



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**ARCHETYPES OF INITIATION AND THE WISE OLD MAN IN
C. S. LEWIS' *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA***

BY

BAHEREH MEHDIZADEH JAFARI

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts**

September 2010



DEDICATION

A special debt of deepest appreciation is owed to my lovely mother and my wonderful father for their caring concern, encouragement, and support, without which I would not have been able to surmount the challenges I faced in the course of my studies.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment
Of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

This study scrutinizes C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* through the archetypal framework, focusing on the two major archetypal motifs of Initiation and the Wise Old Man. The archetype of Initiation is traceable in almost all the adventures of the novices of this collection of stories and this study shows how such initiation takes the initiates from immaturity to maturity, when they achieve self-discovery and find their true selves. To explore the archetype of Initiation in the selected texts, this study uses Henderson's theory of initiation which offers three stages for achieving initiation: Submission, Containment-Release and Immanence. The literature review looks at other relevant researches on the *Chronicles*, and explores some relevant explications of the major works of Jung, Campbell, van Gennep and Henderson on initiation. From the archetype of Initiation, this study moves on to explore the archetype of Wise Old Man in relation to the presentation of the adventurers in the *Chronicles* - how the archetype of the Wise Old Man is represented in various forms, based on Jung's viewpoint – coming to the



rescue of the adventurers when they are confused and lost or when they are faced with indomitable challenges. Through textual evidence, this study shows how the Wise Old Man – whether in the form of Aslan, a talking lion, a teacher, or a venerable old man – is there for the heroes or heroines, to dispense knowledge, wisdom, or advice to enable them to complete their missions successfully. This study shows how Lewis, in the *Chronicles*, uses the genre of the archetypes of Initiation and the Wise Old Man to tell stories that express moral and spiritual values that appeal universally, not only to children, but also adults. Employing the two archetypes in the study allows for a deeper insight and a better understanding of *The Chronicles of Narnia*.



Abstrak tesis yang diajukan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai sebahagian keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sastera

**MODEL ASAS INISIASI DAN WISE OLD MAN DI DALAM THE
CHRONICLES OF NARNIA OLEH C. S. LEWIS**

Oleh

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September 2010

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Kajian ini cenderung meneliti *Chronicles of Narnia* oleh C. S. Lewis melalui rangka model asas dengan fokus pada dua motif model asas utama Inisiasi dan Wise Old Man. Model asas Inisiasi boleh dikesan di hampir semua pengembaraan para pengembara di dalam himpunan-himpunan cerita dan kajian ini menunjukkan bagaimana inisiasi seperti dari ketidak dewasaan hingga tahap kematangan, ketika mereka mencapai penemuan diri dan mencari diri sejati mereka. Untuk menjelajahi model inisiasi dalam teks yang dipilih, kajian ini menggunakan teori Henderson inisiasi yang menawarkan tiga tahap untuk mencapai inisiasi: Penyerahan, Pembendungan-Pembebasan dan Imanensi. Sorotan literatur terlihat pada penelitian yang berkaitan di Narnia, dan membincangkan beberapa penerangan berkaitan karya-karya utama Jung, Campbell, van Gennepe dan Henderson tentang inisiasi. Dari Model asas Inisiasi, kajian ini mempelopori Model



Wise Old Man berhubung dengan pengembara-pengembara di dalam Narnia - bagaimana Model asas dari Wise Old Man dipersembahkan dalam pelbagai bentuk, berdasarkan pada pandangan Jung - datang untuk menyelamatkan para pengembara ketika mereka bingung dan hilang atau ketika mereka dihadapkan dengan cabaran yang sukar. Melalui bukti dalam bahan penulisan, kajian ini menunjukkan bagaimana Wise Old Man - baik dalam bentuk Aslan, singa yang mampu berbicara, guru, atau orang tua terhormat - ada untuk para pahlawan untuk berkongsi pengetahuan, kebijaksanaan, atau cadangan bagi membolehkan mereka untuk menyelesaikan misi sehingga berjaya. Kajian ini menunjukkan bagaimana Lewis, dalam Narnia, menggunakan Model jenis Inisiasi dan Wise Old Man menceritakan kisah-kisah yang mendedahkan nilai-nilai moral dan murni yang menarik, tidak hanya untuk anak-anak, tetapi juga orang dewasa. Dengan penggunaan dua Model dalam kajian ini membolehkan pandangan yang lebih mendalam dan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

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APPROVAL SHEET

I certify that an Examination Committee has met on September 6th, 2010 to conduct the final examination of Bahereh Mehdizadeh Jafari on her Master of Art thesis entitled “Exploring the Archetypes of Initiation and Wise Old Man in C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*” in accordance with Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P. U. (A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the degree of Master of Art.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or other institutions.

