better life in Calormen, since Shasta is escaping Calormen and links all his favourable experiences with leaving it behind. The following passage, from the chapter describing Shasta’s escape on Bree, echoes Shasta’s view of the North described at the beginning of the story (quoted on p.11), with its links to nature and sense of unfamiliarity:

And then he looked about him and saw where they were. Behind them lay a little copse. Before them the turf, dotted with white flowers, sloped down to the brow of a cliff...But what Shasta chiefly noticed was the air...And this new air was so delicious, and all his old life seemed so far away, that he forgot for a moment about his bruises and his aching muscles... (Lewis, 2001e:29).
In a further development of the linking of space with identity, it may also be noted that there are no Oriental associations with the natural beauty Shasta encounters in the Calormene countryside, no evocations of a foreign space. These are reserved for the city and the market place.

The stranger Arsheesh entertains for the night, for the sole reason that Arsheesh knows ‘by the gold on the stranger’s bare arm that he [is] a Tarkaan or great lord’ (Lewis, 2001e:13), knows that Shasta is not Arsheesh’s son. The Tarkaan observes to Arsheesh: ‘…your cheek is as black as mine but the boy is fair and white like the accursed but beautiful barbarians who inhabit the remote North’ (Lewis, 2001e:15-16). This information is enough to give Shasta great relief because ‘he had never been able to love the fisherman, and he knew that a boy ought to love his father’ (Lewis, 2001e:18). Thus, as a Northerner, Shasta’s superiority to the Calormenes around him is well in evidence; he has the spiritual capacity to long for something beyond what he knows, he is troubled by his lack of love for his adoptive father, and he is recognizably beautiful and white unlike the dark-faced Calormenes around him. The opening parts of the story illustrate Said’s (2003:157) point that to ‘be a European in the Orient always involves being a consciousness set apart from, and unequal with, its surroundings. But the main thing to note is the intention of this consciousness: What is it in the Orient for?’ This can be translated into an investigation into the structure of the plot of a fantasy fiction like *The Horse and His Boy* by turning attention to the initial position of the protagonist in the narrative. As I have discussed, Shasta’s position, as a Northerner brought up as a Calormene, is necessary to enable his journey of self-discovery. To answer Said’s
question, Shasta is in the Orient to learn what he is not, and to enable readers to learn what not to be.

Shasta’s discovery of his identity also fills him with excitement, essentially because it frees possibility for *being*. Hence his first thought “‘Why, I might be anyone!’” (Lewis, 2001e:18) The abstract conception of freedom takes on a more concrete meaning as it represents the possibility of an escape from an identity that is literally imprisoning. For Shasta, accepting this identity means remaining in a situation where he will be exploited and potentially worse, as Arsheesh intends to sell him into slavery to Anradin. This introduces one of the primary themes of the novel, the escape from slavery, embodied in Calormene culture, to freedom, which characterizes the North, an idea Said (2003:172) argues has acquired ‘an almost unbearable, next to mindless authority in European writing: the theme of Europe teaching the Orient the meaning of liberty, which is an idea… Orientals…[know] nothing about’.

Schakel (2005b:83) notes that the novel focuses on characters that are all trying ‘to escape a repressive or enslaving situation’, and to accomplish this they must escape Calormen and the Oriental identity it represents. Shasta wants to escape a life of slavery to Anradin, who, Bree warns, is ‘bad…you’d be better lying dead tonight than go to be a human slave in his house tomorrow’ (Lewis, 2001e:21). The Calormene girl, Aravis, is escaping an enforced marriage, and both Talking Horses are escaping a life of servitude in a land where animals are dumb slaves rather than free subjects as they are in the Northern countries.
The absence of Talking Animals in Calormen, along with a complete lack of any other fantastic elements, is another important facet of Lewis’s characterization of Calormen as mundane and without spiritual value. Shasta idly voices his thoughts of hope and excitement to Anradin’s horse after overhearing that he is not Arsheesh’s son, and is filled with wonder to find that the horse can talk. The encounter constitutes Shasta’s first contact with the fantastic world of the North, which is where the horse, who allows Shasta to call him Bree, is from. Bree explains why he has had to pretend to be ‘dumb and witless’ like Calormene horses: ‘If they’d once found out I could talk they would have made a show of me at fairs and guarded me more carefully than ever. My last chance of escape would have been gone’ (Lewis, 2001e:20).

The entire concept of Talking Animals in The Chronicles illustrates some of the most important points Lewis wishes to make about freedom, wildness, and notions of what constitute humanity, ideas which are central to the discourse in The Horse and His Boy. In my study of The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, I discussed how the Talking Beasts in Narnia can be read as a metaphor for recovering a sense of humanity that modernity has dulled (or destroyed) by promoting a mindset characterized by over-rationalization. To Lewis, from the viewpoint of this mindset, things and even people are appreciated only in terms of their usefulness, which is epitomized in the practice of slavery. Furthermore Lewis suggests that this results in the illusion of mastery over nature and other living beings, and a lost sense of the inherent wildness, or freedom, of these things, a lost sense of respect that comes from the appreciation of that wildness. Respect in this sense is akin to awe, or wonder, which Lewis ascribes to a spiritually enlightened nature. These ideas
find their strongest expression in the character of Aslan. Repeated references are made to Aslan’s wildness, that is, to the fact that he is not a ‘tame lion’ (Lewis, 2001a:197). Emphasizing the wildness of Aslan in this way allows Lewis to restore a sense of awe to readers’ experience of the sublime.

In *The Chronicles*, the Talking Beasts allow Lewis to problematize presumptions about what humanity means, and about the place of human beings in the world in relation to nature, other creatures, and other human beings. For these reasons, Narnia is characterized as a country of beasts, tree-people and mythical creatures that are at least part beast. Wildness in *The Chronicles* is, therefore, usefully understood as a metaphor for freedom. Paradoxically, wildness is also a metaphor for humanity, and those characters who are humane in *The Chronicles* allow for the freedom of others. As Caspian is told in *Prince Caspian*, Narnia is ‘not the land of Men’ (Lewis, 2001b:61). It is rather a country of wild things ruled by men who are enlightened and respect the freedom of these creatures.

The antithesis to Narnia is embodied in those spaces where nature and wildness is suppressed or enslaved, epitomized in Lewis’s depiction of cities. The most identifiable mark of these spaces is the absence of Talking Beasts, which thus becomes a metaphor for the lack of respect for wildness/freedom in those societies which inhabit such spaces. For example Narnia under the reign of the Telamaries is a place where Talking Beasts have been driven into hiding, and where the animals that remain are not gifted with speech (Lewis, 2001b:54). The function of Talking Animals in *The Chronicles* is thus the
locus of a double-sided metaphor; they can be read as animals whose humanity is recognized by the men who rule them, and therefore as indicators of an enlightened society. And they can be read as human beings whose association with wildness and nature has not been lost, through which readers can ‘exercise their emotional need to accept their own animality’ (Myers, 1994:130).

Curiously Lewis thematically sets up a distinction in The Chronicles between wildness and its debased, opposing reflection, which for purposes of clarification I will term savagery. While wildness signifies freedom and the enlightenment of respect for fellow creatures, those aspects which characterize a humane society, savagery signifies the opposite of humanity and humane-ness: cruelty and a callous indifference to the feelings and fates of others. In The Horse and His Boy, Aslan is mistakenly perceived as savage when his intentions are misunderstood and characters are ignorant as to his identity. However, what they perceive is rather a reflection of their own savagery. For example, Aslan attacks Aravis as punishment for the drugged sleep she puts on her servant girl, and the scratches he lays on her back ‘tear for tear, throb for throb, blood for blood, [are] equal to the stripes laid on the back of [the] slave girl’ in punishment (Lewis, 2001e:216-217).

Freedom/Wildness and enslavement in The Horse and His Boy are inextricable from cultural identity. To be free means to be Narnian/European while to be Calormene/Oriental means being enslaved. Bumbaugh (2005:244) argues that ‘Shasta, Bree, Hwin and Aravis are all caught in a system that denies their fundamental natures and requires
them to serve ends and purposes not their own… Bound in a hierarchical system, each serves an agenda not of his or her own choosing’ while, in contrast, ‘Narnia is a land where differences in station exist, but hierarchy is neither rigid nor immutable…In Narnia the line between ruler and ruled, between human and non-human is blurred and indistinct’. During the course of the novel, both Shasta and Aravis are required to learn from the more enlightened Northerners what it means to be free, although they do so in different ways.

It is illuminating to compare Shasta’s educational experiences with Aravis’s. Shasta, as I have discussed, is a born Northerner, and his education consists of learning what it means to be a Northerner. Essentially Shasta’s journey emphasizes the identity he is meant to assume rather than the identity he must leave behind. Aravis, on the other hand, is a born Calormene, and interestingly, Lewis inscribes her education as different from Shasta’s in that the emphasis is rather on the rejection of her Calormene identity. One explanation for this may be found by considering the difference in social status of the two characters. While Shasta is leaving behind a life of slavery, Aravis, as a high-born Calormene, has more to lose by rejecting her born identity. During the course of the novel she has to learn that even those aspects of life in Calormen that she will miss are pernicious and empty of value. Shasta, who has only known misery and dullness as a Calormene, has no such attachment to his old identity. However, Aravis’s ethnicity also permits readings of the Calormene identity as entwined with race, in so far as rejecting this identity for ethnic Calormenes requires a stricter education in its harmfulness. In contrast Bree assures
Shasta that his longing to see the North is because of his ‘blood’, stating that he is sure Shasta is of ‘true Northern stock’ (Lewis, 2001e: 23).

As Aravis is a Calormene who wishes to escape to Narnia, the point is clearly made that she is morally superior to all other Calormenes depicted in *The Horse and His Boy*. At one point in the story, when Shasta wonders if Aravis has abandoned him, the narrator assures the reader that ‘in this idea of Aravis Shasta was…quite wrong. She was proud and could be hard enough but she was as true as steel and would never have deserted a companion, whether she liked him or not’ (Lewis, 2001e:23). Furthermore, her love for rural spaces and her hatred for the city signify spiritual superiority, as the narrator comments that she ‘had always lived in the country and had hated every minute of her time in Tashbaan’ (Lewis, 2001e:138). Both these facets of her characterization provide an explanation for her relocation to the North; although Aravis is ethnically Calormene, her spiritual identity is Northern. However, unlike Shasta, Aravis retains an attachment to certain aspects of her Calormene identity, and she also exhibits mistaken notions that are distinctly characterized as Calormene.

At the beginning of the journey, it is suggested that Aravis lacks an understanding of the relationship that exists between the subjects of a free country like Narnia. She is haughty and rude towards Shasta, because he is of a lower class, and although Bree convinces Aravis to escape with them, she makes it clear that she ‘[wants] Bree, not him’ (Lewis, 2001e:43). Her wrongful understanding of the relationship between fellow creatures is also indicated by her presumptions concerning animals and humans. She dismisses Shasta
as a slave who has ‘stolen his master’s horse’ (Lewis, 2001e:40). Bree corrects her, pointing out that it might just as well be said that Bree has stolen Shasta. Aravis makes a similar mistake when she asks Bree why he keeps speaking to Hwin instead of to her, as she still considers herself Hwin’s owner. Bree rebukes her, accusing her of retaining Calormene notions of animals belonging to humans: ‘…that’s Calormene talk. We’re free Narnians, Hwin and I, and I suppose, if you’re running away to Narnia, you want to be one too. In that case Hwin isn’t your horse any longer. One might just as well say you’re her human’ (Lewis, 2001e:42).

The title of the novel, *The Horse and His Boy*, is a reference to this conversation, and the themes of enslavement and freedom that underlie the conversation are central to the story. It is the first instance when Aravis is forced to rethink presumptions about her place in society and her relationship with other creatures. Her Calormene upbringing has taught her to think in terms of subservience and rigid class hierarchy. However, the text suggests she must confront the fact that in Narnia she will be treated as equal to other human beings like Shasta, and that even animals must be respected as subjects equal to herself.

Aravis also displays the self-centeredness of a slave-owner when she relates how she drugged her maid to escape her father’s house, not caring that the slave-girl will be beaten in punishment. It is Shasta who notes the injustice of her behaviour towards the slave-girl. However, Aravis does not recognize Shasta’s superior moral awareness, and only arrogantly dismisses him: “‘I did not do any of these things for the sake of pleasing you…’” (Lewis, 2001e:53). At this point in the story Aravis does not have a correct sense
of values; she does not realize that her behaviour towards others is as important as her own escape from tyranny, and she does not understand that it is a person’s moral awareness that makes them valuable, not their social status. Aravis’s misplaced preoccupation with social status is again apparent at the entrance of the city of Tashbaan, where she feels mortified at not arriving in the pomp that attends the arrival of Calormene nobles: “…I ought to be riding in on a litter with soldiers before me and slaves behind, and perhaps going to a feast in the Tisroc’s palace…not sneaking in like this…” (Lewis, 2001e:64).

Schakel (2005b:86) observes that the city of Tashbaan then becomes a ‘testing [ground] that lead[s] to self-understanding and growth’ for Shasta and Aravis as both ‘encounter models instrumental in their development. Shasta’s is a positive model of what he can and would like to be, a group of men from Archenland and Narnia who look and act very different from the people he has lived with all his life.’ Shasta’s encounter with the Northerners enacts his education in the identity he is meant to assume. Although Shasta has longed to see the North all his life and has willingly severed all ties to his Calormene identity, he still has, as the narrator comments, ‘no idea of how noble and free-born people behave’ (Lewis, 2001e:85).

The description of Shasta’s first sight of the Northerners illustrates the fundamental differences between Calormen and Narnia for readers of The Horse and His Boy. It also enables an effect curiously similar to one in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader. In that novel Lucy and Edmund are forced to spend the holidays at the home of their aunt and
uncle in Cambridge where they are surrounded by the over-rationalized dullness of a completely modern environment. Thus they spend all their time longing for Narnia, and their longing is focalized in a framed painting of a Narnian-like ship in Lucy’s bedroom, which magically draws them in to the otherworld. Something similar happens in The Horse and His Boy. Like Cambridge, Shasta’s frame world is a site of longing for the North, and the North represents escape and freedom from dullness and mundanity. The best route of escape from this world takes Shasta through the city of Tashbaan, which is an intensified image of Calormene society and everything that has provoked his escape, in the sense that it is congested and stifling and full of the sort of people he has known all his life. Shasta’s first sight of the Northerners in such a space thus enables Lewis to frame an image of Narnia with everything that is directly contrary to it. And like the picture of the Narnian ship, it provides a space for Shasta (and readers) to focalize the longing he feels and has always felt for the North:

It was quite unlike any other party they had seen that day. The crier who went before it shouting was the only Calormene in it. And there was no litter; everyone was on foot. There were about half a dozen men and Shasta had never seen anyone like them before. For one thing, they were all as fair-skinned as himself, and most of them had fair hair. And they were not dressed like men of Calormen. Most of them had legs bare to the knee. Their tunics were of fine, bright, hardy colours – woodland green, or gay yellow or fresh blue. Instead of turbans they wore steel or silver caps, some of them set with jewels, and one with little wings on each side of it. A few were bare-headed. The swords at their sides were long and straight, not curved like Calormene scimitars. And instead of being grave and mysterious like most Calormenes, they walked with a swing and let their arms and shoulders go free, and chatted and laughed. One was whistling. You could see that they were ready to be friends with anyone who was friendly, and didn’t give a fig for anyone who wasn’t. Shasta thought he had never seen anything so lovely in his life (Lewis, 2001e: 68).
The usefulness of a pseudo-Oriental culture for Lewis’s purposes is well illustrated in this passage. The main thing to note here is the emphasis on material form to evoke a feeling of moral difference that is grounded in sensual experience. The absence of litters communicates a feeling of fellowship absent from Calormene society, which is defined by slavery and difference in class. The description of colour here is also extremely significant. In the midst of a stifling street of dark-faced Calormenes, Lewis emphasizes a sense of light, fairness and brightness of colour. Much of the description depends on racial difference, on the company’s fair skin and fair hair, and Lewis extends the colour scheme to their clothes to include an association with the colours of nature in contrast with the city squalor of the street: ‘fine, bright, hardy colours – woodland green, or gay yellow or fresh blue.’ The preference for steel or silver caps, the attire of war, over turbans, effects a distinction between a greater sense of masculinity and the feminine draperies of Oriental attire. This is in line with Said’s account of Orientalist discourse, wherein one of the ways in which ‘the East is characteristically coded negatively’ is as ‘female’ (Moore-Gilbert, Stanton & Maley, 1997:23). Thus, the Orient is defined as Other in relation to a male norm as well as a Western one. In *The Chronicles* these associations are made clearer by a comment made by King Tirian in *The Last Battle* as he throws off a Calormene disguise and wears Narnian attire again: ‘I feel a true man again’ (Lewis 2001g:108). It is less clear why ‘long, straight’ swords are ‘lovelier’ to Shasta than curved scimitars, but the superiority of Western racial and cultural forms is at this point well established, and the effect is to introduce a sense of the grotesque to the emblems of the Orient, which inheres in their difference from the ‘pure’ forms of the superior culture. This sense of the ‘grotesque…recurs frequently in Romantic writing.
about the Oriental Other, although…’, as Leask (1992:4) acknowledges, ‘…image-repertoire [of this kind]…derives from sources at least as old as Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*.’ It is also a style of representation that is essential to the theme of cultural infection that plays a crucial role in *The Last Battle*.

Finally the distinction between the grave and mysterious Calormenes and the cheerful friendly Northerners is central to Lewis’s representation of the Orient. Mystery, most apparent in a prevalence of secretiveness, characterizes Calormene culture, but it is what this secretiveness conceals that is significant. As Myers (1994:162) observes, the ‘Calormenes are verbose, sententious, and indirect’, but ‘Lewis slyly undercuts their gravity and mystery by making their proverbs ridiculous. For example, Shasta’s foster father says, “Natural affection is stronger than soup and offspring more precious than carbuncles”’. ‘Soup, of course’, Myers notes, ‘varies greatly in strength; “carbuncle” means “a red jewel” in medieval romances, but its modern meaning is “a red sore.”’

In her discussion of the role that politeness plays in *The Chronicles*, Stabb (2005:289) makes a similar observation: ‘While Lewis shows the Calormenes to have rudimentary forms of politeness among their own people, their ways of talking – for examples forms of address and honorifics – are actually mocked.’ For example Bree points out the absurdity of the honorific – ‘may he live forever!’ – that Calormenes are required to attach to the ruler of Calormen, the Tisroc, whenever he is mentioned: ‘I’m a free Narnian. And why should I talk slaves’ and fools’ talk? I don’t want him to live forever and I know that he’s not going to live forever whether I want him to or not.’ Myers (1994:162) adds that ‘the Calormene habit of prefacing every noun in direct address with
“O” turns every conversation into a series of poetic apostrophes. Shasta…says “O my father” to the fisherman, but when he gets to the North he adopts Northern style, calling his real father, King Lune, simply “Father”.

The effect of verbosity is achieved with a profusion of unnecessary synonyms. ‘Instead of saying a thing once, the Calormenes say it twice or more, with the synonyms joined by “and.” For instance the Tisroc says…”Tell us what you desire and propose”’ (Myers, 1994:162). Both the absurdity and indirectness concealed within the verbosity of Calormene language are meant to reflect an emptiness of value, which can be linked to the structure of the society.

Bumbaugh (2005:244-245) writes:

> All citizens of Calormen are placed somewhere on a rigid hierarchical ladder. Those above on the ladder are free to abuse and mistreat those below; those below are free to accept the blows and kicks of their betters and pass them on. Thus, this fear-based system functions to transfer pain and humiliation from top to bottom of the social structure. From servant and slave to Vizier and Crown Prince, this immutable system bends all energies and all loyalties to advance and serve the corrupt and cynical schemes of the Great Tisroc.