BAHEREH MEHDIZADEH JAFARI

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

For many years now, the mythical and archetypal patterns of heroes and their journeys have been explored by many researchers. Numerous studies have concentrated on the heroic rites of passage consisting of three parts - separation, initiation and return. In this rites of passage, the hero sets off on a journey, which leads to his transformation and eventually, his progressive development. Arnold van Gennep's *Les rites de passage* (1960) and Joseph Campbell's *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1968), offer three stages in the hero's development. Pursuing the general pattern of Initiation along with Jung's leadership, Joseph Henderson also defines the rites of initiation in three phases. Many examples throughout the *Chronicles* reveal that Lewis is familiar with this archetypal pattern which he utilizes in his *Chronicles*.

The fiction and non-fiction works of C. S. Lewis have been the subject of much scholarly research with many studies and dissertations done on various aspects of the *Chronicles*. *The Chronicles of Narnia* is acknowledged as the best and most well-known of Lewis's works and is believed to sell more than a hundred thousand volumes annually. Hooper wrote, "If asked which of Lewis's books I thought most likely to become immortals, I should say *The Narnia Chronicles*" (*They Stand* 174). It is considered a classic by many



belletrists on children's literature and a masterpiece among not only children but also college students and professors. *The Chronicles* is a series of seven fairy tales, written for children about some children of our world, who journey to another world. They are present in the history of Narnia from the first day of creation to the last day of existence as a world. Lewis, in each of these chronicles, narrates a journey undertaken by his selected characters who face challenges, overcome them and eventually enjoy the fruits of their achievements. In each journey there is an initiate who is not necessarily the hero of the story according to the mythical pattern but is among the protagonists of the story, who undergoes trials that end up in his or her maturity through the rites of initiation. Therefore, the archetype of Initiation is one of the perceptible archetypes in the *Chronicles*. One of the fundamental reasons for the popularity of *The Chronicles* among both children and adults is the presence of spiritual themes, which are integral in the archetype of initiation.

Moreover, Lewis in his *Chronicles* portrays another archetype which is archetypal character of the Wise Old Man. The adventurers of the stories always encounter some adversities or confusing situations during their quests in which the presence of knowledge, wisdom and intuition of this archetypal character are vital for them to overcome these situations. Lewis, by depicting this archetype offers its universal meaning and its essential presence in the stories for different generations of the readers all around the world whom often expect the existence of this archetype in such mythological stories. These two archetypes are further explained and elaborated on as the study progresses through the *Chronicles*.



The following section touches on the biography of Lewis in order for the reader to better understand both the writer and his stories.

Lewis's Social Background

Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963), lived most of his adult life as a college teacher, mostly in the college town of Oxford, England. Yet, he lived one of the most extraordinary lives of the twentieth century. In 1925, Lewis received a fellowship in English at Oxford's Magdalen College, and his duties included teaching. That same year, he met J. R. R. Tolkien who was a Roman Catholic and very devoted to his faith. Although Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* would eventually have a profound effect on him, Lewis remained steadfast in his atheism. Throughout his twenties, Lewis was a ruthless advocate of atheism. He ridiculed religious faith and argued with those who defied his views. Even so, Tolkien stood his ground and still became Lewis's closest friend during those years. In the meantime, Lewis studied literature with eagerness, teaching himself to read in foreign languages so he could read literary works in their original tongues. When not studying, he was teaching. As a junior faculty member, he had a heavy load of students and classes. He was expected to meet with each of his students individually to discuss their papers, but most loved him and admired how he helped them to become better thinkers. Beetz in *Exploring C. S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia* (2001) writes:

Lewis was past thirty years old before his religious views changed. Influenced heavily by the writings of Plato, as well as Aristotle and other philosophers, Lewis had what he described as religious experience, or an epiphany when he was riding bus: He realized that God was necessarily the deity that Christians accept or the deity of any other religion, but suddenly believed that there was



indisputable evidence that there had to be a Supreme Being. It was at this time that he concluded that human thinking was a metaphysical act, meaning that the ability to think in abstractions had to occur apart from the human body, which could allow only for concrete thought (17).

In his studies, which included the literature of cultures of countries as far away as China and India, Lewis noted that constant theme of the divine in people's metaphysical lives was often explained through myths. He also noted that while myths could be very elaborate and beautiful, and all mythologies recognized a supernatural god, myths were all untrue. This had been the bedrock of some of his arguments in favor of atheism - not all mythologies could be true, therefore all must be false. By 1931, Lewis realized that this was an insipid and unreasonable argument.