Lewis shows that, in a system such as this, there is no possibility of any kind of meaningful relationship capable of generating genuine feeling. Arsheesh exploits Shasta as a slave, and the father-son relationship between them is empty of meaning, just as Shasta’s home in Calormene is not a home in any meaningful sense. Similarly Aravis is simply a tool to advance her father’s social standing through marriage to the social-climbing sycophant, Ahoshta Tarkaan. The text suggests there is no real feeling of
fatherly or daughterly sentiment between the two, while the marriage Aravis would have made would similarly be a union empty of feeling, designed to serve her father’s ends.

Calormene society is thus characterized by an emphasis on appearance over value and meaningfulness. This style of representation is ideal for Lewis’s purposes, as it allows him to utilize Oriental strangeness while simultaneously depicting a moral opposite for his ideal identity. Bumbaugh (2005:245) argues that the ‘effect of [the fear-based] system [of Calormene society] is to create a culture of deception, a realm in which truth cannot be expressed, and language is used to obscure rather than clarify.’ In an extension of this truth-negating function, Calormene relationships are mocking echoes of what is to be found in their true manifestations in the Northern countries. Once again, the thing to note is the emphasis on difference in form, which, it is suggested, indicates a deeper underlying corruption, a disease that threatens values in the way metaphors of the deformed signifiers of Oriental culture in Romantic writing represent the fear of ‘[l]uxury in both its economic and moral sense’ (Leask, 1992:2). Lewis’s evocation of the Orient thus involves the portrayal of spectacle detached from meaningfulness, epitomized in the description of the city of Tashbaan.

Tashbaan is described by the narrator as ‘one of the wonders of the world’ (Lewis, 2001e:61), but like India in The Secret Garden, this is a wonder without any spiritual value. In an image of hierarchy reflective of Calormene society, it is set on an island that rises in a hill, culminating in ‘the Tisroc’s palace and the great temple of Tash at the top’. From afar it is spectacular and even beautiful, ‘with terrace above terrace, street above
street, zigzag roads or huge flights of steps bordered with orange trees and lemon trees, roof-gardens, balconies, deep archways, pillared colonnades, spires, battlements, minarets, pinnacles’. However, the splendours of the city are absolutely underpinned by oppression and misery, which is made apparent upon closer observation. As the protagonists enter Tashbaan’s walls, they see reminders of degradation everywhere, narrow streets crowded with people that include beggars, ragged children, stray dogs and, most significantly, bare-foot slaves. The narrator comments that ‘what you would chiefly have noticed if you had been there were the smells, which came from unwashed people, unwashed dogs, scent, garlic, onions, and the piles of refuse which lay everywhere’ (Lewis, 2001e:65). These reminders of squalor and misery undermine the descriptions of the higher streets in Tashbaan, where the wealthy live in palaces with gardens of ‘green, branches, cool fountains, and smooth lawns’ (Lewis, 2001e:66).

Lewis’s depiction of an Oriental space is, therefore, not without its favourable aspects. But the lesson of the story, is, in the main, that these aspects are ultimately empty of value and reflective of deeper social evils. When Shasta finally manages to escape, he looks back at Tashbaan, remembering ‘all the splendour and strength and glory of it’, but unable to separate it from the dangers it represents to those who wish for freedom (Lewis, 2001e:103).

In contrast Shasta encounters first hand the behaviour of the Northerners when they mistake him for Corin, a prince of Archenland. Corin is, in fact, Shasta’s identical twin brother, but this is not known to either of the boys when the mistake is made. The
necessity to keep his identity a secret prevents Shasta from revealing the Narnians’ mistake, and he is forced to go with them until he can find a chance to escape. In this way, Shasta is admitted into the Narnians’ intimate society, and experiences a detailed example of the identity he will eventually assume. Shasta’s temporary assumption of his twin brother’s identity gives the metaphor an added neatness. Schakel (2005b:87) argues that the literary device of the ‘missing twin’ is another motif that ‘relates closely to the theme of personal identity’, and Corin literally provides an image of Shasta’s true self. Furthermore, it also allows Shasta to experience Corin’s role within Northern society, a role destined for Shasta to occupy, and the relationships that role enables.

Lewis uses the meeting to emphasize that the Narnians are superior in every way to the Calormenes. The mythical creatures and Talking Beasts of their company inspire wonder in Shasta but the human beings make the greatest impression on him, as they strike the greatest sense of contrast with the people he has known. Once again Lewis emphasizes a difference in physical form as an indicator of spiritual and moral difference. They are all ‘grownups; but young, and all of them, both men and women, [have] nicer faces and voices than most Calormenes’ (Lewis, 2001e:74-75). An added thrill for readers is the revelation that the Narnian monarchs are in fact the Pevensies, the protagonists of previous Chronicles. Because readers have previously identified with the Pevensies, their appearance here effects a sense of self-discovery similar to Shasta’s, but different in that it is self-aware. The (intended Western) reader knows the Narnian king and queen began as children like themselves, but has the pleasure of seeing them in their most perfect incarnations, during the Golden Age of Narnia’s history, through the eyes of a different
protagonist on the same journey of self-discovery. To Shasta, Edmund is ‘the very nicest kind of grown-up’ while Susan is ‘the most beautiful lady he [has] ever seen’ (Lewis, 2001e:71-72).

In the company of the Northern, fair-skinned Narnians, Shasta experiences relationships built on honesty and sincere affection, in other words meaningful relationships. King Edmund, believing Shasta is Corin, reprimands him for running away, and although Shasta does not know him and has not done anything wrong, the experience strikes him as ‘unpleasant’ as he feels the instinctive desire to ‘make a good impression on [the King]’ (Lewis, 2001e:71). Susan, the Narnian Queen, who has been close friends with Corin since the death of his mother and is clearly a mother figure to him, provides an example of motherly concern (Lewis, 2001e:72). The scenes with these pseudo-parental figures are contrasted with Shasta’s hollow relationship with Arsheesh, as the narrator comments that it

never came into his head to tell these Narnians the whole truth and ask for their help. Having been brought up by a hard, close-fisted man like Arsheesh, he had a fixed habit of never telling grown-ups anything if he could help it: he thought they would always spoil or stop whatever you were trying to do (Lewis, 2001e:84-85).

Growing up with the cruelty and injustice of Calormene society, Shasta believes the Narnians will sell Aravis into slavery and have him killed if they discover the truth (Lewis, 2001e:85). His knowledge of dealing with people is based on deceit and fear. In contrast, on his return, Corin, who has been brought up in the North to value honesty, is angry at Shasta’s suggestion that he tell the adults anything but the truth:
“And now, [said Shasta], show me how you got in…You’d better lie down on the sofa and pretend – but I forgot. It’ll be no good with all those bruises and black eye. You’ll just have to tell them the truth, once I’m safely away.”

“What else did you think I’d be telling them?” asked the Prince with a rather angry look (Lewis, 2001e:91).

The style of speech employed by the Northerners is carefully designed to reflect this honesty and genuine feeling. Myers (1994:163) notes that the courtly Narnians [like the Calormenes] also speak in a highly elaborate style, but one that contrasts with Calormene style at several points. Their proverbs are direct, homely and intentionally humorous…When the Narnian king and queen give an order, they preface it with “of your courtesy.” Their nouns of address are names…without impossible compliments…’

Schakel (2005b:83) notes that the Narnians, like Shasta, are also trying to escape an enslaving situation. Shasta learns that Susan is in Tashbaan visiting a suitor, ‘Rabadash, [the] crown prince of Calormen.’ While in Narnia, Prince Rabadash adjusted to what are established as Narnian standards of meekness and courtesy, but his behaviour in Calormen reflects his true Calormene identity, that of a ‘most proud, bloody, luxurious, cruel, and self-pleasing tyrant’ (Lewis, 2001e:76). As a result of this, Susan has decided to refuse Rabadash’s offer of marriage, but the Narnians sense that if they make this explicit, they will be held prisoner and Susan, in a predicament which recalls Aravis’s reasons for escape, will be forced into a marriage with the Calormene prince, or made his slave. Thus the Narnians plan their escape, and the consequences of their success are witnessed by Aravis herself.
Aravis’s experience in Tashbaan parallels Shasta’s in that she, too, observes people who are unaware of her presence, and thus witnesses a detailed example of their private behaviour. However, while Shasta’s encounter is with ‘a positive model of what he can and would like to be…the model Aravis finds…is a reminder of the kind of life she is fleeing from’ (Schakel, 2005:87). The reminder comes first in the form of an old friend of Aravis’s, Lasaraleen, who recognizes Aravis not long after she is separated from Shasta by the Narnians, and agrees to help Aravis escape. Lasaraleen is both an image of Aravis’s flaws as well as an embodiment of those qualities Aravis dislikes about Calormen. Schakel (2005:87) notes that Lasaraleen ‘exhibits the same haughtiness and self-concern as Aravis.’ However, unlike Aravis, Lasaraleen is ‘empty-headed’ and ‘cares only about “clothes and parties and gossip”’, tastes that make her ideal for the society of Tashbaan. In contrast, the narrator tells us that ‘Aravis had always been more interested in bows and arrows and horses and dogs and swimming’ (Lewis, 2001e:111), activities that link her tastes to the country and to nature. In a further development of the feminization of the Orient, Aravis’s tastes also link her to the masculine ‘norm’ of Northern culture, while Lasaraleen is overtly feminine whilst simultaneously enmeshed in the trappings of Oriental spectacle.

The spectacle provided by Lasaraleen, with her litter ‘all a-flutter with silken curtains and all a-jingle with silver bells’ followed by ‘female slaves in beautiful clothes, and then a few grooms, runners, pages, and the like’, her luxurious baths and spoiled pet monkey (Lewis, 2001e:106-111), establishes her function as a vivid emblem of the Orient. However, her principal sign is empty-headedness: lack of understanding, and
preoccupation with the outer forms of wealth and pleasure without any regard for a truly meaningful life. Her emptiness is further reflected in her dramatic style of speech which underlines her ignorance and lack of understanding of things of value. ‘She uses numerous adjectives and emphatic adverbs to express her scatter-brained triviality – “how perfectly thrilling” and “madly in love.”’ Because she knows nothing of her own she is constantly quoting: “my husband says,” “they say,” “I’m told”’ (Myers, 1994:162). She is also hopelessly self-involved. The narrator comments that although ‘Lasaraleen had said she was dying to hear Aravis’s story, she showed no sign of really wanting to hear it at all. She was, in fact, much better at talking than listening’ (Lewis, 2001e:111).

Lasaraleen’s notions of marriage, Calormene society and the outside world are based on a value system dictated by greed, pride and ignorance. She believes Aravis should marry the elderly sycophant Ahoshta Tarkaan simply because of his social status. Most indicative of her ignorance is that she holds the prevailing Calormene view of Narnia as ‘a country of snow and ice inhabited by demons and sorcerers’ (Lewis, 2001e: 115).

The result of Aravis’s reunion with Lasaraleen is thus that she becomes ‘so tired of Lasaraleen’s silliness…that, for the first time, she [begins] to think ‘that travelling with Shasta [is] really much more fun than fashionable life in Tashbaan’ (Lewis, 2001e: 115). Thus she begins to shed her Calormene values of class superiority, wealth and luxury. However, before Aravis leaves Tashbaan, she penetrates even deeper into the heart of Calormene culture, and witnesses the true extent of its corruption. Wanting to avoid using the gates of the city in her escape, Aravis adopts Lasaraleen’s plan to sneak out through
the palace of the Tisroc. However, the two girls lose their way and unintentionally find themselves in a secret room in which the Tisroc and Prince Rabadash are hatching a plan to invade Narnia in retaliation for Susan’s escape and her refusal of the prince’s offer of marriage.

The labyrinthine palace itself functions as a metaphor for the highly embroidered Calormene language in which more is concealed than revealed, meanings are indirectly conveyed and ostentatious decorativeness belies the presence of constant danger. As Aravis and Lasaraleen sneak through the palace, they pass through halls that are ‘magnificent beyond description’ (Lewis, 2001e:117), but dimly lighted so that they can hardly see. They finally encounter the Old Palace, described as a ‘maze of corridors lit only by occasional torches fixed in brackets to the walls’ (Lewis, 2001e:117). As the girls penetrate deeper and deeper into the heart of the Tisroc’s dwelling, the passages they travel become progressively darker and more confounding until they come across an alarming sight: ‘the dark shapes of two men walking backwards and carrying two candles. And of course,’ the narrator tells us, ‘it is only before royalties that people walk backwards’ (Lewis, 2001e:118). The two men are slaves, ‘deaf and dumb, as Aravis, rightly guessed, and therefore used at the most secret councils’, (Lewis, 2001e: 118), who are attending the Tisroc at a meeting with Prince Rabadash and the Grand Vizier, Ahoshta Tarkaan. These passages, in which darkness and secrecy are emphasized, reflect a culture characterized by deception and fear in contrast with the honesty and emotional bonds that underlie Narnian society. An important indication of this is that treachery is an ever-present danger in the Calormene hierarchy of social relationships. Narnian bonds are
based on trust, while the Calormenes betray trust when it serves their own selfish agendas.

The presence of Aravis at the Tisroc’s secret meeting provides the means by which Shasta discovers the Calormene plot to attack Archenland. But it also affords Aravis the opportunity to see the Calormenes at their most revealing, even though the secrets exposed to her are shrouded in characteristic Calormene verbosity and indirectness. The point of the descriptions given here, however, is to contrast the Calormenes with the behaviour of the Northerners, and to underline that despite much display of wealth and power on the part of the Calormenes, their culture is spiritually and morally impoverished.

The narrator tells us that the least of the jewels with which [the Tisroc] was covered was worth more than all the clothes and weapons of the Narnian lords put together: but he was so fat and such a mass of frills and pleats and bobbles and buttons and tassels and talismans that Aravis couldn’t help thinking that Narnian fashions (at any rate for men) looked nicer (Lewis, 2001e: 118).

As an emblem of the Orient, the Tisroc is a distasteful spectacle that reflects the excess of ruthless and complete selfishness, while his excessive decorativeness serves to characterize him as subtly feminized. At the pinnacle of a society in which every subject owes subservience to those higher up on the social hierarchy, the Tisroc represents the essence of Calormen, as demonstrated in the exchange below:

“O impeccable Tisroc,” said the Vizier. “In comparison with you I love neither the Prince nor my own life nor bread nor water nor the light of the sun.”
“Your sentiments,” said the Tisroc, “are elevated and correct. I also love none of these things in comparison with the glory and strength of my throne” (Lewis, 2001e:133).

In contrast with the outward devotion that is expected from his subjects, the Tisroc feels no reciprocal sense of obligation, referring to his subjects as ‘vile persons’ (Lewis, 2001e:123). Neither does he feel any sense of affection for his son, declaring that he has ‘eighteen other sons and Rabadash, after the manner of the eldest sons of kings, [is] beginning to be dangerous’ (Lewis, 2001e:133). Owing to the cutthroat system of politics in Calormen, where power is the ultimate value, it is suggested that the Tisrocs tend to be assassinated by their own sons. This is another example of how relationships in Calormen tend to be undercut by ambition and fear, and when Prince Rabadash suggests the Tisroc’s failure to go to war with Narnia is due to cowardice, the ‘cool placid voice in which [the Tisroc threatens his son’s life makes] Aravis’s blood run cold’ (Lewis, 2001e:123).

The Tisroc’s reluctance to conquer Narnia, however, is not due to respect. After all, ‘Narnia, by its very existence, represents a challenge and a reproach to Calormen’ (Bumbaugh, 2005:246). Conversely, the same is true of Calormen with respect to Narnia, but Lewis’s characterization of the ideal state of Narnia involves a completely guilt-free history: while Narnians go to war, their wars are always in defence against foreign foes that threaten their existence, and the Narnians never seek to expand their own borders. In contrast, Calormen is a bloodthirsty empire, and the Calormenes wage aggressive wars for glory and wealth. In addition, the Tisroc’s justification for these wars is based on a disturbingly skewed value system: “These little barbarian countries that call themselves
free (which is as much to say, idle, disordered, and unprofitable) are hateful to the gods and to all persons of discernment”’ (Lewis, 2001e:124). The Tisroc sees no value in the fact that Narnia’s inhabitants are happy, or that it is a land of idyllic, natural beauty and abiding friendships. In the Calormene value system, these qualities are completely obscured by an emphasis on profit. Calormene values are also reflected in the analogy Prince Rabadash makes between ‘punishing Narnia’ on the one hand, and ‘hanging an idle slave’ and ‘sending out a worn-out horse to be made into dog’s meat’ (Lewis, 2001e:124) on the other. Both demonstrate a callous disregard for life in the interests of profit.

The implied criticism of imperialism here echoes a form of representation found in the Romantic writing of the British Empire, which, Leask (1992:4) tells us, ‘in effect perpetuates the prejudice of East/West binary opposition whilst attacking the ideology of empire which it empowers.’ Lewis, perhaps unintentionally, underlines this by emphasizing the threat of the Orient’s/Calormen’s hatred of freedom itself: “It is very grievous,” said the Tisroc in his deep, quiet voice. “Every morning the sun is darkened in my eyes, and every night my sleep is less refreshing, because I remember that Narnia is still free”’ (Lewis, 2001e:126). In this way, The Chronicles echo unintentional Romantic justifications for European imperialism: not only that European styles of governance are morally superior (and therefore that Europeans are more justified in ruling Orientals than Orientals are in ruling themselves) but also that the empowerment of the Orient represents a threat to Western freedom. Yet, within the pages of Lewis’s narrative, Narnia remains innocent of any kind of colonialist or imperialist aggression, if not activity.
When, as in the case of the Lone Islands, Narnians rule distant territories, they do so to the benefit of the subordinate territory, and with its conveniently willing compliance.

The reason the Tisroc will not wage open war with Narnia is actually based on ignorance and self-preservation, as the Tisroc fears the power of Aslan, whom he describes as ‘a demon of hideous aspect and irresistible maleficence who appears in the shape of a Lion.’ Thus the Tisroc is ‘determined not to put [his] hand out further than [he] can draw it back’ (Lewis, 2001e:125). Prince Rabadash, determined to have Susan for his wife, offers a solution: that the Tisroc should pretend ignorance of Rabadash’s actions while the prince conquers Archenland and Narnia, so that if he is unsuccessful, the Tisroc may claim that the prince acted ‘without [his] knowledge and against [his] will, and without [his] blessing, being constrained by the violence of…love and the impetuosity of youth’ (Lewis, 2001e:128). There are two crucial flaws in Prince Rabadash’s plan, apparent to the reader but not to the Calormenes themselves. In judging the Northern countries by Calormene values the prince is actually setting himself up for failure. Firstly, Rabadash intends to conquer Archenland and increase the Calormene garrison until it is big enough to invade Narnia, not taking into account that in the event of a war against Archenland, Narnia will come to the aid of its time-honoured ally. Secondly, Rabadash assures the Tisroc that the King of Narnia will not demand that the Calormenes return Susan to Narnia:

“…For though the fancy of a woman has rejected this marriage, the High King Peter is a man of prudence and understanding who will in no way wish to lose the high honour and advantage of being allied to our House and seeing his nephew and grand-nephew on the throne of Calormen” (Lewis, 2001e:128).
Completely lacking an understanding of Narnian values, the Calormenes under-estimate the bonds that tie Narnia to Archenland and the King of Narnia, Peter, to his sister, Susan. They severely undervalue the strength of meaningful relationships, having no experience of such relationships themselves. Bree later sums up the fundamental treachery of the prince’s plan: “An attack in time of peace, without defiance sent!” (Lewis, 2001e:139).

The effect of witnessing the Tisroc’s meeting at last solidifies Aravis’s resolve to turn her back on Calormen and leave her Oriental identity behind: she has penetrated into the deepest, most intimate heart of its system and seen for herself its shocking corruption. The meeting she witnesses further has personal relevance for Aravis on two scores. Firstly, Prince Rabadash’s intention to force Susan to marry him is a reflection of Aravis’s own reasons for escaping. Secondly, she has seen for herself the worth of her intended Calormene husband, Ahoshta Tarkaan: “A hideous grovelling slave who flatters when he’s kicked but treasures it all up and hopes to get his own back by egging on that horrible Tisroc to plot his son’s death. Faugh! I’d sooner marry my father’s scullion than a creature like that” (Lewis, 2001e:137). With all her attachments to her old identity broken, her illusions about Calormen thoroughly dashed, Aravis then has the strength to proceed on her journey to the North, where she fully embraces her true spiritual identity by taking up what are established as Northern/Western attitudes, customs, and values.

Like Aravis, Lasaraleen has witnessed for herself the diseased heart of Calormene culture, but unlike Aravis, she does not turn her back on her Oriental identity, remaining within her native space. However, Lewis characterizes this as an act of self-delusion.
rather than bravery, and in order to remain in the Oriental space Lasaraleen, weak-minded and attached to the luxury of her life, is deluded into believing the same illusions Aravis has shed: “Oh, Aravis, Aravis! How can you say such dreadful things; and about the Tisroc (may he live for ever) too. It must be right if he’s going to do it!” (Lewis, 2001e:137). The difference between relinquishing the Oriental identity and accepting it is thus firmly instantiated as good/enlightened and evil/ignorant respectively. The Oriental space is also established as irredeemable, timeless, with no possibility of change or variation in moral awareness. Its beauty, wealth and splendour are revealed to be empty of value, a glittering cover for a spiritual wasteland, and thus essentially deceptive. A truer reflection of Calormen’s worth is therefore to be found in the desert which the protagonists need to cross as the final stage in their journey to the North: a ‘vast grey flatness on every side. It looked absolutely dead, like something in a dead world…” (Lewis, 2001e:140-141).

Myers (1994:165) remarks that even ‘after the travelers have successfully escaped from Calormen, its hatefulness continues in the hardships of the desperate race through the desert…” The desert provides the final and simplest contrast to the nourishing lushness of the North, enabling Lewis to inspire the desirability of Narnia and Archenland and the values they embody:

They were almost in despair before at last they came to a little muddiness and a tiny trickle of water through softer and better grass. And the trickle became a brook, and the brook became a stream with bushes on each side, and the stream became a river and there came (after more disappointments than I can possibly describe) a moment when Shasta… suddenly realized that Bree had stopped and found himself slipping off. Before them a little cataract of water poured into
a broad pool, and both the Horses were already in the pool with heir heads down, drinking, drinking, drinking. “O-o-oh,” said Shasta and plunged in…It was perhaps the loveliest moment in his life (Lewis, 2001e:146).

At this point the characters are confronted with the first opportunity to struggle as free subjects; although their surroundings invite rest, the need for urgency is at its greatest, as they must hurry to warn the kings of Archenland and Narnia of the approaching Calormene army. However, as the narrator informs us, ‘one of the worst results of being a slave and being forced to do things is that when there is no one to force you any more you find you have almost lost the power of forcing yourself’ (Lewis, 2001e:150). The intervention of Aslan is thus necessary to effect the final sprint; posing as a savage beast attacking the travellers, he forces the horses to bring the children into Archenland in time. While a wounded Aravis and the exhausted horses accept the hospitality of the Hermit of the Southern March, Shasta is able go on ahead to warn King Lune, thus fulfilling his destiny as the one who would save Archenland in the hour of its greatest need. The task dismays Shasta, who has ‘not yet learned that that if you do one good deed your reward usually is to be set to do another and harder and better one’ (Lewis, 2001e:159). In other words, Shasta does not understand that his reward is the spiritual growth that results from the hardships he suffers. It is this growth that prepares Shasta for his true identity as Prince Cor of Archenland, as he attains it in the act of earning it, and in the act of leaving behind what are established as aspects of his Oriental identity as Shasta of Calormen.

The contrast between the spaces of North and south in *The Horse and His Boy* comes to completion with Shasta’s arrival in Archenland, where the king recognizes him as his
son, Cor, the crown prince of Archenland. As a father and as a king of the North, King Lune contrasts with both Arsheesh and the Tisroc as a model of ‘a nurturing parent who is proud of his children and continues to feel kindly towards them even when he threatens a punishment’ (Myers, 1994:159), and as a model of a just and courteous ruler. Like the Tisroc he is described as a fat man, but in this case his fatness is associated with different things and he is the ‘jolliest, fattest, most apple-cheeked, twinkling-eyed King you could imagine’ (Lewis, 2001e:159). His speech, though courtly and elaborate, is described by Myers (1994:163) as ‘rural and more conservative’ than the other Narnians, and the ‘implication is that he is bluff, hearty, and honest’. Once again, Lewis’s art inheres in the different associations he evokes while describing similar things in the contrasting spaces of North and south. When Aravis meets King Lune, he is ‘wearing the oldest of old clothes’ and is ‘not looking at all like Aravis’s idea of a king’ (Lewis, 2001e:227). King Lune is thus contrasted with the distasteful spectacle of the Tisroc’s ostentatious clothes. ‘But the bow with which he [greets] Aravis as he [takes] her hand’ strikes her as ‘stately enough for an Emperor’. Unlike the Tisroc, his manners indicate the true inner nobility that Calormenes lack, an inner nobility that reflects an ideal spiritual state for a human being. The novel ends with the narrator informing the reader of the future marriage of Shasta and Aravis, a marriage based on the Northern values of friendship and mutual respect, in contrast with Aravis and Susan’s potential marriages to Calormenes.

Contrast, that is, the emphasis on difference, between the depiction of a pseudo-Oriental space and pseudo-Western space, with the characterization of the former as morally inferior to the latter, is crucial for Lewis’s staging of the cultural infection that leads to
Narnia’s destruction in the last of *The Chronicles*. But before that story commences, Lewis tells the tale of the otherworld’s creation in *The Magician’s Nephew*. As I will discuss, going back to the beginning of the otherworld enables Lewis to deal with questions of good, evil and moral choice on the scale of the destinies of worlds. And the position of the pseudo-Oriental space plays a fixed and highly significant role as a natural source of evil in the perspective enabled by *The Magician’s Nephew*. 
Chapter Four

Endings And Beginnings And The Location of Corruption

At the end of *The Magician’s Nephew*, Polly and Digory, the protagonists of the novel, are shown something by Aslan before they are sent back to London: a grassy hollow in an enchanted wood where pools of water are the doorways to many worlds, including Narnia and the Primary World. Aslan tells the children:

“When you were last here…that hollow was a pool, and when you jumped into it you came to a world where a dying sun shone over the ruins of Charn. There is no pool now. That world is ended, as if it had never been. Let the race of Adam and Eve take warning.” (Lewis, 2001f: 210)

Because it tells of the creation of Narnia, *The Magician’s Nephew* is currently numbered first in the series, even though it was the sixth to be published. However, the novel is as much about endings as about beginnings, and, as Schakel (2005b:94) notes, before the story of the creation of Narnia is even told, ‘comes the account of the ending of another world. Structurally and thematically, the book suggests, beginnings and endings cannot be separated.’ Even as readers are allowed to experience the wonder of many worlds, and the joy of the creation of new worlds, they simultaneously learn that these worlds have endings as well as beginnings, and some do not have histories as wholesome and heroic as Narnia. The example the book provides of one such a world is Charn, a world that has ended before its time due to the wickedness of its inhabitants. As a space representing an immoral state, Charn is both contrasted with Narnia and compared with the Primary World in ways that reiterate Lewis’s encoded warnings about the corrupting influences of modernity. In my discussion of *The Magician’s Nephew*, I will also demonstrate how
Lewis suggests that Charn has fallen prey to the immoral impulses instantiated (in The Horse and His Boy) as inherent in the Oriental identity.

The spaces of The Magician’s Nephew are probably the most complex in their relationship to each other and to the other spaces described in the series. Like The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, it begins by comparing two spaces, the English countryside and the city of London, although in this novel the emphasis is on the latter. The reader is introduced to a girl called Polly Plummer, who befriends Digory, the second protagonist of the novel. At the beginning of the novel Digory has been crying because he has lived all his life in the country and has been brought to live in London, which he calls ‘a beastly Hole’ (Lewis, 2001f:10-11), and because his mother is ill and likely to die (Lewis, 2001f:12).

The idyllic description which Digory tearfully gives Polly of life in the countryside, of ‘a pony and a river at the bottom of the garden’ (Lewis, 2001f:11), echoes the scenes of wholesome, rural beauty from the beginning of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. This is not coincidental, as the two places are one and the same. As is explained at the end of the story, Digory grows up to be the Professor with whom the four Pevensie children come to stay during the war, and his house in the countryside is the one in which the Pevensies discover the wardrobe-portal to Narnia (Lewis, 2001f:219). The English countryside, as I have demonstrated with reference to The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, is meant to embody everything Lewis wishes to champion in his readers’ own world, although the purpose of the fantasy structure is to displace it to a setting where its
worth may be Recovered. While this space is dwelt on in some detail in the earlier story, along with strategic echoes of Narnia’s enchanted spring, the subject of *The Magician’s Nephew* is, in many ways, the antithesis of this space, the city. In *The Chronicles*, the city takes many forms, the most reprehensible of which is the city of Tashbaan in *The Horse and His Boy*. However, these cities are, on one level, simply reflections of London showing differing gradations of moral corruption, and it is London which is Lewis’s prime concern, since London represents the home space infected by moral corruption.

The narrator also invites readers to compare some favourable aspects of the Primary World in an older time with its less desirable elements: ‘In those days…schools were…nastier…But meals were nicer; and as for sweets I won’t tell you how cheap and good they were, because it would only make your mouth water in vain’ (Lewis, 2001f:9). In this way, the Primary World space of London, like Charn, is introduced as a site in need of correction, rather than evil in itself, like the Oriental space of Tashbaan.

The significance of the dying world Charn, as suggested at the beginning of this chapter, is that it is held up as a warning to the inhabitants of the Primary World. Significantly, the characterising image of Charn is also that of a city. However, as I will discuss, it differs from Calormen (whose character is epitomised in the decadence and cruelty of Tashbaan) in one important respect: the story makes it clear that, despite its evil fate, Charn has a history of a nobler existence, and there are hints that its beginnings bear a closer resemblance to Narnia than to the Primary World. Its difference from Calormen is that it is not simply an antithesis of the ideal identity developed in the stories, but a
cautionary self-image. Calormen, on the other hand, never shows a glimpse of a more enlightened character and, for that reason, is less an image of a Primary World that has been corrupted than it is an image of corruption *per se*, with no indications of any moral continuity between it and Narnia. However, as I will discuss, similarities of corruption between Charn and Calormen are numerous and help instantiate the Oriental space as a source of moral infection. As I will show, Lewis depicts Charn as having clearly fallen prey to influences established as inherent in the Oriental identity, while Charn itself is not portrayed as a source of evil.

Digory and Polly encounter Charn in the following way. Finding their way by chance into Digory’s uncle’s study, Polly is tricked into putting on a magic ring which makes her vanish, as Uncle Andrew explains (Lewis, 2001f:26), ‘right out of the world’, and Digory is obliged to follow her in order to bring her back. Uncle Andrew admits to orchestrating the entire episode with the intention of experimenting with the rings which, he has discovered, enable passage between worlds. However, as Schakel (2005b:95) notes, ‘Uncle Andrew’s only desire is power, domination over things and people’, and his role as magician is characterized by a wilful indulgence of selfish curiosity, ‘with a total lack of concern for others [that] is epitomized at a level children can understand by his [cruel] experiments on guinea pigs.’ Uncle Andrew’s spiritual corruption is indicated in the way he sees Digory’s pointing out of the immoral implications of his actions as ‘getting off the point’ and seeing things ‘from the wrong point of view’ (Lewis, 2001f:32). Like the Calormenes who traffic in slavery and covet other lands as imperial assets, Uncle Andrew’s flaw is the indifferent cruelty of selfishness; he does not recognize the rights of
others. In contrast, Digory recognizes that they are in a fairy story, and that the rules of fairy stories, governed by a moral code, apply: ‘you’re simply a wicked, cruel magician like the ones in the stories. Well, I’ve never read a story in which people of that sort weren’t paid out in the end’ (Lewis, 2001f:35). Uncle Andrew is temporarily unsettled by this notion; as the narrator tells us, ‘of all the things Digory had said this was the first that really went home’ (Lewis, 2001f:35).

As an Englishman, the story suggests Uncle Andrew is, unlike the Calormenes, the heir to a cultural tradition of fairy stories meant to impart a sense of moral consciousness, which Digory invokes. The moment is a subtle reminder that while Uncle Andrew is behaving badly, he is acting contrary to the moral nature of his culture, that is, contrary to the correct moral emotions that Lewis believes fairy stories of the Western cultural tradition impart. With the source of corruption established so clearly in the previous Chronicle as the Oriental space, it seems Uncle Andrew has taken on qualities of the Other in his wilful indulgence of selfishness and in his cruelty. However, Uncle Andrew is teachable (albeit within limits), and, unlike Aravis, does not need to be removed from his native space to find redemption. Like the children, he spiritually benefits from his experiences in Narnia. However, since Narnia is only representative of an ideal identity he has already inherited, his experiences in Narnia are only meant to enable the Recovery of that identity. Thus, at the end of the novel, Uncle Andrew goes to live in the country house with Digory’s family, and ‘never tried any magic again as long as he lived. He had learnt his lesson, and in his old age he became a nicer and less selfish old man than he had ever been before’ (Lewis, 2001f:220).
Digory shares with his uncle a tendency to being engulfed by curiosity, and it is this trait which leads to evil being introduced into Narnia. As the narrator explains, ‘Digory was the sort of person who wants to know everything, and when he grew up he became the famous Professor Kirke who comes into other books’ (Lewis, 2001f:48). While curiosity is not evil in itself, the story suggests, it is dangerous when it comes to ‘finding out things nobody [has] ever heard of before’ (Lewis, 2001f:48), and when coupled with a selfish disregard for the consequences of one’s actions.

After putting on the magic ring, Digory finds himself rising out of one of many enchanted pools in The Wood Between the Worlds, completely dry and reunited with Polly. However, before returning to the Primary World, Digory desires to explore the other worlds which, the children deduce, can be reached by jumping into any one of the different pools while wearing the correct magic ring. The first of the worlds they explore is Charn.

The immediate impression that Charn leaves on the children is of deadness, great age, and a vague sense of menace. Lewis is artful about extending these qualities to the very cosmology of the world as even the sunlight is described as ‘dull’, ‘rather red’, and ‘not at all cheerful’ (Lewis, 2001f:53). Charn’s quietness and the complete absence of people unsettle the children, as do its coldness and utter lack of growing things. It is also, from the beginning, clearly described as a great city, with ‘buildings all around’, paved surfaces, courtyards, and ‘great pillared arches, yawning blackly like the mouths of railway tunnels’ (Lewis, 2001f:54). A sense of grandeur also pervades the atmosphere, as
the narrator remarks that they ‘must have been magnificent places when people were still living there’ (Lewis, 2001f:58).

Schakel (2005b:94) comments that the otherworld of Charn ‘is not a faerie world…Except for the [strong feeling of enchantment] the city Digory and Polly are in could as well be the ruins of an ancient city in our world’. However, the children eventually discover a room full of images carved in the shapes of people, ‘like the most wonderful waxworks you ever saw’ (Lewis, 2001f:58), and the richness of colour echoes Lewis’s descriptions of Narnia and Narnian people, while their clothes are clearly evocative of the royal figures of an archaic culture, with ‘robes…of crimson and silvery grey and deep purple and vivid green…[with] patterns, and pictures of flowers and strange beasts, in needlework, all over them…[while precious] stones of astonishing size and brightness stared from their crowns and hung in chains around their necks…’ (Lewis, 2001f:61)

The images also give some indication of the world’s history, as the children deduce from the figures’ faces what kinds of people they were. At first, as the children walk by the images, the ‘faces they…see [are]…nice. Both the men and women [look] kind and wise, and they [seem] to come of a handsome race’ (Lewis, 2001f:62). However, as the children walk on they notice that the faces on the images gradually change, indicating a deterioration of moral consciousness. They come to faces that they do not like, which look:

very strong and proud and happy, but…cruel. A little further on they [look] crueeller. Further on…they [still look] cruel but no longer…happy. They [are] even despairing
Finally the children discover a golden bell inscribed with an invitation to ‘strike the bell and bide the danger’ (Lewis, 2001f:63). It is at this point that Digory becomes the means by which evil enters Narnia. Unable to resist his curiosity despite Polly’s misgivings, he strikes the bell. Digory does, in fact, commit what is depicted as the sin of magicians, by interfering with things he does not understand without considering the consequences of his actions and their impact on others. Polly, after he mocks her for her lack of curiosity, notes that Digory suddenly looks ‘exactly like his uncle’ (Lewis, 2001f:65).

The striking of the bell triggers both the destruction of Charn and the awakening of Jadis, the last of Charn’s queens, who in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, eventually becomes the White Witch holding Narnia under her oppressive sway. Believing that the children have been sent by the great magician and King of their world to ask her ‘favour and bring [her] to him’ (Lewis, 2001f:82), the Witch leads Polly and Digory out of the self-destructing palace, relating stories from Charn’s blood-soaked history as they flee:

““That is the door to the dungeons,” she would say, or “That passage leads to the principle torture chambers,” or “This was the old banqueting hall where my great-grandfather bade seven hundred nobles to a feast and killed them all before they had drunk their fill. They had had rebellious thoughts”” (Lewis, 2001f:65).

The image Jadis describes has a particularly shocking quality due to the violation of the code of hospitality. It also recalls an important contrast in The Horse and His Boy, which begins with numerous violations of hospitality in Calormen and ends with a
demonstration of true hospitality in Narnia and Archenland. As Myers (1994:158) observes:

The contrast between Calormen and Narnia with respect to hospitality…demonstrates that the two greatest hindrances to hospitality are pride and cruelty. All the Calormenes in the story are either proud or cruel, or both, and their hospitality shows it. The Calormene lord forces the fisherman to offer hospitality and then receives it with scorn. Prince Rabadash’s hospitality towards the Narnians becomes a threat to make guests into prisoners as soon as Queen Susan refuses his offer of marriage. Because of her pride in her clothes and social position, Lasaraleen is more interested in showing off than making Aravis comfortable. But once the [travellers] reach the North, they receive good hospitality. Aravis and the horses are entertained…by a hermit…whose kindness and humility approaches, according to Lewis, “the sterner or more awful forms of the good”, and Shasta receives similar treatment from the [D]warfs.

As the last of Charn’s queens, Jadis represents the culmination of the descent into tyranny that characterizes Charn’s history. This culmination is marked by its development into the ultimate city linked to both London and Tashbaan: ‘And all the temples, towers, palaces, pyramids and bridges cast long disastrous-looking shadows in the light of that withered sun’ (Lewis, 2001f:75). The Witch’s description of Charn’s final days is particularly illuminating, as it couples the emblems of antiquity with images of industry and oppression that recall both the modern world’s obsession with progress and the Oriental space of Calormen: “I have stood here when the whole air was full of the noises of Charn; the trampling of feet, the creaking of wheels, the cracking of whips and groaning of slaves, the thunder of chariots, and the sacrificial drums beating in the temples…” (Lewis, 2001f:76). Like the Calormenes, the Witch’s tyranny is the result of ruthless selfishness, epitomized in her use of the Deplorable Word to destroy all the
living things of her world rather than give up her throne. Like the Tisroc who loves nothing above the ‘glory and strength of [his] throne’, she sees her own power as the central most significant value, and all others as merely instruments in the furtherance of her will: “I was the Queen. They were all my people. What else were they there for but to do my will?” (Lewis, 2001f:78)

Having destroyed her world, the Witch is eager to escape to another where she intends to impose her oppressive rule. Through a series of accidents, she manages to enter the Primary World. While Lewis portrays the subsequent events to great comic effect, the appearance of the Witch in London also enables a contrast between the compelling vividness of her evil and the more mundane wrongness of the home space, while at the same time drawing attention to the similarities between the two:

…now that one saw her in our own world, with ordinary things around her, she fairly took one’s breath away. In Charn she had been alarming enough: in London, she was terrifying…Uncle Andrew…seemed a little shrimp of a creature beside the Witch. And yet…there was a sort of likeness between her face and his, something in the expression (Lewis, 2001f:86).

The plot development thus functions as an effective way for Lewis to use fantasy to ‘restore to the pressing concern with good and evil and to ethical decision-making some of their [lustre] and their challenge’ (Molson, 1982:97). By pointing out a ‘continuity in corruption’ between the evil Witch and Uncle Andrew (Schakel, 2005b:97), Lewis locates the home space on a trajectory of moral deterioration that can only culminate in its transformation into a world that resembles Charn, a world which itself has fallen into disaster by taking on qualities of the Other.
The creation of Narnia further develops the theme ‘of choice [going] beyond individuals to nations’ (Schakel, 2005b:100). This helps the reader to identify the position of the home space on a moral scale as somewhere between the ended, degraded world of Charn and the young, innocence of the new world of Narnia. In the confusion of the Witch’s escapades in London, Digory and Polly eventually manage to transport the Witch, along with themselves, a London cabby and his horse, and Uncle Andrew into the Wood Between the Worlds, and then into the dark, empty world of Narnia at the very dawn of its creation. As Aslan sings the new world into being, the children are put into a position where they are able to compare Charn with the new world, and more clearly understand the position of their own world in the process. As the ‘sun above the ruins of Charn had looked older than ours: this looked younger’; while the light of Charn’s sun is ‘not at all cheerful’, the narrator comments that ‘you could imagine that [the new sun] laughed for joy as it came up’ (Lewis, 2001f:123). Furthermore while Charn’s fall into disaster has coincided with its development into a great city, the innocence and joy of the new world is expressed in the imagery of unconquered nature: ‘It was a valley through which a broad, swift river wound its way, flowing eastward towards the sun…The earth was of many colours: they were fresh, hot and vivid’ (Lewis, 2001f:123).

The significance of the redemptive qualities of the new world is most apparent in their effect on the cabby, who is originally from the English countryside. As he speaks with Aslan, his voice becomes ‘slower and richer’, and, the narrator comments, more ‘like the country voice he must have had as a boy and less like the sharp, quick voice of a cockney’ (Lewis, 2001f:166-167). It is the cabby and his wife’s origins in the country
that make them fit to be King and Queen of Narnia, their ability, as Aslan explains, to ‘use a spade and a plough and raise food out of the earth’ (Lewis, 2001f:166). The cabby’s rural beginnings, recalled and enhanced by his presence in Narnia, are further indicative of spiritual qualities that he has always possessed. As I have discussed, the rural aspects of the home space reflect, for Lewis, a true Western identity, one that is free of the corrupting influences of modernity. Lewis reinforces this notion by repeated reminders of the inherent nobility of the cabby’s true self: ‘All the sharpness and cunning and quarrelsomeness which he had picked up as a London cabby seemed to have been washed away, and the courage and kindness which he had always had were easier to see’ (Lewis, 2001f:198).

However, because Digory has brought the Witch into Narnia, “a force of evil has already entered it; waked,” Aslan explains, “and brought thither by [a] Son of Adam…And as Adam’s race has done the harm, Adam’s race shall help to heal it” (Lewis, 2001f:162). Digory is thus set the important task of fetching an apple from an enchanted garden, an apple that is capable of growing into a tree that will protect Narnia for hundreds of years. However, before Digory has a chance to pick the apple, he is confronted by the White Witch, who attempts to persuade him to keep the apple for himself in order to cure his mother. Initially tempted, Digory recognizes the Witch’s evil when she suggests that he leave Polly behind, and does not give in to his desire.

Because Digory resists the temptation either to eat the fruit or to take it home to cure his mother, but dutifully brings it back to Aslan, Narnia’s fate is happier than the Primary
World’s (Watt-Evans, 2005:27). While this enables Lewis to preserve the idealistic nature of Narnia’s history, sustaining its function as a metaphor for an exemplary spiritual state, it does raise questions about Lewis’s representation of evil in *The Last Battle*, since some sort of factor is needed in order to precipitate the end of Narnia in the same way that Jadis’s evil paves the way for Charn’s destruction. As *The Magician’s Nephew* suggests, such evil has to be pervasive and all-consuming within a world in order to warrant that world’s divine destruction. However, since Narnia has an ideal beginning, with mankind (in this case, Digory) rejecting temptation and refusing to eat the apple, how does Lewis deal with the question of evil during its long history? More to the point, how does Lewis preserve the Narnian space as a metaphor for an ideal spiritual state while portraying the operations of evil in this space against which good can be defined and identified?

The central thrust of this thesis is that, aside from reflecting Lewis’s opinions on religious doctrine and proscriptions on modernity, *The Chronicles* are very much involved in the development of an ideal identity, one that involves a spiritual dimension which is undeniably located in and identified along national and racial lines. Thus the point of the depiction of evil in *The Chronicles* is, in a significant way, to identify it with Otherness. While characters that are the rightful inheritors of the ideal identity (also encoded as the true, natural Western identity), like Uncle Andrew and Edmund, may be tempted to evil, the function of the narrative is to establish very clearly for Lewis’s young readers that the depicted evils are contrary to the morality identified with Western culture.
Watt-Evans (2005:30) states that in Lewis’s ‘other writings about Christianity he sets forth very plainly the idea that all good comes from God, and all evil from mankind’s refusal to accept God…Aslan created Narnia, [and although Digory resists the temptation to eat the apple of youth]…right from the start there were those who refused to acknowledge [Aslan]…’ The White Witch is one of these, and she becomes the original source of evil within Narnia. But the Witch is herself descended from a line of ruler/sorcerers who have deteriorated into what is characterized as Oriental tyranny, and this infection of Otherness significantly colours what Watt-Evans (2005:27) refers to as ‘Narnia’s Genesis.’

It is worth noting that the Witch’s Oriental association is strengthened by her connection to ‘the Ancient Hebrew legend of Lilith, [the] first wife of Adam’ (McSporran, 2005:192), who demands equality with her husband and is replaced by Eve as a result (Sawyer, 1996:139). In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the White Witch is said to be descended from Lilith, a point Lewis uses to underline her Otherness by relocating Lilith’s origin to Oriental demonology. Mr Beaver tells the Pevensie children: “…And she was one of the Jinn [Genii]. That’s what she comes from on one side. And on the other she comes of the giants. No, no, there isn’t a drop of real human blood in the Witch”, to which Mrs Beaver adds: “That’s why she’s bad all through…” (Lewis, 2001a: 90).

Giants, which are creatures of northern mythology, may be either good or evil in The Chronicles, and there are good giants in both The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe and
Prince Caspian, so that the original good inhabitants of Charn are not inconsistent with Lewis’s fictional history despite Mrs Beaver’s assertion that the Witch is ‘bad all through’ because she is not human. On the other hand, many of the associations evoked by stories derived from Arabian Nights motifs, conjured by the Witch’s Jinn/Genie heritage, reflect the moral deterioration that characterizes Charn’s later history, and this also has the effect of underlining its links to the pseudo-Oriental imagery of Calormen. Stephens and McCallum (1998:231) explain the effects of using motifs that originate in a ‘comfortably’ Other culture:

Genies [Jinn] are not human, but spirits of enormous power, often rather amoral, often bringing with them a frisson of danger. They originate in Islamic demonology, and are therefore comfortably separable from the demons of Christian Europe; and they belong to the realm of oriental fantasy, a make-believe medieval world of magic, of immense wealth, of sensuality, of instant gratification of desire, and of sudden, irrational, and barbaric cruelties. For the modern invented stories, in particular, these elements invest the story with a sense of radical otherness against which Western humanist values are constructed as culturally normative.

Watt-Evans (2005:28) observes that ‘in our world, in the Christian view, Satan was present from the start; it was Satan who took the form of the serpent and tempted Eve… [In] The Magician’s Nephew the role of Satan the corruptor and tempter is filled by the White Witch.’ Hence the source of evil at the very beginning is encoded as the infection by Otherness, and the White Witch as Satan and Jinn/Lilith figure in one is doubly unnatural as ‘rebel against God’s authority’ and ‘rebel against male authority’ (McSporran, 2005:194) as well as comfortably culturally Other and other to what is human.
Aslan warns about Digory enabling the Witch’s entry into Narnia, “‘Evil will come of that evil, but it is still a long way off, and I will see to it that the worst comes upon myself’” (Lewis, 2001f:162). Readers of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe may understand the meaning of these words and how these events come to pass. Presumably, as Aslan foretells, the Witch grows ‘stronger in dark magic’ (Lewis, 2001f:205), since she eventually manages to bring all of Narnia under the enchanted winter that Lucy stumbles into at the beginning of that novel. In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the Witch’s Jinn heritage combines with one other sign of the Orient, the Turkish Delight by means of which she seduces Edmund into betraying his brother and sisters, and with an emphasis of the Witch’s unnatural aspects to convey her Otherness/evil. McSporran (2005:194) notes that:

Lewis makes the White Witch not only doubly unsympathetic but doubly unnatural. The White Witch is not only dressed in white; she is defined by whiteness: a specific kind of whiteness, the chilly pallor of ice and snow…Lewis is quick to stress that this does not imply “fair-skinned” (the “lovely” and natural people of Narnia are “fair-skinned”), but a stark unnatural white…

Edmund’s treachery necessitates Aslan’s demise in the Narnian parallel to the crucifixion, fulfilling Aslan’s promise of seeing to it that the worst of the consequences of the Witch’s evil will ‘come upon himself’ (Lewis, 2001f:162). Additionally, it may be deduced that all the dark creatures that fight on the Witch’s side in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe have been created as a result of her dark magic, and the Giants who appear in The Silver Chair are descended from these. After all, there is no indication in The Magician’s Nephew that Aslan created any of these beings. Most probably, the Lady of the Green Kirtle who enchants Prince Rilian in The Silver Chair, said to be ‘the same
kind as that White Witch’ and ‘in league and friendship with the dangerous giants of Harfang’ (Lewis, 2001d:248) is her descendent. As a witch that transforms into a serpent, the Lady of the Green Kirtle is also lamia-like, and as such, associated with the half-Jinn Lilith, with whom the shape-shifting monster lamia is often equated (McSporran, 2005:196). Most notably, the Lady of the Green Kirtle enslaves the Earthmen of Bism with enchantment in an image of tyranny that echoes both Calormen and the corrupted culture of Charn.

Watt-Evans (2005:28) notes, ‘Narnia was created without evil, and without a human race – but [the cabby and his wife provide] the human inhabitants of Narnia and Archenland, and the White Witch [brings] in evil. The pirates of Telmar [from whom the Telmarines are descended] later [add] more of both.’ However, this does not explain the form evil takes in The Last Battle, since, as Watt-Evans (2005:28) points out, ‘the White Witch [is] killed, quite thoroughly…’; so for that matter, is the Lady of the Green Kirtle. In Prince Caspian, the Telmarines are defeated and given the opportunity to return to the Primary World, and those that choose to remain are loyal to Narnia. Furthermore, the Telmarines, (characterized as a European people) are redeemed through Caspian, who fights for Old Narnia, thereby metaphorically embracing his true identity. Lindskoog (2001:21) notes the similarity between the English name of the Uzbek hero, Tamarlane, and the word Telmarines. As noted in Chapter Two, Uzbekistan is most probably the source of inspiration for Calormen. The word Telmarine in The Chronicles signifies the evil to which Caspian’s race has fallen prey; the word is not used by either Caspian or his progeny after the restoration of Old Narnia. Later, Caspian’s progeny becomes a line of
sovereigns whose collective reign spans a faultless Narnian history, described as ‘hundreds and thousands of years when peaceful King followed peaceful King till you could hardly remember their names or count their numbers…’ (Lewis, 2001g:110). With the Telmarines restored to their true Narnian/Old Western identities and the Witches killed off, Narnia, as Watt-Evans (2005:28) reasons, ‘should have been free of evil…But we know it wasn’t.’

In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, readers are introduced to the Calormenes, who replace the Witches as the source of evil in both *The Horse and His Boy* and *The Last Battle*. As I have discussed, the Calormenes are introduced with no explanation for their origins or the fundamental moral corruption of their culture, and unlike the Telmarines or even the people of Charn, from whom the White Witch is descended, they never show a glimpse of a positive identity. Like other representations of evil in *The Chronicles*, the Calormenes represent the Otherness/evil against which Lewis’s ideal, spiritual identity may be defined. However, the Calormenes, unlike the Witches and the Telmarines, have cultural markers of Otherness that pervade every aspect of their representation, enabling the extension of the contrast between good and evil through culture. This allows Lewis to increasingly celebrate Western cultural aspects as markers of Good, as he saw the values he sought to uphold in *The Chronicles* as values that were specifically fundamental to the ‘Old West’, or European culture untainted by modernity (Duriez, 2005:301).

According to Myers (1994:176) the main point of *The Last Battle* is for Lewis to ‘allow his child readers…to taste human mortality.’ The story begins: ‘In the last days of
Narnia…’ (Lewis, 2001g:7), signalling the end of the world Lewis has invited readers to love. More to the point, however, is her observation that in ‘the exemplary mode, the surface details communicate what it feels like to see the decline of the nation one loves’ and ‘exemplify the proper response to defeat and death’ (Myers, 1994:176). The Last Battle is also, in this sense, about the proper response to an attack on identity itself. For this reason, the central lesson of the last of The Chronicles is, not simply, as Myers (1994:178) states ‘that without physical resources and without hope, it is still possible to die on the right side’, but that while engulfed overwhelmingly by Otherness, it is still possible to reject its corrupting influences. Since evil in The Chronicles is fundamentally a matter of infection by Otherness, it is the infection by Otherness, resulting in ‘the decline of the nation one loves’ (Myers, 1994:176), that dictates the predominant imagery of Narnia’s end in The Last Battle.

The concept of cultural infection hinges on two ideas that are central to Said’s concept of imaginative geography: first, it presupposes a distinction between the Other and the Subject identity and second, it posits the Other as a pernicious category, capable of corrupting the Subject. The Horse and His Boy establishes both. In that novel, a line is drawn between two cultures, that of Narnia/Archenland and of Calormen. These cultures are not only irreconcilably different but are fundamentally opposed to one another in starkly apparent moral terms. Furthermore, the moral difference between the two is grounded in their material difference, so much so that the signs of the Other have become, by The Last Battle, easily identifiable signifiers of evil in themselves.
One device Lewis uses to preserve the distinction between the good/Subject and evil/Other is through the symbolism provided by the Talking Beasts of Narnia. In the previous chapter, I discuss how the Talking Beasts figure in *The Chronicles* as indicators of Narnia’s enlightened state, the freedom of its subjects and the humaneness of recognizing the rights of nature, but this does not exhaust the range of metaphorical meanings evoked by Lewis in his use of the Talking Beasts. Myers (1994:177) states that the ‘depiction of both personal and national decline is enhanced by Lewis’s use of animals and mythological beings.’ For this reason the Talking Beasts may function as representations of the good and evil aspects of human nature:

Lewis’s choice of the Ape as the bad animal is governed by traditional learning rather than science, for in medieval literature the Ape…was a symbol of hypocrisy or unintelligent imitation… The other animals in *The Last Battle* have attributes and personalities commonly assigned to their species. The donkey…is stupid; the horses…are spirited and noble; the dogs are loyal and eager… The Cat…symbolizes hypocrisy…[and the] Lamb is meek… (Myers, 1994:177)

In this way, the Talking Beasts also enable Lewis to portray Narnia’s moral infection while preserving the imagery of race and culture as markers of good and evil, which as I will show, play a significant role in *The Last Battle*.

As alluded to in the previous chapter, there is a thematic distinction in *The Chronicles* between Wildness, signifying freedom and respect for nature, and Savagery, identified with cruelty and indifference to the fates of others, both of which are explored through the symbolism of animals. Both aspects inhere in the amoral, instinctual nature of the beast. However, in human beings and through the metaphor of the Talking Beasts, they
assume the aspects of good and evil, since humankind is responsible for their actions and the consequences of these. Thus the animals in The Chronicles who behave humanely are rewarded with the gift of speech, such as the mice that bite through Aslan’s cords in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (Lewis, 2001b:225). Conversely, in Prince Caspian, Lucy contemplates the frightening notion of ‘men going wild inside, like the animals in [Telmarine] Narnia’ (Lewis, 2001b:135).

In The Horse and His Boy, it is clearly established that wildness in this positive sense characterizes Narnia, while Calormen, with its society based on slavery and cruelty, embodies savagery. The metaphorical link between the imagery of animal savagery and Calormen is perhaps epitomized in the scene in which Aslan attacks Aravis in a reflection of her callous indifference to the fate of her maid, whom Aravis has drugged in order to escape, resulting in her maid’s being beaten brutally in punishment. At the end of The Horse and His Boy, Prince Rabadash is transformed into a reflection of his true self, an ass, and one that is not gifted with speech. He thus assumes the image of his own inner savagery as well as stupidity. The ass may also be read as an image of the stupidity of evil in line with Lewis’s theological position that “the Devil is (in the long run) an ass” (in Carter, 1978:35). More significantly, since Calormen is characterized by its dumb beasts in contradistinction to Narnia’s Talking Animals, the image of the dumb ass here also functions as a symbol of Calormene society.

The Last Battle begins with two beasts: an Ape called Shift, described as ‘the cleverest, ugliest, most wrinkled ape you can imagine’ (Lewis, 2001g:7) and a donkey called
Puzzle. Although these are Narnian creatures, Shift exploits Puzzle much as Arsheesh exploits Shasta while pretending to be Shasta’s father in The Horse and His Boy: ‘At least they both said they were friends, but from the way things went on, you might have thought Puzzle was more like Shift’s servant than his friend. He did all the work’ (Lewis, 2001g:7). Moreover, the novel begins with a deception, and deception is emphasized as a characteristic feature of Calormene culture. In The Last Battle, it is deception that accomplishes the undoing of Narnia. Shift finds an old lion skin at the bottom of a pool and convinces the gullible Puzzle to wear it in order to pretend to be Aslan:

‘…think of all the good we could do!’ said Shift. “You’d have me to advise you, you know. I’d think of sensible orders for you to give. And everyone would have to obey us, even the King himself. We would set everything right in Narnia”’ (Lewis, 2001g:7).

Through Shift’s cunning and powers of manipulation, he convinces many Narnians that Puzzle is Aslan and that he, Shift, is speaking on Aslan’s behalf. Watt-Evans (2005:27) notes that in so far as Narnia’s Apocalypse is a parallel to the biblical account of our own world, there ‘is a final battle, and there is a beast – poor Puzzle the donkey – and his false prophet, Shift the Ape, who rule over Narnia just as the Antichrist …shall rule all the world except the saved.’ At first, ‘setting everything right in Narnia’ amounts to serving the petty desires of the Ape, feeding his greed for oranges and bananas and nuts, even to the extent of finishing the winter supplies of the squirrels. Like the Calormenes, whose entire society is structured around self-preservation at the expense of others, the sin of the Ape is selfishness. However, the Ape’s alliance with the Calormenes is what results in the most disturbing changes to Narnia. Significantly this occurs after the Ape, a creature of Narnia, starts behaving like a Calormene himself. The disturbing impact of these
changes is enhanced by their stark contrast with expectations raised by the illusion of Aslan’s return created by the Ape.

When Lewis introduces King Tirian, ‘the last of the Kings of Narnia’ and Jewel the Unicorn, they are contemplating the ‘wonderful news’ of Aslan’s return (Lewis, 2001g: 21). But this is itself tarnished by the bearers of the news: various Talking Animals who are not sure of what they have seen, and a ‘merchant from Calormen’ (Lewis, 2001g:22). It is well established in The Chronicles that not only are sightings of Aslan profoundly significant, but those who see him and the manner in which he is seen are important as well. Readers of the previous books will be aware of this. In Prince Caspian, Lucy is the first to see Aslan and the other children are only able to see him once they have attained her level of faith; the Dwarf, Trumpkin, who does not believe in Aslan, is the last to see him (Lewis, 2001b:160-168). In The Magician’s Nephew, Uncle Andrew convinces himself that Aslan is only a wild animal, and is soon only able to see him as such (Lewis, 2001f:150). In this case, the mention of the Calormenes is the first indication that all is not right within Narnia. The sense of impending doom is intensified by the prophecy of the centaur, Roonwit, who warns that the ‘stars say nothing of the coming of Aslan, nor of peace, nor of joy’ and that ‘some great evil hangs over Narnia’ (Lewis, 2001g:24-25).

The Ape’s actions are the first indications of Narnia’s moral infection. However, it is the proliferation of the Calormenes themselves within the ideal space of Narnia that signal its impending destruction and that are identified with the infiltration of evil into the idealized space, justifying the xenophobic reaction of King Tirian to seeing too many Calormenes
in Narnia at once. In the following scene, Lewis uses signs of the Other, in particular racial Otherness, to portray a landscape that has been darkened by a savage presence:

The first thing that struck the King and the Unicorn was that about half the people in the crowd were not Talking Beasts but Men. The next thing was that these men were not the fair-haired men of Narnia. They were dark, bearded men from Calormen, that great and cruel country that lies beyond Archenland across the desert to the south (Lewis, 2001g:32).

The King and the Unicorn see the Calormenes, empowered with the authority of the false Aslan, already beginning to turn Narnia into a dehumanized mechanism for profit, as they cut down the forests and cruelly mistreat animals while using them for labour. Lewis enhances the disturbing impact of these scenes in his use of the Talking Animals and enchanted trees, which enables him to portray the violation of nature as the enslavement of people:

Up till now Tirian had taken it for granted that the horses which the Calormenes were driving were their own horses; dumb, witless animals like the horses of our own world. And though he hated to see even a dumb horse overdriven, he was of course thinking more about the murder of the Trees. It had never crossed his mind that anyone would dare to harness one of the free Talking Horses of Narnia, much less to use a whip on it. But as that savage blow fell the horse reared up and said, half screaming: “Fool and tyrant! Do you not see I am doing all I can?” (Lewis, 2001g:33).

Lewis’s purpose to ‘exemplify the proper response’ to ‘the decline of the nation one loves’ (Myers, 1994:176) is well demonstrated in these scenes. On the one hand, Tirian’s rage is emotionally justified, rooted in the discovery that the enslaved horse is ‘one of his own Narnians’ (Lewis, 2001g:33). However, his actions, in ‘[attacking the Calormenes] – without defying them – while they were unarmed’ (Lewis, 2001g:35) is contrary to the
code of chivalry that dictates manners in *The Chronicles*, and Tirian gives himself up to the Calormenes in his shame. Consequently, the lesson here is not to be reduced spiritually to the level of the Other while in conflict, but to preserve one’s decorum even when responding to a complete absence of honourable behaviour. However, Tirian’s actions become increasingly misplaced in a land that has been infected by the contagion of the Other and in which dishonour is becoming commonplace. The scene in which the Calormenes take Tirian prisoner, boasting of their ‘skill and courage’ (Lewis, 2001g:39), is a striking image of this contagion, depicted by Lewis as the menacing encroaching of racial darkness overpowering the fair-skinned Tirian, with his ‘blue eyes and fearless honest face’ (Lewis, 2001g:21):

Then the dark men came around him in a thick crowd, smelling of garlic and onions, their white eyes flashing dreadfully in their brown faces. They put a rope halter around Jewel’s neck. They took the King’s sword away and tied his hands behind his back. One of the Calormenes, who had a helmet instead of a turban and seemed to be in command, snatched the gold circlet off Tirian’s head and hastily put it away somewhere among his clothes (Lewis, 2001g:37-38).

The speeches of the Ape are, likewise, depicted as distressing because they reflect this contagion. His plans of sending the animals to work ‘the way horses and such-like do in other countries’ and calling the Calormenes ‘our dark-faced friends’ (Lewis, 2001g:42) basically work to break down the fundamental binary opposition between Narnia and Calormen.

Lewis is, on the other hand, also portraying a Narnia that has been infected with modernity, in a reflection of the Primary World home space. However, modernity here
has been reduced to images of tyranny and enslavement, identified in *The Horse and His Boy* as Oriental in nature: ‘We’ll be able, [says the Ape] with the money you earn, to make Narnia a country worth living in. There’ll be oranges and bananas pouring in – and roads and big cities and schools and offices and whips and muzzles and saddles and cages and kennels and prisons…’ (Lewis, 2001g:43). Thus Lewis also develops the idea of modernity as an infection itself, a corrupting Otherness that does not inhere in the true Western identity, by reducing it to the admission of continuity between the Subject and Other. But allowing for any kind of continuity between these identities, as the Ape does, makes the Subject identity vulnerable to infection, resulting in its demise.

The most devastating instance of contagion in *The Last Battle* is the idea, introduced by the Ape and supported by the Calormenes, that Aslan and Tash, the name of the Calormene deity, are two names of the same person:

> All that old idea of us being right and the Calormenes wrong is silly. We know better now. The Calormenes use different words but we all mean the same thing. Tash and Aslan are only two different names for you know Who. That’s why there can never be any quarrel between them…Tash is Aslan: Aslan is Tash’ (Lewis, 2001g:45).

Lewis’s use of the traditional symbolism of animals functions here to highlight the Ape’s hypocrisy. As such, the Ape’s attempt to stress any kind of continuity of values between the Subject and Other is instantiated as a hideous deception. However, the significance of the Ape is not simply in his role as the facilitator of Narnia’s moral infection. Reduced to a simplified symbolic construct, with no redeeming qualities, the Ape functions as a representation of human hypocrisy detached from the Subject identity, a manifestation of
a quality of the Other within the ideal space. Tirian, with whom the Ape is contrasted, makes this explicit for readers: “Ape,” he cried with a great voice, “you lie. You lie damnably. You lie like a Calormene. You lie like an Ape” (Lewis, 2001g:47). The savagery of the beast, representing qualities which are to be rejected, here becomes a metaphor for the savagery of the Other, and these are contrasted with the humanity epitomised in the Narnian identity. In a development of these themes, the Ape begins to claim that he is a man and acts like the king of Narnia. Dressing up in a scarlet jacket, jewelled slippers and a paper crown, he is described as looking ‘ten times uglier’ than when he lived as an Ape by Cauldron Pool (Lewis, 2001g:38). In this way, the Ape is both contrasted with Tirian, who is both truly human/humane and the true king of Narnia, and made reflective of the Tisroc as described in *The Horse and His Boy*, whose ostentatious clothing casts the Calormene ruler’s lack of humanity into ugly relief.

The conflation of Tash and Aslan becomes the crucial factor in Narnia’s destruction. Ideologically this strikes at the heart of Lewis’s narrative, as it introduces the idea of Western religion, the source of Western values, being corrupted by entanglements with Eastern superstition and barbaric paganism, complete with ritual human sacrifice. In *The Chronicles* this is a binary opposition that is highlighted by the interjection of a Talking Lamb, who itself represents Christ-like innocence and truth:

“Please,” said the Lamb, “I can’t understand. What have we to do with the Calormenes? We belong to Aslan. They belong to Tash. They have a god called Tash. They say he has four arms and the head of a vulture. They kill Men on his altar. I don’t believe there’s any such person as Tash. But if there was, how could Aslan be friends with him?” (Lewis, 2001g:45)
In *The Chronicles*, the Calormene god Tash is probably the most striking example of pseudo-Oriental imagery appropriated for Lewis’s purposes. Discussing Robert Southey’s Romantic work *Kehama*, Leask (1992:21) notes that ‘Southey…painted a negative picture of Hinduism as idolatrous superstition, indirectly justifying Christian missionary activity in Britain’s new imperial dominion.’ The distaste underlying the description of a foreign deity, possessing four arms and the head of a vulture, embodies the ‘conventional Eurocentric rejection of…Indian deities’ (Franklin, 1998:58) and echoes Romantic portrayals of Oriental religion as deformed and monstrous. Leask (1992:21) notes Southey’s avowed commitment ‘“…to counterbalance the disadvantage of a mythology…which would appear monstrous if its deformities were not kept out of sight.”’ Similarly, Lewis’s protagonists react with fear and revulsion at the sight of Tash: ‘After one look at it, Puzzle gave a screaming bray and darted into the tower. And Jill (who was no coward, as you know) hid her face in her hands to shut out the sight of it’ (Lewis, 2001g:47).

In *The Chronicles*, Lewis’s portrayal extends beyond perception, and the deformity of a foreign deity here signifies a deep corruption that instantiates the religion as the ideological opposite of Christianity. Tirian’s failure to make the Talking Animals understand this results in the Calormene religion, the source of evil, taking root in Narnia, thus corrupting the ideal space at the source of its morality:

He meant to go on and ask how the terrible god Tash who fed on the blood of his people could possibly be the same as the good Lion by whose blood all Narnia was saved. If he had been allowed to speak, the rule of the Ape might have ended that day; the Beasts might have seen the truth
and thrown the Ape down. But before he could say another word, two Calormenes struck him in the mouth with all their force, and a third, from behind, kicked his feet from under him. As he fell, the Ape squealed in rage and terror: ‘Take him away…Take him where he cannot hear us, nor we hear him…’ (Lewis, 2001g:45)

After Tirian is restrained by the Calormenes, he compares his misfortunes to those experienced by his predecessors, coming to the conclusion that “Aslan – and children from another world…have always come in when things were at their worst…” (Lewis, 2001g:56). In effect, this allows Lewis to recount the previous Chronicles as the history of the enchanted world, and the good deeds of ordinary English children from the Primary World as the substance of legend. The king’s reverie prompts him to call aloud for aid from the child protagonists of the previous books, now called the ‘Friends of Narnia’ (Lewis, 2001g:57), and he appears in their presence as a phantom in the Primary World:

He seemed to be standing in a lighted room where seven people sat around a table. It looked as if they had just finished their meal. Two of those people were very old, an old man with a white beard and an old woman with wise, merry, twinkling eyes. He who sat at the right hand of the old man was hardly full grown, certainly younger than Titian himself, but his face had already the look of a king and a warrior. And you could almost say the same of the other youth who sat at the right hand of the old woman. Facing Tirian across the table sat a fair-haired girl younger than either of these, and on either side of her, a boy and girl who were younger still. They were all dressed in what seemed to Tirian the oddest kind of clothes (Lewis, 2001g:56).

This scene is profoundly important for the entire series because it is the moment when Recovery has been achieved in all its most important aspects. The key to its significance

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lies in the fact that it is described in its entirety from Tirian’s point of view. In it, Tirian, a character from another world, is seeing a vision of characters from the Primary World, but these are characters to which the ideal identity developed throughout the series has been fully restored. As such, it is the characters from the Primary World who are endowed with a radiant sense of otherness, and Tirian’s sense of wonder and respect is artfully conveyed. The mundanity of this world becomes entirely irrelevant, as Tirian is wholly preoccupied with the overwhelming impression made on him by the spiritual identities of the characters. Thus, the narrator tells us, ‘they were all dressed in what seemed to Tirian the oddest kind of clothes’ (Lewis, 2001g:58), but this fades into insignificance beside his overwhelming impression of majesty and wisdom. When Peter Pevensie addresses him, it is not as a person from a world devoid of enchantment, but as a figure out of Tirian’s own ancient past, commanding his obedience: “If you are from Narnia, I charge you in the name of Aslan, speak to me. I am Peter the High King” (Lewis, 2001g:56). The entire scene is an artful portrayal of an idealized identity, recovered in fantasy and restored to the home space.

Thematically, the scene depicts the stage at which the protagonists have completed their education in recognizing and attaining the qualities which rightfully belong to them. However, *The Last Battle* enacts the education in sustaining this identity in the midst of encroaching Otherness, and in the event of defeat by Otherness. For this reason the two youngest of the Primary World protagonists, Eustace and Jill, are transported to the otherworld, not to aid in Narnia’s triumph, but to learn the value of standing firm in the face of its defeat.
Myers (1994:178) makes the curious observation that the attitude towards death presented by Lewis in *The Last Battle* is not a question of religious faith: ‘No doctrine about an afterlife, no suggestion that death is unreal, sustains them as they go into the last battle. Their heroism is modelled not on the Bible but on Northern literature.’ This can be seen in the way *The Last Battle* is a departure from the earlier *Chronicles* in that Aslan does not make an appearance when things are at their worst. Tirian, Jill and Eustace witness Narnia being utterly overrun by its enemies, followed by the complete destruction of the otherworld. Myers (1994:174) observes of the differences between the last book and *The Magician’s Nephew*: ‘In *The Last Battle* everything in Narnia is wrong, and efforts to stop the decline just make things worse’. The effect of this is that rather than underlining religious faith, the emphasis is on sustaining one’s *identity* while being overwhelmed by the inexorable encroachment of Otherness.

After helping to free Tirian, Jill and Eustace are led by the King to a Narnian outpost to rest and plan their next strategy. Here Tirian advises that they dress in Calormene mail – ‘outlandish gear’ – and rub juice on their faces, which ‘will make [them] brown as Calormenes’, declaring that ‘nothing but oil and ashes will make us white Narnians again’ (Lewis, 2001g:70). The motif of disguise may be read as another metaphor for infection. Although Tirian has kept Calormene clothes in case the Narnians ever had ‘reason to walk unseen in the Tisroc’s land’ (Lewis, 2001g:70), what necessitates their use is the need to walk unseen in Tirian’s own land. In a development of the theme of infection, Narnia has, at this point, become like the Tisroc’s land, a land of Calormenes.
Interestingly, sporting signs of the Other allow the protagonists to preserve their own identities, by enabling them to walk unharmed in their rightful space. In effect it also enables the parody of the Oriental form by contrasting the function of these signs as signifiers of a corrupt value system with the identities they disguise. In the act of mimicry, Tirian, dressed up as his enemy, declares, “…If we are challenged, then do you two hold your peace and I will do my best to talk like a curst, cruel, proud lord of Calormen…” (Lewis, 2001g:76). Tirian, by definition as a Narnian lord, is the embodiment of the opposites of the qualities he assumes, and his assumption of the outward forms of the Other only serves to emphasize that difference.

Interestingly, the motif of disguise here may be seen to accomplish a form of cultural inoculation similar to what Leask (1992:7) observes about the striking proliferation of Orientalist fashions in Romantic literature, serving to ‘disengage the signifier from any semantic substance, to parody it, and also to inoculate [the Subject] and his culture from the threat which it poses.’ However, while disguise enables the temporary preservation of the Subject identity, its very necessity, together with the stealth strategy adopted by the protagonists, works to emphasize the threat of infection. This is further conveyed in the sense of tension that is mirrored in the landscape around the protagonists. As they embark on their journey to save their friends, there are repeated reminders of Narnia’s changed state:

All around them the wood was very quiet. Indeed it was far too quiet. On an ordinary Narnian night there ought to have been noises – an occasional cheery “Goodnight” from a hedgehog, the cry of an owl overhead, perhaps a flute in the distance to tell of Fauns dancing, or some throbbing
hammering noises from Dwarfs under-ground. All that was silenced: gloom and fear reigned over Narnia.

The protagonists eventually free Jewel the Unicorn and discover the secret of the false Aslan, liberating the dim-witted Puzzle in the process. The discovery of the Ape’s deceit gives Tirian great joy, as he believes that revealing this to the other Narnians will dispel the false authority the Calormenes have assumed and free Narnia from its contagion:

“…Let them see the thing they have feared and bowed to. We can show them the truth of the Ape’s vile plot. His secret’s out. The tide’s turned…No more whispering and skulking and disguises…” (Lewis, 2001g:85). However, Tirian’s first attempt to expose the false Aslan results in an unpleasant surprise; the Dwarfs to whom they reveal Puzzle have become disenchanted with the entire notion of Aslan, declaring that they will

“…look after [them]selves from now on and touch [their] caps to nobody” (Lewis, 2001g:93).

Ironically, the Dwarfs also don’t accept Tirian’s claim to authority as the truth because of the disguise he is wearing: “‘I don’t think we want any more Kings – if you *are* Tirian, which you don’t look like him – no more than we want any more Aslans’” (Lewis, 2001g: 93). While the use of disguise is rendered necessary to preserve the Subject identity, it also entails the use of deception, a quality of the Other, because of which Tirian and his friends are distrusted by the Dwarfs. Leask (1992:9) notes the unreliability of the Oriental sign as an agent of cultural inoculation. As such, the moment where the Calormene disguises work against the protagonists essentially enacts what he observes as that
disturbing moment when the heraldry of the Other takes on a life of its own and threatens the familiar with an uncanny absorption and loss of identity…for if [the Oriental image] is rendered necessary as a form of inoculation, it tends suddenly to manifest itself as an infectious rather than a prophylactic agency (Leask, 1992:9).

The scene in effect depicts the point at which Narnia’s infection has become irreversible. Deception has been entrenched in the ideal space, and distrust and betrayal are widespread, making Narnia, in effect, into a society like Calormen’s. Spufford’s (2002:105) account of the upsetting elements of this book essentially underlines the effects of contagion, the corruption and loss of Narnia’s essential character:

From the very beginning of the book, when Shift the Ape finds a lion-skin and begins scheming to impersonate Aslan, new tones of moral failure and shoddiness are admitted into Narnia that were never allowed to be there before. Narnia suddenly becomes a world where the villainy of villains is no longer contained and demarcated by a limited story-set of emotions, but can spread out to confuse the innocent, and to taint the story’s world… [Narnia] has already become un-Narnian by breaking the rules that tacitly governed it till then.

The most significant victim of the spread of deception is religious faith. ‘Tirian had never dreamed that one of the results of the Ape’s setting up a false Aslan would be to stop people believing in the real one’ (Lewis, 2001f:94). Disbelief, significantly, is also to be found among the Calormenes. Shortly after Tirian has been deserted by the Dwarfs, one Dwarf called Poggin joins their ranks and relates to them the events surrounding the Ape since the King’s escape. The Calormene captain, Rishda, has been joined in counsel by a talking cat called Ginger, to whom he confesses that he does not believe in Tash. Myers (1994:177) comments that ‘the Cat has no interest in the religious question of whether Aslan or Tash is the real deity. It is concerned with nothing but profit; it
symbolizes hypocrisy…’ The Cat, like the Ape, is a manifestation of a Calormene value, the value of profit. The Cat also represents Rishda’s hypocrisy in his use of religion to achieve his ends, since Rishda believes in neither Tash nor Aslan. Moreover, as an agent of Calormene interests, Ginger is instrumental in fabricating the lie that Tirian has been devoured by Aslan as well as spreading the story among the ‘more enlightened Narnians’ that there is ‘no such person as either’ Aslan or Tash (Lewis, 2001g:100). The Cat declares: “‘For the Beasts who really believe in Aslan may turn at any moment…But those who care neither for Tash nor Aslan but have only an eye to their own profit and such reward as the Tisroc may give them when Narnia is a Calormene province, will be firm’” (Lewis, 2001g:100-101).

The irony of Rishda’s disbelief is that Tash does exist, and Rishda has summoned him. Just as Poggin is concluding his account of Rishda and Ginger’s conversation, the protagonists notice that the sky is suddenly clouding over, they are overtaken by an uncanny chill, and a foul smell comes to them. These are forerunners of Tash’s arrival, which presents an extraordinary image of evil come from the Orient to strike a death-blow to the idealized embodiment of a Western identity. Lewis combines the imagery of an Oriental deity with the associations of evil by underlining the mysterious and predatory aspects of its form:

At a first glance you might have mistaken it for smoke, for it was grey and you could see things through it. But the deathly smell was not the smell of smoke. Also, this thing kept its shape instead of billowing and curling as smoke would have done. It was roughly the shape of a man but it had the head of a bird; some bird of prey with a cruel, curved beak. It had four arms which it held high above its head, stretching them out Northward as if it wanted to
snatch all Narnia in its grip; and its fingers – all twenty of them – were curved like its beak and had long, pointed, bird-like claws instead of nails. It floated on the grass instead of walking, and the grass seemed to wither beneath it (Lewis, 2001g:102).

The evocations of evil in this passage are inextricable from the foreignness of the image’s form. The image as Other is depicted as deformed by definition; the sense of the grotesque, which Leask (1992:4) says ‘recurs frequently in Romantic writing about the Oriental Other’ is possibly at its most emphatic. Foreign, deformed in Southey’s terms, and utterly malevolent, Tash is the ultimate emblem of the Orient as it is represented in The Chronicles, something irreconcilably Other, completely opposite to the Subject identity and to Good itself. It is Tash’s arrival that signals the penetration of infection into Narnia’s essence; Tirian declares that Tash has gone “‘North into the heart [my emphasis] of Narnia…It has come to dwell among us. They have called it and it has come” (Lewis, 2001g:104).

An important effect that seeing Tash has on the protagonists is that it prompts them to discard their disguises, and to reaffirm their identities in what may be read as a cleansing ritual: ‘Then they went back to the Tower with red, shiny faces, looking like people who have been given an extra special good wash before a party. They re-armed themselves in true Narnian style, with straight swords and three-cornered shields. “Body of me,” said Tirian. “I feel a true man again.”’ (Lewis, 2001g:108). The repetition of the word ‘true’ here is significant; if Tirian and his friends are to take the last stand against deceit, they must leave off deceit, reasserting both the truth of themselves and the true-ness of themselves: As Narnians, deceit is beneath them and a quality of the Other. The natural
beauty of the landscape around them aids in this reaffirmation of identity: ‘The children felt, “This is really Narnia at last.” Even Tirian’s heart grew lighter as he walked ahead of them…’ (Lewis, 2001g:109). However, this is simply a last reminder of the values the protagonists stand for before they are given the news of Narnia’s final defeat, brought to them by the Talking Eagle, Farsight. In effect, the scene he describes is of the completed infection of Narnia by the Orient: ‘…Cair Paravel filled with dead Narnians and living Calormenes: the Tisroc’s banner advanced upon your royal battlements: and your subjects flying from the city…’ (Lewis, 2001g:113-114). The point is driven home for the reader by Tirian: “So,” said the King, after a long silence, “Narnia is no more” (Lewis, 2001g:114).

Lewis depicts the exemplary response to defeat in the attitudes shown by the characters to this news. Most significant is Jewel and Tirian resolving to ‘die in battle’ (Lewis, 2001g:115) with the Calormenes, while Eustace agrees with Jill that it is better ‘to be killed fighting for Narnia than [to] grow old and stupid at home’ (Lewis, 2001g:120). There is no question of surrender or any other solution that might in any way lend itself to inter-cultural absorption. With the infection of Narnia by evil now complete, the last battle then ensues, but it is a battle that cannot be won. The significance of the battle lies rather in its enactment of a last affirmation of identity. This Lewis portrays in racial terms, underlining a sense of the monstrous in his depiction of the Oriental enemy to effect the terror and hopelessness of the final End: ‘Eustace stood with his heart beating terribly, hoping and hoping that he would be brave. He had never seen anything (though he had seen both a dragon and a sea-serpent) that made his blood run so cold as that line
of dark-faced bright-eyed men’ (Lewis, 2001g:147). However, in experiencing death in the correct way, that is, in maintaining their difference from the Other up to the very end, the protagonists discover the ultimate value of their identities: transcendent meaning.

Wood (2005:47) explains:

The Narnian chronicles employ a pervasive Platonism that emphasizes the secondary nature of representation – and of nature itself as a representation – while at the same time insisting upon a necessary correlation between works of the imagination, of material reality and of Reality beyond (or Within).

During the final battle, Tirian is the last of the protagonists to find himself forced through the stable door that had previously housed the false Aslan. There he finds the seven protagonists of the Primary World, dressed as Kings and Queens, ‘all with crowns on their heads and all in glittering clothes’ (Lewis, 2001g:165). It soon comes to light that what the characters have in fact experienced are their deaths, symbolized in the forced entry into the stable (Myers, 1994:179). On the other side of the stable door, they meet Aslan, and discover that they are in Narnia, but a Narnia that is more meaningful and delightful than the one that they have left. Digory, who has become the old Professor in whose house the Pevensies first discovered the wardrobe portal to Narnia, explains that the old Narnia ‘was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of something in Aslan’s real world’ (Lewis, 2001g:208).

Thematically, Aslan’s country can be read as the embodiment of Narnia’s true identity beyond the threat of Otherness, where all identities are likewise stabilized and sanctified
beyond the influences of corruption. As such the entry into Aslan’s country is also the moment when the protagonists come to a true understanding of themselves, which entails a realization of the complete polarization of the Subject and Other identities. There are two events that are key to these themes: the arrival of Tash, and the entry into Aslan’s country of a young Calormene noble, Emeth. While Emeth’s salvation may seem to allow for a continuity of virtue between the Subject and the Other, Lewis negates this by emphasizing Emeth’s peculiarity among the other Calormenes and his misplaced faith in Tash. Like Aravis, he is characterized as a Calormene with a spiritual identity that is linked to the Subject space.

Emeth is first introduced as a devout believer in the Calormene god Tash, desiring to walk through the Stable Door and declaring that he will ‘gladly…die a thousand deaths if [he] might once look on the face of Tash’ (Lewis, 2001g:208). His faith, like the faith of the Narnians in Aslan, has been exploited for the purposes of profit, but that is not the only way in which Lewis emphasizes Emeth’s character as distinct from the other Calormenes. The description of Emeth as he walks towards the stable door emphasizes the purity of his faith and his courage, but is also mute on the subject of his Otherness: ‘His eyes were shining, his face very solemn, his hand was on his sword-hilt, and he carried his head high. Jill felt like crying when she looked at his face’ (Lewis, 2001g:140). The one reminder of his racial difference is conveyed in the spirit of qualifying his spiritual beauty: ‘He was young and tall and slender, and even rather beautiful in the dark, haughty, Calormene way’ (Lewis, 2001g:138). A comment by Jewel further qualifies Emeth’s nobility as being un-Calormene and therefore un-Oriental: ‘By the
Lion’s Mane, I almost love this young warrior, Calormene though he be. He is worthy of a better god than Tash.’ Emeth’s story further instantiates his peculiarity among the Calormenes:

…when I first heard that that we should march upon Narnia I rejoiced; for I had heard many things of your Land and desired greatly to meet you in battle. But when I found that we were to go in disguised as merchants (which is a shameful dress for a warrior and the son of a Tarkaan) and to work by lies and trickery, then my joy departed from me. And most of all when I found we must wait upon a monkey, and when it began to be said that Tash and Aslan were one, then the world became dark in my eyes. For always since I was a boy I have served Tash and my great desire was to know more of him and, if it might be, to look upon his face. But the name of Aslan was hateful to me (Lewis, 2001g:198).

The above passage demonstrates the potential of this character to inscribe an alternative view of the Other identity. Assuming the position of the Subject, Emeth defines his own identity in a way that runs counter to Narnian views of Calormen. His interpretation of his own identity in relation to the Narnians mirrors the Narnian attitude to the Calormenes, and he sees the two only in terms of contrasts and oppositions, but with the positive and negative values (embodied in religion) reversed. Consequently he is angered by Rishda’s behaviour in exploiting religion and mocking Tash, which he sees as contrary to Calormene values. However, Lewis undercuts this alternative view by contextualizing it within an illustration of overwhelming evidence to the contrary of what Emeth believes about what Calormene identity means. For example his dislike of deceit, which Emeth sees as a requisite for the honour of a high-born Calormene, establishes his sense of honour in line with Narnian standards of chivalry. As The Horse and His Boy demonstrates, deceit is a characterizing feature of Calormene society. From the greedy
fisherman Arsheesh (who pretends Shasta is his son in order to raise his price when selling Shasta into slavery) to the underhanded schemes of the Tisroc in the deep heart of his secretive palace, deceit sets the verbose, indirect Calormenes apart from the honest Narnians. In addition, Emeth’s devotion to Tash and his abhorrence for Aslan are misplaced, but his seeing them in terms of oppositions is correct. When Emeth finds himself in Aslan’s country and encounters the Lion himself, Aslan explains that all the service Emeth has done to Tash has been accounted as service to him, Aslan, not because they are the same, but because they are opposites:

For I and he are of such different kinds that no service which is vile can be done to me, and none which is not vile can be done to him. And if any man do a cruelty in my name, then, though he says the name Aslan, it is Tash whom he serves and by Tash his deed is accepted (Lewis, 2001g:202).

The significance of Tash for Calormene identity is pertinent here. In his chapter ‘On the Origins of Evil’, Watt-Evans (2005:29) investigates the origin of Tash and explores the implications of Tash and Aslan being opposite, noting that they are not equals, since Tash obeys when Aslan orders him to be gone; neither is it an issue of creation versus destruction, since Aslan has power over both: ‘It appears that the two are opposites in purely moral terms: Aslan, the incarnation of all that is good, and Tash, the embodiment of evil.’ However, Watt-Evans (2005:30) hypothesizes that another way the two are opposite is that Tash does not guide men, but is rather guided by them:

[Tash] is in Narnia because the Calormenes summoned him thither. He is in Narnia’s world, in Calormen, because the Calormenes unknowingly summoned him. Just as Digory brought the first evil into an innocent world, in the form of Jadis of Charn, later known as the White Witch, so did the
people of Calormen, through their ferocity and cruelty, bring in Tash...

It’s a theory…that fits not just what we’re told about Narnian history, but also suits Lewis’s theology…the idea that all good comes from God, and all evil from mankind’s refusal to accept God.

Watt-Evan’s hypothesis also supports the idea of Tash’s grotesquery as a monstrous image of Calormene cruelty and selfishness, in essence, as an image of Calormene identity itself. ‘Perhaps, then,’ he (2005:31) concludes, ‘the Calormenes created Tash. Their centuries of rejecting Aslan and calling him a demon, their selfish and brutal society based on slavery, eventually made their evil manifest as an actual Tash.’ As such, the scene in which Rishda looks on Tash with horror may be read as a metaphor for Rishda’s confrontation with his own monstrosity:

…the Tarkaan neither lifted his face from the ground nor said a word. He was shaking like a man with a bad hiccup. He was brave enough in battle: but half his courage had left him earlier that night when he first began to suspect that there might be a real Tash. The rest of it had left him now (Lewis, 2001g:165).

Rishda’s fear and unwillingness to meet the Calormene deity are contrasted with Emeth’s longing to see Tash and his determination to do so even if he should be killed. Aslan explains to Emeth: ‘…unless thy desire had been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek’ (Lewis, 2001g:202). The irony of Emeth’s devotion to Tash is that devotion itself is not an aspect of Calormene religion; Rishda, in serving his own interests has in doing so more truly served Tash, and so it is Rishda who succeeds in summoning Tash and not Emeth. Watt-Evans (2005:30) argues that selfishness, ‘to Lewis, was the essence of evil…the inability to put anyone else’s
needs or wants above one’s own.’ Thus in selfishness, Rishda succeeds in summoning Tash, who plays the role of the Narnian equivalent to ‘Satan the deceiver’, the embodiment of evil (Watt-Evans, 2005:28). And in a metaphor for self-destruction, Rishda is consumed by Tash, that is, consumed by his own evil just as Narnia’s world is destroyed when the evil of Calormen consumes it.

Aslan’s revelation of the true nature of himself in relation to Tash thus clarifies the truth about the Calormene identity, invalidating Emeth’s right to define his own religion and his own culture. In effect, Emeth’s entry into Aslan’s country only serves to emphasize the fundamental oppositions between the Subject and Oriental identities. In an Orientalist discourse, Said (2003:38) declares, the ‘crime [is] that the Oriental [is] an Oriental… Thus any deviation from what [are] considered the norms of Oriental [behaviour is] believed to be unnatural.’
Chapter Five

Conclusion: Tracing The Oriental From Lewis to Le Guin

The implications for the identity construction of the characters of *The Chronicles of Narnia* raise several questions that are pertinent to a postcolonial context. The most important of these is to what extent the fictional geographies of fantasy literature reflect imaginative geographies in Said’s sense. By this I am referring chiefly to the designation of identities to rigid spaces capable of generating categories such as Orient/Other and Western/Subject. Moreover, to what extent have representations of the Other been deployed in these narratives for the sole purpose of defining the Subject?

In my thesis it has been my expressed intention to demonstrate the value of studying the representation of the Other in fantasy literature, specifically in children’s fantasy literature. In my introduction, I establish the view that fantasy can be an important site for postcolonial activity, on the part of both authors and critics, because it can be approached as the site where space is converted into meaning. Because the spaces of fantasy are designed by the authors for the purpose of functioning as the site of their narratives, they are, in a sense, formed by the stories the authors tell. Their geographies are plotted, labelled and invested with meaning accordingly. In so far as these narratives serve to construct identity, it is important to note the roles played by the Other in these narratives.

The importance of studying the spaces of fantasy, however, does not simply rest on the extent to which fantasies seem to refer to ‘reality’, the extent to which they resemble the
world that we know. Rather, the otherworlds of fantasy highlight an imaginative process by which we come to understand space in relation to identity, in effect, the process by which we come to know real space and invest it with meaning and create space in the process of knowing. The imaginative impulse is key; when Said uses the term imaginative geography to describe the process by which we invest space with meaning, he emphasizes the fictional nature of what we understand by reality, or more accurately, the way we organize reality by means of fiction. In relation to this, Said (2003:93) identifies what he calls a ‘textual attitude’, resulting from:

> a common human failing to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientations of direct encounters with the human…The idea is that people, places and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes.

Otherworld fantasy, as a genre wherein authors may freely construct entire worlds, can thus be studied as projections of the imaginative processes by which space is converted into meaning. Another useful function of fantasy literature is that it foregrounds the constructedness of categories such as ‘strange’ and ‘familiar’. By transfiguring the landscapes of the familiar with the otherness of magic, for example, it rearranges values around these categories and reveals new ways of perceiving the functionality of the Other in both fantasy and non-fantasy narratives.

Using *The Chronicles of Narnia* as an example of a text in which a representation of the Other has been clearly determined by its usefulness as a contrasting Other-space, has allowed me to explore these operations at their most problematic. Sands-O’Connor (2002:19) remarks that Lewis’s representation of the Other in *The Chronicles* constitutes
the ‘most extreme case of overt racism in children’s books,’ and this can particularly be
seen on the level at which Lewis entrenches signs of the Other, especially dark skin, as
signifiers of corruption, something rarely seen in such an explicit form in contemporary
fantasies. The primary significance of The Chronicles, however, is that they illustrate an
extreme example of imaginative geography deployed for the sole purpose of defining a
Subject identity, and engineering the Subject identity’s appeal.

It may be observed of The Chronicles, as Said (2003:71) does of Orientalist imaginative
geography in general, that ‘we need not look for correspondence between the language
used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language used to
depict the Orient is inaccurate, but because it is not even trying to be accurate.’ In the
Narnia books, Lewis is not at all concerned with depicting the Other identity, whether
accurately or inaccurately. The depiction of Calormene culture in the Narnia books is
entirely determined by its use as a contrasting Other. Most indicative of this is, perhaps,
the way in which Lewis actually reverses certain Orientalist dichotomies due to the
values of his narrative. For example, the Calormenes clearly do not embody the
irrationality and backwardness of traditional Orientalist stereotypes (Said, 2003:7, 40) but
are strongly associated with progress and over-rationalization, qualities which are evil in
Lewis’s value system. On the other hand, all other Orientalist ‘ideas (Oriental despotism,
Oriental splendour, cruelty, sensuality)’ (Said, 2003: 4) are associated with Calormen
because these qualities are Other to Lewis’s values. Lewis’s representation is therefore
understood as Orientalist at the most fundamental level: its representation as the
evil/inferior half of a Subject/Other binary construction.
What makes this kind of imaginative geography most peculiar, however, is its fantasy setting, and the value that fantasy attaches to making-strange, the value of Recovery. Thus, the Orient in *The Chronicles* is both irreconcilably different as well as utterly banal, endowed with a persistent familiarity that enables its narrative function as a frame space for what is, after all, the focus of the narrative: the Subject space. This yields an important insight for postcolonial criticism: the idea that the designation of strangeness does not necessarily signify the inferior category of the Other in an otherwise Orientalist text.

In a way, *The Chronicles* can be seen to offer a template of Orientalist imaginative geography in fantasy. Furthermore, because of the overt didacticism entailed in Lewis’s use of fantasy to train children into ‘having correct moral emotions’ (Hilder, 2003:12), it is also an example of an adult-colonialist text in which ‘the targeted child audience [is included] within the privileged racialized group’ (Reimer, 2000:111). The novels thus embody a double colonialist enterprise whereby child readers of both targeted and marginalized groups are colonized into the Orientalist paradigms of identity embodied in the imaginative geographies constructed by the text.

The significance of *The Chronicles* can be seen in the way so many aspects of its representation of the Orient also appear in later fantasies by other authors, even those otherwise known for their antipathy to conservative agendas. I do not mean to suggest a direct line of influence between these authors, however, but simply the existence of what
Said (2003:7) calls a ‘hegemony of European ideas about the Orient…reiterating European superiority’:

In a sense Orientalism was a library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective. These ideas explained the behavior of Orientals; they supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; most important, they allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics (Said, 2003: 41).

I will briefly consider a few examples of other fantasy authors who have used representations of the Orient in their works, and will focus particularly on those authors generally celebrated for subverting the conventions of heroic fantasy. By comparing these texts with *The Chronicles of Narnia*, I will attempt to render something of a broad overview of the way representations of the Orient function in contemporary fantasy, and the extent to which Orientalist imaginative geography tends to be a feature of these texts.

It should be noted that not all fantasy authors make use of otherworlds in the same way that Lewis does. In particular it should be noted that none of the authors I will be discussing are concerned with embodying ideal identity in space as Lewis embodies his concept of a spiritual and cultural ideal in Narnia. The concept of Recovery, or the value of enabling one to see something previously known as unfamiliar and illuminated with a renewed sense of meaning when displaced to an otherworld setting, remains, however, significant, for reasons which I will set out when discussing each work.
Diana Wynne Jones, an author who has produced fantasy novels for children since the 1970s, has been both contrasted with Lewis and noted for her use of the fantasy novel to question traditional constructions of Subject and Other identities, and specifically for her resistance to the use of the cultural insider Subject position (Sands-O’Connor (2002:19). The fantastic otherworld portrayed in her novels *Howl’s Moving Castle* (1986) and its sequel *Castle in the Air* (1990) can, however, be compared with the Narnia universe in ways that reveal startling similarities, as well as contrasts, in the treatment of what is clearly apparent as the Oriental Other.

It is interesting to consider the implications for Recovery in Jones’s works, since the fantasy qualities of her otherworlds, while inspiring wonder, do not result in the idealization of these otherworlds. On the one hand, similarities with Lewis, who uses his fictional space to criticize aspects of contemporary reality, can be seen. Nikolajeva (2002:26) observes that:

> The unique feature of Jones’s construction of literary space is that, unlike most fantasy writers, she frequently starts in [otherworlds], depicting our own world as strange – a device recognized in criticism as defamiliarization. This gives her an opportunity to view our own world through an outsider’s eyes, observing its unexpected and peculiar aspects and thus interrogating the values and attitudes we take for granted.

On the other hand, Jones is also concerned with questioning the very narrative forms she approximates in her construction of Secondary Worlds, rethinking the assumptions that underlie them and the identities they generate. In *Howl’s Moving Castle*, Jones is said to
be most clearly ‘rethinking the fairy tale’, while drawing on (and rethinking) *The Arabian Nights* for *Castle in the Air* (Rosenberg, 2002:5).

*Howl’s Moving Castle* tells the story of Sophie Hatter, who lives in the fairy-tale land of Ingary, ‘where such things as seven-league boots and cloaks of invisibility really exist’ (Jones, 2005a:9). In Ingary, if ‘you are born the eldest of three…[everyone] knows you are the one who will fail first, and worst, if the three of you set out to seek your fortunes’ (Jones, 2005a:9). Thus Sophie believes that anything she does is doomed to failure because she is the eldest of three sisters. This initially seems to prove true, as Sophie is beset by misfortune. First she is given the least promising apprenticeship of the sisters, inheriting the family shop and the thankless career of hat-making. Then she is alerted to the fact that she is being exploited by her stepmother, Fanny, who reaps the financial benefits of Sophie’s skill in the hat shop without having any hand in the shop’s success. Soon Sophie’s hats, which bring curious luck to her customers, excite the jealousy of the fearful Witch of the Waste, who transforms Sophie into an old woman as a consequence.

Accepting her destiny as a failure, Sophie then sets off to join the household of the Wizard Howl, whose castle floats above the nearby hills. There Sophie eventually learns the truth about herself; she is a witch, with the power to influence reality as she wills. However, in order to fully come into her power, Sophie has to learn to take her destiny into her own hands and not let the fairy-tale maxim that, as the eldest, she is doomed to failure discourage her from asserting her identity. With encouragement from the vain, cowardly and ingenious wizard Howl, Sophie asserts her true self as a woman of power,
helps defeat the Witch of the Waste, and has her love for Howl returned, thus achieving a happy ending in defiance of the conventions of the fairy tale. Jones thus undercuts the maxims of the fairy world she deploys, and rewrites the fairy tale while inscribing the space of fairy as a metaphoric mindscape where such transformations can occur as a result of will and imagination. Rosenberg (2002:5) notes that the Castle novels also see ‘Jones beginning to explore issues of gender construction…Sophie’s role in these two books suggests the power women can wield if they choose to do so’.

Castle in the Air is linked to the previous novel in that its protagonist, Abdullah, inhabits the same fantasy universe as Sophie. Taking place after the events of Howl’s Moving Castle, Abdullah’s story is closely intertwined with several characters from the previous novel. While Sophie is an inhabitant of Ingary, which is reminiscent of ‘mid-nineteenth-century England’ (Hill, 2002:48), Abdullah lives far to the south, in the city of Zanzib of the Sultanates of Rashpuht, an Oriental realm inspired by The Arabian Nights. Just as Ingary is inhabited by the witches and wizards of European fairy tales, Zanzib is a land of genies and magic carpets where ‘every child…learns the lore concerning djinns…at school’ (Jones, 2005b:178). Unlike Calormen, Jones’s Oriental space is a fantasy realm with magics, lore, and supernatural beings that inspires a wonder of its own. However, while Jones’s imaginative geography is not as rigidly delineated as Lewis’s, she does replicate a surprising number of features from the Narnia books in her treatment of the Other-space.
The most striking similarity between the Castle books and the Narnia stories is the way both authors use longing to inscribe the Oriental space as a vacuum anticipating a Subject space where the happy ending can occur. Like Shasta, the protagonist of The Horse and His Boy, Abdullah’s life in the Oriental space is unsatisfying, if not as miserable. Abdullah is a carpet-seller, not a rich one because his father ‘had been disappointed in him and, when he died, he had only left Abdullah just enough money to buy and stock a modest booth in the north-west corner of the bazaar’ (Jones, 2005b:9). Like Shasta, Abdullah has no meaningful relationships of any kind. His father has left most of his money ‘and the large carpet emporium in the centre of the Bazaar…to the relatives of his father’s first wife’, all of whom Abdullah despises. Much like Arsheesh, Shasta’s Calormene foster father, Abdullah’s living relatives seem to contribute nothing to his life but criticism. Later they seek to exploit him when they learn of a prophecy that Abdullah will one day be ‘raised above all others in the land’ (Jones, 2005b:55). Abdullah fills his life with daydreams to compensate for a lack of excitement and fulfilling relationships.

Unlike Shasta, however, Abdullah has no interest in the North; his daydreams are full of drama and adventure reminiscent of tales from The Arabian Nights. In his daydreams Abdullah fantasizes that he is ‘really the long-lost son of a great prince’ (Jones, 2005b:12) who, at the age of two, was kidnapped by a villainous bandit called Kabul Aqba and forced to run away from his palace into the desert. Before he had run away, he had also been betrothed to a beautiful princess, a detail of the daydream on which Abdullah has lately been concentrating (Jones, 2005b:12-13). Abdullah also has a longing for gardens,
which are not available to the common people of Zanzib, and imagines a luxuriously beautiful garden in the palace of his fantasies (Jones, 2005b:13).

Like Shasta whose longing for the North becomes realized as the Narnians draw him into their company, after mistaking him for his twin, Abdullah’s dreams also start coming true. First he is granted the unexpected opportunity to buy a magic carpet, which carries him to the garden of a young woman called Flower-in-the-Night. Both the garden and Flower-in-the-Night are, moreover, exactly like the garden and princess of his daydreams. Just as Abdullah persuades the princess to elope with him, she is kidnapped by a powerful djinn, and Abdullah is captured by the Sultan and forced to flee from the palace dungeon into the desert. There he encounters a bandit just like the one in his fantasies, one who even bears the same name, Kabul Aqba. Gradually, Abdullah begins to appreciate the difference between daydreaming and reality as he is forced from his complacent, uneventful life into hardships that seem to mock his daydreams. As Abdullah crosses the desert into Ingary, following the djinn and determined to rescue Flower-in-the-Night, Abdullah begins to alter his daydreams to accord with more practical, sensible ideas of what he would like his life to be. In effect, Jones undercuts the values that underlie Abdullah’s Arabian Nights-style daydreams in much the same way she questions the conventions of the fairy tale in Howl’s Moving Castle. What is interesting in Castle in the Air is the imaginative geography that imposes itself as a consequence.

It is significant that Abdullah crosses a desert, just as Shasta does, in his journey from the south to the north, and that this journey is a reflection of the internal journey he is
making. The desert also contrasts with the garden Abdullah is given in the north at the end of the novel, a garden that functions as the location of Abdullah’s happy ending. Like Shasta, Abdullah does not, indeed cannot, and perhaps more importantly, does not wish to, return to the Oriental space, where the tyrannical Sultan threatens to impale Abdullah simply because the Sultan wishes Flower-in-the-Night to marry in a way that will cement a desirable political alliance. By staying in Ingary, Abdullah also manages to flee his despicable relatives. Like Shasta and Aravis, Abdullah and Flower-in-the-Night flee the tyranny of an Oriental space, where they may not assert their identities and achieve their happy endings, and enter the Subject space, which is the only space where this is possible.

Jones again departs from Lewis’s example in that, initially, Abdullah finds Ingary strange and not altogether pleasing. It does not stun him with its beauty and starkly superior inhabitants, manners, and customs in the way that everything Narnian strikes the arrivals from Calormen. Furthermore Abdullah’s strangeness, his flowery language (strikingly similar to Calormene speech) and exotic appearance serve him well in the foreign country, enabling him to charm people into providing him with assistance. In The Horse and His Boy, Lewis instantiates elaborate styles of speech as a sign of the Orient while establishing this way of speaking as a corruption of language whereby words are used to deceive in order to accomplish selfish agendas. In Castle in the Air, according to Kaplan (2002:62), Jones questions ‘whether it is possible to use language “correctly.”’ In books such as these, language is forever fluid, forever dangerous, but nonetheless not to be abandoned. It is unreasonable to ask how to use language, since the answer is not
constant.’ This can be seen in the way Sophie works magic using direct, ‘idiomatic English, not…arcane words of power’ (Kaplan, 2002:59), while the flattering, embroidered style of Zanzib-speech employed by Abdullah enables him to complete his own quest. Although Jones, like Lewis, utilizes flowery, insincere language as a sign of the Orient, she does not instantiate it as a sign of corruption.

Nevertheless, as Abdullah journeys through Ingary, it is the Subject space which provides him with ideas with which to re-furnish his daydreams. Instead of the extravagant drama that Jones links to The Arabian Nights, Abdullah begins to daydream about a quiet life with Flower-in-the-Night. His initial distrust of the thatched roofs of Ingary gives way to acceptance of this kind of living, while the sight of a garden of bluebells immediately inspires a garden for a thatched cottage with ‘bluebells in it by the thousand’ (Jones, 2005b:149). At the end of the novel, this is indeed the only image of a happy ending Jones can offer:

> When Abdullah and Flower-in-the-Night returned, the king gave them land in the Chipping Valley too, and permission to build a palace there. The house they built was quite modest: it even had a thatched roof. But their gardens soon became one of the wonders of the land…a bluebell wood that grew bluebells all the year round…(Jones, 2005b:285).

Jones is therefore less concerned with embodying an ideal identity in space. But she does contrast space where characters can assert their identities with space in which they cannot. And the way this is chiefly conveyed is through the use of imaginative geography: a line is drawn between two spaces, the south and the north. The north is the space in which the happy ending is possible, because rulers are reasonable and just and
because the north is where idyllic gardens are available to ordinary people instead of just their tyrannical rulers. The south is the irredeemable space and like Calormen, meant to be left behind. The south is the land of tyranny with its Sultan who may execute without just cause, and where slavery is commonplace. The south cannot support the assertion of identity. In *Howl’s Moving Castle*, Sophie rewrites the European fairy tale to make her happy ending possible. In *Castle in the Air*, Abdullah discards the *Arabian Nights* because the Orient cannot in any way furnish the imagination with a happy ending that Jones can endorse.

In both *Castle in the Air* and *The Horse and His Boy* the function of the Orient as irredeemable may be traced to the Recovery of the Subject identity as meaning-in-space, wherein the Subject-reader returns to the realignment of identity with home in the act of the protagonist’s forced exile from the Other-space. In other words, the linear movements in both narratives, from south to north, effect the re-focalization of the Subject space, orientating the home identity in relation to an Othering viewpoint which facilitates Recovery. In the case of Jones, this also enables the redemption of the Subject identity, as Abdullah witnesses the northern characters punished for their misdeeds and shown the error of their ways. For example both Howl and Prince Justin have their identities taken away for attempting to conquer a neighbouring country, Howl by being transformed into a genie and the prince into a soldier of the defeated country. However, in both stories, the focus of the redeeming agents is on the Subject space, and the Sultan, for example, goes unpunished, his tyranny as an Oriental ruler remaining unquestioned.
In contrast with this, there are those fantasy narratives wherein the redemption or restoration of the Orient constitutes the framework for the development of the Subject identity, and these too, are dependent on the deployment of imaginative geography. An example where the features of imaginative geography resemble Lewis’s Otherworld particularly strongly can be identified in the Otherworld depicted in the fantasy novels of Tamora Pierce.

Pierce, who has been writing fantasy for young adults since the 1980s, is known principally for responding to what she feels is a lack of strong female heroes in the sword-and-sorcery genre. In her novels, Pierce seeks to question and ultimately break down identities fixed onto rigid and solidly differentiated spaces based on gender. As she puts it:

…for years and years we’ve been so brainwashed into thinking that males and females have two different roles, and I think we’re going to be a lot happier in our lives if we start looking at the things we have in common. I try to show this in my books, and a story about a girl in a man’s field is still one of the clearest contrasts you can present as a writer’ (Kunzel and Fichtelberg, 2007:11).

Thus in Pierce’s *Song of the Lioness* quartet (1983-1988), in which a young girl is determined to become a knight, Pierce constantly has her protagonist, Alanna, question rigid demarcations of gender identity. In the process, Pierce also challenges the unquestioned idealized view of medieval models of society, found in the fantasies of Lewis and Tolkien, and incorporates the need for change as a major theme in her novels. In the novels under discussion here, the challenges involved in bringing about these changes are what furnish the quest-structures through which Pierce’s female protagonists
empower themselves and develop their identities free of the constraining limits of medieval class and gender roles.

The events of Pierce’s *Immortals* (1992-1996) series take place in the same Otherworld as *Song of the Lioness*, although, instead of Alanna, the female protagonist of these books is a young girl called Daine. Daine is gifted with the powers of Wild Magic, which allows her to communicate with animals and to transform into animal shape. Kunzel and Fichtelberg (2007:97) observe that ‘themes in *The Immortals* quartet tie in closely to Daine’s concerns: freedom and equality, as well as the care of creatures and the environment.’ In many ways these themes are played out in a context very similar to Lewis’s presentation of them in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, particularly *The Horse and His Boy*. Daine’s ability to communicate with animals enables an effect similar to the function of the Talking Beasts of *The Chronicles*, allowing Pierce to articulate the cause of animals more poignantly. In *Emperor Mage* (1995), the third book in the series, the issue of the oppression of animals is broadened out into a critique of general tyranny with the introduction of the powerful, slavery-based empire of Carthak. While signs of the Other, such as dark skin and the practice of veiling for women, strongly suggest Carthak’s evocation of an Oriental realm, the extension of oppression is very similar to the way Lewis treats both cruelty to, or disregard for, animals, and slavery as offshoots of tyranny. When the Carthaki crown prince Kaddar asks Daine what she thinks of slavery, she replies that it ‘makes [her] think of cages’ (Pierce, 2005g:202).
As in the Narnia books, the neat division between freedom and tyranny in *Emperor Mage* is conveyed in the symbolism of north and south, and the southern empire of Carthak is distinguished by its slaves and bloodthirsty imperial exploits. However, unlike both Lewis and Jones, Pierce presents the Other-space as redeemable, capable of change, albeit only through the intervention of a northern heroine. Stephens and McCallum (1998:248) point out that Said identifies a habit amongst Orientalists of constructing, or representing, the Orient as culturally decadent, a bundle of fragments out of which a greater past can be deduced. Behind this is the Darwinian notion of the rise and fall of civilizations, and an assumption that Asian civilization had fallen and now had to make way for European powers to enter and intervene in order to give shape and purpose to chaos.

Early in the novel, Daine is contacted by the Graveyard Hag, the principal goddess of Carthak, who informs her that the gods are not pleased with the empire. Specifically, they seek to punish the emperor Ozorne, who has allowed the neglect of the temples in favour of higher taxes, which he uses to enrich his empire and strengthen his armies. A distinguishing feature of Pierce’s otherworld is that the same gods, who are active participants in the adventures of her protagonists, are worshipped in different regions by peoples that are otherwise culturally different, although certain gods are more influential in certain areas. As such it is even more significant that Daine, a Northerner, is the only agent through whom the goddess chooses to work her will, granting Daine the power to bring dead creatures to life (an ability that is instrumental in bringing about the end of Ozorne’s reign). The goddess asks her: “Do you know how few mortals can be used as a god’s vessel without dying on us?...” (Pierce, 2005g:299-300)
Although Pierce makes it clear that Ozorne is not representative of Carthaki identity through the character Kaddar, the crown prince, who represents a ‘secret fellowship of nobles, academics and merchants who genuinely wish things to change’ (Pierce, 2005g: 344), it is Daine who brings about the destruction of Ozorne and paves the way for the new order. And it is Daine’s culture that stands as an example of a culture free of tyranny, especially tyranny in the form of slavery, and as a threat to Carthaki ways of life. At the end of the novel, just before Daine’s return to Tortall, Daine warns Kaddar (who has succeeded his uncle as emperor) that the slaves only need to look across the Inland Sea (to the North) to know that “…life doesn’t have to be like this” (Pierce, 2005g: 356). As in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the Western identity is inscribed as naturally antithetical to slavery, historically innocent of the practice, and providing an essentialized example of a free society.

Stephens and McCallum (1998:248) identify a similarly problematic pattern in Pierce’s *Song of the Lioness* series, where the Orient takes the form of the nomadic desert-dwelling Bazhir culture:

> The degeneration of the Bazhir from a pastoral to a nomadic culture is seen to have been caused by ten vampiric demons, known as the Ysandir: these…are loosely reminiscent of the ghouls and alguls of the *Arabian Nights*. The Bazhir have been able to contain and limit the depredations of the Ysandir, but the Northerners, Alanna and Jonathon, have the power to destroy them.

Like Daine, Alanna and Jonathon are not credited solely with the destruction of these demons, but are aided by the intervention of the gods, specifically the Great Mother Goddess, a member of Pierce’s otherworld pantheon as high in stature and power in the
north as the Graveyard Hag is in Carthak. As Stephens and McCallum (1998:248) observe, ‘an inevitable consequence of this is to imply a cultural superiority: a boy and a girl…achieve in an afternoon what an entire race has failed to do for immemorial time.’

Stephens and McCallum (1998:248) trace the further development of this pattern in the third volume of the series, The Woman Who Rides like a Man (1986), where Alanna ‘revolutionizes [the Bazhir] way of life, in particular their typically quasi-Islamic conception of female roles’. Even more problematically, Prince Jonathon ‘succeeds Ali Mukhtab as “the Voice” of the Bazhir, their supreme spiritual and political leader, who speaks both to and for them’ (Stephens and McCallum, 1998:249). The Bazhir have to accept this because Ali Mukhtab has foreseen that if they continue to fight against the northern king, they will be driven from the desert. As the desert sustains their way of life and thus their identity, this will effect the elimination of the Bazhir. But if Prince Jonathon becomes the Voice, Ali Mukhtab explains to Alanna, he will be ‘a Bazhir king. He will know us as we do ourselves’ (Pierce, 2005c:57).

On one level, Pierce is communicating a sense that true intercultural understanding can take place after wholehearted acceptance of the Other’s identity, history and customs, and that change is an inexorable factor that should be seen to bind cultures together to form a single human history. But enabling this by putting the Northern prince into such an integral position of power over the Other is to validate what is essentially a colonialist paradigm, specifically the Orientalist notion that the Subject articulates the Other (speaks on its behalf and makes sense of its history) by virtue of being in a position of domination over it (Said, 2003:5). It is also problematic that the Bazhir are willing to accept this
domination rather than detach their identity from the space (the desert) that informs it, instantiating their identity as lacking the flexibility that would enable a preservation of autonomy.

Perhaps the most conscious effort to resist the structures of Orientalist imaginative geography can be seen in the works of Ursula K. Le Guin, an American author, who has written within the genres of both fantasy and science fiction since the 1960s (Bernardo and Murphy, 2006:3). In Le Guin’s fantasy novels for young adults, specifically her *Earthsea* novels (1968-2001) and her *Annals of the Western Shore* series (2006-2009), the most conspicuous technique used to achieve this is her inclusion of the dark-skinned Subject. Bernardo and Murphy (2006:92) argue that ‘Le Guin provides challenges to the white Anglo-Saxon world of fantasy…She thinks outside the attractive, powerful, influential idea of the white, male, heroic figure whose quest links him most often to others like himself either in sex or stature.’ Of her *Earthsea* novels, Le Guin (in Bernardo and Murphy, 2006:115) states: ‘From the start I saw my Earthsea [otherworld] as a deliberate refusal to go along with the prejudice that sees white as the norm, and the fantasy tradition that accepts the prejudice’. However, I will argue that this technique alone does not necessarily dispel the evocation of imaginative geography in her construction of an otherworld.

The *Earthsea* novels feature the otherworld of Earthsea, characterized as a pre-industrial world made up entirely of islands. In the first novel of the series, *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), the narrator quickly identifies the Other, the Kargad Empire, by drawing attention
to the fact that the ‘tongue they speak…is not like any spoken in the Archipelago or the other Reaches’ and by defining them in advance for us as savage: ‘fierce, liking the sight of blood and the smell of burning towns’, and with a ‘lust of conquest’ (Le Guin, 1993a:18). Subsequently the Subject space takes the form of the Inland Isles, which are subsequently bound together by similarities in culture, language and appearance; although differences do exist among the many locales that make up the Inland Isles, what identifies them as Subject is their difference from the Kargs. Thus, imaginative geography is very much part of the makeup of Earthsea, although in this case the Subject space is inhabited by dark-skinned people, while the Other is described as ‘white-skinned’ and ‘yellow-haired’ (Le Guin, 1993a:18).

However, a closer examination of the cultures of these contrasting spaces reveals striking similarities with traditional Orient/Other and Western/Subject categories. Of these, the association with a desert is perhaps most obvious. As can be seen from many representations of the Orient in fantasy literature, the notion of a desert culture being synonymous with evocations of an Oriental space is almost ubiquitous. Examples include all the otherworlds I have discussed: The Chronicles of Narnia, The Song of the Lioness series, as well as the Castle books by Jones. References in the fifth Earthsea novel, The Other Wind (2001), to veiled women and harems in Kargad culture later confirm the suggestion that the Other in the Earthsea novels is not so much a traditional Western Subject decentred as it is an Oriental culture disengaged from racial signifiers of Otherness. From this perspective, there are many similarities that Le Guin’s use of imaginative geography shares with some of the other fantasies I have been discussing.
*A Wizard of Earthsea* does not give us much insight into the Kargad culture, or its significance for the narrative, aside from defining it as ontologically different from the culture of the Inland Isles, and establishing it as the major threat to peace and stability in Earthsea. However, the similarity with Calormen that is apparent from the first book is the idea of a culture defined in advance as ‘savage’, and whose savagery is epitomised in its status as an Empire, indicating a general disregard for the rights of others and gross abuse of power. Readers are able to learn much more about the Kargad culture in *The Tombs of Atuan* (1972), which revolves around the worship of the Nameless Ones in the Kargad land of Atuan and tells the story of Tenar, who has been chosen as high priestess of the Nameless Ones, thus becoming Arha, the Eaten One. Two aspects of this culture echo the depiction of the Calormene culture in the Narnia books: the association with a desert as a metaphor for a spiritual void and – always significant in any fantasy otherworld – a complete lack of magic. In a way these two aspects are linked, and in much the same way as they are in the Narnia books, where Lewis depicts the mundanity of Calormene society as a reflection of its spiritual impoverishment. Similarly, in the first two Earthsea novels, the overriding difference between the coming-of-age of Ged and Tenar is the lack of understanding and wonder, the keys to the spiritual enrichment afforded by fantasy, experienced by Tenar in Atuan.

Although Bernardo and Murphy (2006:112) identify ‘a mystical element’ to the ritual surrounding the religion practised at the Tombs, it is characterized as dull and devoid of meaning. The narrator (1993b:179) describes the chanting of the women as a ‘dry, unceasing drone’, the repetition of a ‘word so old it had lost its meaning, like a signpost
still standing when the road is gone’. The tombs themselves, said to house ‘those who ruled before the world of men came to be’ are described as being ‘full of meaning’ but ‘yet there was no saying what they meant’ (Le Guin, 1993b:187). Arha finds nothing to do there: ‘She went only because it was permitted her to go there, because there she was alone. It was a dreary place’ (Le Guin, 1993b:188). Indeed, lack of meaning is so characteristic of the Kargad religion that there are strong hints that it does not command any belief from the Kargs themselves. Arha notes that the worship of the Tombs is neglected because, aside from the occasional offering of prisoners to be sacrificed, ‘no one comes’ (1993b:196). Her faith is further shaken by the shocking revelation of her friend Penthe’s unbelief in the Godkings, and is dealt a crucial blow by the discovery of the priestess Kossil defiling the Labyrinth with light. The Other-space is thus effectively established as void of meaning, and like Calormen and Zanzib, enables the desire for fulfilment that must come from another culture.

In stark contrast with this, Ged’s Hardic culture, underpinned by the lore of the mages who command the greatest authority in the Inland Isles and thus function as the equivalent of the priests of the Kargad Empire, provides the framework through which he comes to a true understanding of himself, accumulating insight into the world around him as he does so. His story (detailed in A Wizard of Earthsea) is a tale of wondrous adventure and his mastery of mage-craft allows him to attain great insight, while Tenar’s growing into the position of High Priestess is described as simply entrenching a monotonous existence devoid of meaning. Thus, in The Tombs of Atuan, it is Ged who gives Arha back her true name, Tenar, and reveals the truth about the Nameless Ones that
she serves. There is a striking parallel here with *The Last Battle*, where Aslan interprets Emeth’s religion for him as the opposite of everything good and valuable, and Tash is revealed to exist despite Rishda’s lack of belief in him; Ged assures Tenar that the Nameless Ones exist, although they are not deserving of worship:

…where men worship these things and abase themselves before them, there evil breeds; there places are made in the world where darkness gathers, places given over wholly to the Ones whom we call Nameless, the ancient and holy Powers of the Earth before the Light, the powers of the dark, of ruin, of madness… (Le Guin, 1993b:266)

The suggestion that the evil of the Labyrinth reflects the evil of the Kargad psychology also echoes the reading of Tash in *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a representation of the twisted psyche of the entire Calormene race. Ged tells Tenar: ‘I think they drove your priestess Kossil mad a long time ago; I think she has prowled these caverns as she prowls the labyrinth of her own self, and now she cannot see the daylight any more’ (Le Guin, 1993b:266). The Kargad/Oriental identity is thus intertwined with ignorance and evil, and like Shasta and Aravis, and Abdullah and Flower-in-the-Night, Tenar must turn her back on it in order to come to enlightenment. Furthermore, this entails a journey to the Subject space, enabling a metaphor for the internal journey she makes. Yet in *Tehanu* (1990), the fourth Earthsea novel, when Tenar has successfully been integrated into the culture of Gont, she questions whether she can ever truly leave behind this identity and the service to darkness that it entails: ‘Did she think that by crossing the sea, by learning other languages…she could ever be anything but what she was – their servant, their food, theirs to use for their needs and games?’ (Le Guin, 1993d:549) Tenar’s doubts about the outcome of her decisions emphasize her good intentions, but also serve to instantiate
rejection of the Other identity as a formidable challenge to her character’s liberation from evil.

A similar construction of imaginative geography appears in *Voices* (2006) the second book of Le Guin’s *Annals of the Western Shore* series, where the conflict is between the peaceful, dark-skinned people of Ansul and the fair-haired, desert-dwelling Alds who have conquered them. If *The Tombs of Atuan* is comparable to *The Horse and His Boy* in its pattern of escape from Otherness/evil, *Voices* resembles *The Last Battle* in its depiction of the conquest by Otherness.

Like the Calormenes and the Kargs in the *Earthsea* novels, the Alds, as a people, are defined by tyranny. The Subject voice in this tale is that of Memer, who writes her story as we read it. Memer is the child of Decalo, a woman of Ansul, and of an unknown Ald soldier who raped her mother during the occupation of Ansul. Despite her dual heritage, Memer identifies completely with her Ansul heritage, declaring that she will ‘always hate the Alds, and…drive them out of Ansul, and kill them all if [she] can’ (Le Guin, 2008:11). Like the Kargs and Calormenes, the major source of the Alds’ savagery seems to be their religious beliefs, which by the beginning of the story, have led them to conquer Ansul in order to find and destroy what they believe is the source of evil. The Alds believe that writing is demonic and destroy all the books that they can find in Ansul. Because they do not believe in any gods but their own, they do not allow the people of Ansul to practice their religion openly. Women are also denied their freedom under the
rule of the Alds, who believe that a ‘woman…alone in the street [is] a whore, a demon of temptation, and any soldier [is] free to rape, enslave, or kill her’ (Le Guin, 2008:21).

*Voices* is about the liberation of Ansul from Ald rule, which occurs after the arrival of a foreign story-teller, Orrec, who sparks the fires of rebellion in the people of Ansul with stories that inspire nationalist pride and long-suppressed rage. Orrec’s arrival also coincides with the spread of rumours of divisive tension among the Alds. These further encourage the people of Ansul to rebel against the foreign conquerors. The novel may be read as a criticism of religious fanaticism, specifically tyrannical fanaticism that denies validity to other systems of belief and, in the process, justifies invasion, violence and oppression. This is embodied in the Other of the story, the Alds, and liberation from them is the primary quest of the story. No other interpretation of the Ald’s religion is given in the story, and thus it becomes a signifier of ignorance and uncompromising hate. The most favourable depiction of an Ald is provided in the form of the Gand Ioretth, who is portrayed as more secular in outlook than most of the other Alds, and whose lack of religious devotion is given as the primary reason that he is willing to grant Ansul its freedom.

In my analysis of the first four *Earthsea* novels I have attempted to demonstrate that even without the use of racial markers of Otherness as indicators of inferiority, cultural markers, where they group themselves in significantly suggestive ways, may function as such, thus enabling the potentially problematic effects of imaginative geography. In such a case, the subversion of racial signifiers may be seen to function as part of the estranging
function of fantasy; as the otherworld setting enables the Recovery of the familiar, so subversion of racial symbolism may be seen as part of the estranging of what are nevertheless identifiable Subject and Other identities. This is a significant observation to make, impacting particularly on the postcolonial readings of fantasy texts. Le Guin’s fifth Earthsea novel, *The Other Wind*, however, allows for a new understanding of the cultures of Earthsea that demonstrates ways to resist the tempting organization of Orientalist imaginative geography, ways that are far more effective than the simple subversion of racial signifiers.

It is initially apparent from the first Earthsea novels that it is the mages of Ged’s Hardic culture that have true knowledge about the nature of Earthsea. On Roke Island, the location of the school for wizards, Ged learns about the Equilibrium that sustains the balance of Earthsea, and about the importance of words and naming. This knowledge later enables Ged to complete his quest in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, naming the gebbeth with his own name and therefore coming to true understanding of his own identity and the balance that underpins the world. In contrast, the Kargad culture depicted in *The Tombs of Atuan* seems to be defined by ignorance, epitomised in the fact that the Kargs do not understand the nature of the deities they worship, and the result is the empowerment of the evil that the Nameless Ones represent. In *The Other Wind*, however, these demarcations of knowledge and ignorance are broken down by the introduction of a problem that the knowledge of the mages is insufficient to address.
*The Other Wind* begins with the introduction of a minor wizard, Alder, who is troubled by dreams in which he finds himself at the wall separating the dead from the living, dreams in which the dead call out to him to set them free. The mages of Earthsea recognize Alder’s description of the Dry Land, where the souls of the dead go, and interpret this as an indication of a disturbing disruption in the order of things. Added to this are the disturbances caused by the dragons in the west that are attacking farms and burning crops, although they seem to avoid killing human beings. These are the two major problems facing the king, Lebannen, who begins his reign in fulfilment of a prophecy at the end of *The Farthest Shore* (1973).

Bernardo and Murphy (2006:164) note that the ‘normal categories of class, sex, and race do not act as determinative for Lebannen. He recognizes the need to get beyond the limitations that society might still have because he needs to rule, and to rule he needs knowledge that cannot come from only one source.’ Lebannen’s reign thus represents a new way of understanding identity that involves a breakdown of restrictive and pernicious categories, categories that can only emphasize irreconcilable otherness and notions of fundamental superiority/inferiority. Events in *The Other Wind* communicate this new understanding by allowing readers to question the ideas established in the earlier novels. One of these ideas is the understanding that the Kargs, established as Other to the Subject Hardic peoples, have no insight into the nature of Earthsea and no valuable wisdom of their own.
At the beginning of *The Other Wind*, Lebannen is in the process of securing a peaceful relationship with the Kargs. The narrator explains that it has taken ten years for Lebannen’s message of peace to reach the Kargs because of the prejudice and contempt the Kargish king has for the dark-skinned sorcerers of the Inland Isles. However, recent changes in Kargish history have opened up opportunities for peaceful exchange; a warlord called Thol has conquered the Kargad lands, replacing the tyrannical theocracy of the old Godking with a more secular regime that is less given to prejudice. Although Le Guin is not contradicting the idea (from *The Tombs of Atuan*) that the religion of the Other is a major source of evil, her account of these changes does resist the idea of the Other identity as a stable, homogenous reality that exists outside the context of historical circumstances and is not subject to internal fluctuations. A remark by Tenar about the Kargs from Hur-at-Hur also adds to this sense of internal diversity: ‘On Atuan, we called them barbarians’ (Le Guin, 2001:74).

This increased sense of a changing, dynamic culture whose Otherness is tempered by recognizably human responses to history is further developed by entwining Hardic and Kargish history through the Hardic hero, Ereth-Akbe, who originally entrusted the Ring of Peace to a Kargish king, from whom Thol claims descent. Le Guin then introduces the idea of alternative sources of wisdom in Kargish culture with the stories told by the daughter of King Thol, Seserakh, who has been sent to wed Lebannen as a sign of peace between the two peoples.
It is significant that Tenar is the one who facilitates exchange between the Kargish princess, Seserakh, and Lebannen, who is initially unwilling to accept her. Tenar has journeyed to the palace in Havnor to accompany Tehanu, her adopted daughter whose dragon-lineage is revealed at the end of the previous book. Tehanu is in Havnor at the request of Lebannen, since Tehanu is able to communicate with the dragons that are causing such upheaval in the western isles. However, as a Karg herself, Tenar finds herself unexpectedly useful as a translator for Seserakh, who does not speak Hardic.

Bernardo and Murphy (2006:164) observe that many of the characters in *The Other Wind* ‘act as bridges across categories in the novel’: Tenar between Lebannen and Seserakh, Tehanu between people and dragons, and Alder between the living and the dead. In addition to facilitating understanding between man and woman, Tenar also bridges the gap between cultures.

Through the efforts of Tenar, Le Guin avoids instantiating Lebannen as the sole facilitator of peace between the Kargs and Hardic peoples, and thus resists the Orientalist idea of a Subject culture’s responsibility to bring stability to the Other-space. Le Guin furthermore develops the earlier portrayal of Tenar as someone who has utterly rejected her Kargish identity (thereby functioning as a signifier of the superiority of the Subject) into one in which Tenar rediscovers the positive aspects of Kargish culture. In her talks with Seserakh, Tenar experiences joy in speaking her native language and most importantly, rediscovers the Kargish belief in rebirth after death, which the wizards of Earthsea dismiss as superstition. This belief is eventually revealed to be half the explanation behind the upheavals upsetting the balance of Earthsea in the novel, and
further serves to overturn the earlier characterization of the Other culture as void of meaning.

Bernardo and Murphy (2006:165) note that in the novel

Narrative itself creates a nexus of knowledge when the Pelnish wizard, the Kargish princess, the Woman of Kemay…Lebannen, Orm Irian, and the Roke mage all share versions of a story that explains the initial relationship between dragons and people and the pact people made to split the land called the Verduran/verwan dan’.

According to ancient stories that originate in both the Hardic and Kargish cultures, and are told among the dragons as well, all the peoples of Earthsea, including the dragons, were initially one. However, a great split occurred and a choice was made; those who chose freedom and kept the Old Speech in which the world was made became the dragons, and the ones who went east gave up the Old Speech and received the restrictions of good and evil and the ownership of what they created became the Hardic and Kargish peoples. A further split then occurred between the people of the Inland Isles and the Kargad Lands. In The Tombs of Atuan, Tenar is told by the priestess Kossil that unlike the Kargs, the Hardic people “are not reborn. They become dust and bone, and their ghosts whine on the wind a little while till the wind blows them away. They do not have immortal souls” (Le Guin, 1993b:218). In keeping with the characterization of the Kargs as ignorant about such matters, events in The Furthest Shore initially seem to contradict this, as Ged and Lebannen travel to the Dry Land and see for themselves the fate of the dead. However, during her talks with Seserakh in The Other Wind, Tenar reaffirms her
belief that as a Karg she will not go to the Dry Land but ‘rejoin the greater being of the world’ (Le Guin, 2001:145).

Seserakh’s assertion that the dragons are sacred because they also meet the Kargs’ fate after death is the first indication of some truth in the Kargish beliefs, since Lebannen remembers that there are no dragons in the Dry Land and it becomes apparent that the Kargs, like the animals and dragons, do not go to the Dry Land when they die. The story told among the dragons of the theft by the Hardic peoples of their immortal land is then the last puzzle piece of the origin story, enabling the people of Earthsea to solve the problem of the restless dead and to understand the grievances of the dragons. Combining the dragon’s accusation with the Kargish tale that suggests that the Hardic people have lost the ability to be reborn because of their practice of magic, the Pelnish wizard Seppel is able to recognize the truth in an old Pelnish boast that ‘the goal of wizardry was to triumph over time and live forever’ in ‘a great land of rivers and mountains and beautiful cities, where there is no suffering or pain, and where the self endures, unchanged, unchanging, forever…’ (Le Guin, 2001:226-232).

In this way it eventually becomes understood that sometime after the split between people and dragons, the Hardic people went back on their promise to forget the language of making and began to learn the dragon’s language, thereby attaining the power of sorcery and walling off a part of the dragon’s immortal realm in which their own souls could dwell. However, what they have accomplished is the imprisoning of the souls who have been given names in the dragon’s language (ie. the souls of the Hardic peoples), and
the creation of the Dry Land. Events in *The Furthest Shore*, which tells of the disturbances created by the wizard Cob in the Dry Land, unsettle the imprisoned dead and remind the dragons of their old grievance, leading to the events of *The Other Wind*. In order to undo the damage created by the making of the Dry Land, Alder realizes that the wall that the wizards have made needs to be broken, and with the help of the wizards and dragons, he accomplishes this task.

It has been noted that Le Guin’s portrayal of women has undergone an evolution due to her increased awareness and respect for feminist issues (Bernardo and Murphy, 2006: 132), and it is possible that her thinking concerning cultural identities has likewise evolved. Although aspects of *Voices*, published after *The Other Wind*, conform to some Orientalist patterns, there are certainly striking differences between Le Guin’s portrayal of Subject and Other identities in *The Wizard of Earthsea* and her account of the necessary mutual exchange between these identities portrayed in *The Other Wind*. Contrasting the depiction of the Orient in both the early Earthsea novels and *The Chronicles of Narnia* with *The Other Wind*, it appears that the Kargish identity in *The Other Wind* has evolved into much more than simply a designation of the Other, walled in by rigid lines of definition that keep it stable, homogenous and irreconcilably inferior.

The definitive moment of Le Guin’s portrayal of positive exchange between identities occurs at the end of the novel, where the different peoples of Earthsea at last piece together the puzzle of the origin story. Lebannen, recognizing the right of the Other to have a voice in the discussions about ‘matters that concern the balance of all things in
Earthsea’ (Le Guin, 2001:157) is persuaded by Tenar to allow Seserakh to sail with the party he has assembled for the journey to Roke Island. The exchange of knowledge that occurs there between the mages of Roke, their rivals represented by the Pelnish wizard Seppel, the dragons Orm Irian and Tehanu, and the Kargish princess, is an enactment of unifying humanity in which different spiritual perspectives facilitate the exercise of a wide spectrum of human identity in the effort to address the problem of an imbalance affecting all of humankind.

Kieran Egan…argues that “imagination is the capacity to think of things as possibly being so” and that, in conjunction with our growing capacity for “invention, novelty, and generativity”…imaginative capacity can lead to moral autonomy” from the crowd. In this sense Northrop Frye…speaks of a well-trained imagination as giving us the moral freedom to re-envision and so impact our society (Hilder, 2003:12).

If fantasy, the genre in which imagination is the primary instrument, is seen as the site where space is converted into meaning, and the organization of space is inextricably connected to the identities fantasy texts generate, then fantasy may be understood as a genre wherein the possibilities for being are limitless. ‘Respect for children and their right to inherit a world in which the possibilities for being are open is the mark of the postcolonial writer’ (McGillis, 2000:xxviii). The identities generated by the spaces in fantasy do not exist in a vacuum. Consciousness of this on the part of fantasy writers is vital: fantasy can be the site where identities are liberated from the neo-colonial paradigms that imprison them.
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