In the late summer of 1931, while exploring a country town with friends, including Tolkien, he had his most momentous religious experience. He had been long resisting the inevitable consequences of his research into cultures and myths in particular. Tolkien had been reading aloud portions of *The Hobbit* (1937), *The Silmarillion* (1977), and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954) to gatherings at the Kilns, and Lewis was very impressed at how Tolkien was able to express complex, important ideas about spiritual lives in his invented mythology of Middle Earth. While walking with Tolkien and discussing mythology, Lewis came to the conclusion that all his thoughts and research seemed to point to Christianity as a "true myth", meaning that although it is like mythology, it has some historical background and is supported by historical fact. As he asserted: "now the story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference, that it really happened" (*They Stand* 425). That is, like



other mythologies, Christianity offers explanations for the spiritual aspects of human life and accounts of the relationship of humanity with the supernatural universe; the difference between them and Christianity was that Christianity could be proven to be true. “This revised outlook on myth would, almost two decades later, have a direct bearing on Lewis’s development of mythical motifs, both borrowed and invented, in *The Narnian Chronicles*” (Schakel, *The Way* 10).

Such a realization changed the life of Lewis dramatically. He joined the Anglican Church and attended services regularly. He saw himself as a prodigal son who had returned home to God. He had been a very close-minded atheist; now he was a very open-minded Christian. Perhaps, because of his memories of the religious antagonism between Protestant and Roman Catholics in Belfast, he rejected the notion that any one denomination was the one true Christian denomination, and he began developing his concept of “mere Christianity,” the elements of Christianity that unite all Christians, regardless of their differences. There are other elements in his conversion to Christianity - his understanding that all of his favorite writers were Christian, his beliefs in moral law, and the existence of the lawgiver behind it, and also, his pure romantic experience that he believed had come from his desire for the divine. As Schakel says:

There were other contributing factors as well. One was his study of English literature, in which he found that authors he loved most, such as Spenser, Donne, Herbert, and Milton, were Christians. Also, his philosophical studies led him to believe in moral law and a lawgiver behind the law (something he explains in the first section of *Mere Christianity*), and he came to regard the pagan religions not as false but as incomplete, precursors to Christianity rather than contrary to it. Perhaps most important, he finally recognized the romantic longings he had experienced throughout his life as a yearning for the divine (*The Way* 9).



When he was fifty-years-old, unmarried professor without any child, he began writing for children. While it was expected that this effort would be a big failure, on the contrary, the books proved to be a huge success. The first inspiration for creating an imaginary world began in his childhood with affection for the stories of Jonathan Swift, like *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and memories of the picture of a lion and a faun carrying an umbrella and parcels in a snowy wood. Also, during WWII, living with the mother and sister of his friend, Paddy Moore, who had died in France, was another stimulation in the writing of the *Chronicles*. As Schakel asserts: "It seems very likely that, if Lewis had not lived with Mrs. Moore and her daughter and mingled with the people who passed through their home, he would not have been able to write the *Chronicles*" (*The Way* 8).

The last and most important inspiration for Lewis to create his own mythology was Tolkien's success in creating *The Lord of the Rings*, which led to Lewis writing *Chronicles, The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* in 1939, the year that World War II began with the joint invasion of Poland by Germany and the Soviet Union. The evil of the war finds its way into *The Chronicles of Narnia*, although they are not as important as the changes in Lewis's household that the war brought on. In *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, the Pevensie children are sent to Professor Kirke's house to escape the bombing. During the war, Lewis had many children come and go in his household, mostly girls, and he entertained them with the stories of Narnia. Thus, by the end of WW II all, except possibly *The Last Battle*, of the Narnia stories, were in progress.



The 1940s were very busy for Lewis. In 1940, his book *The Problem of Pain* was published. In it, he tries to explain why there is suffering in a world created by God. In 1941, he began a series of radio lectures on Christianity. These enormously popular lectures were published in three volumes, and later gathered into *Mere Christianity*. These made him world famous.

In 1942, he published the classic *The Screwtape Letters*, about a demon's efforts to corrupt a good man. This expanded the audience of fiction readers that Lewis had reached with his *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938). In 1943, he published *Perelandra*, a sequel to *Out of the Silent Planet*. When WWII ended in 1945, Lewis's foster children returned to their parents and his household became quiet again.

In 1947, Lewis published *Miracle*, in which he tries to answer common questions about miracles. He maintains that miracles occur only at important moments when history, religious faith, and movements in the universe coincide to create a crisis. This idea is seen throughout *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The miracles of the children being transported to Narnia occur at critical periods in the history of Narnia's world. The centaurs, who are very learned and study astronomy, assert that Aslan only comes to Narnia when the stars and planets are themselves in critical positions. *Miracles* (1947) was the source of one of Lewis's most humiliating defeats as a debater, when he tried to defend his view that miracles occurred only at special times, against someone who believed miracles to be much more common. In the late 1950s, Lewis drifted to a moderate position, accepting that miracles may be more common than he supposed, but still not everyday events.



In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Lewis was absorbed in his Narnia books. There is much disagreement among scholars about the order in which they were written. Lewis helps a little in a letter to a young reader named Laurence: “When I wrote *The Lion*, I did not know I was going to write any more. Then I wrote *Prince Caspian* as a sequel and still didn’t think there would be any more, and when I had done *The Voyage* I felt quite sure it would be the last. But I found I was wrong” (*Lewis’s Letters to Children* 68). One should take Lewis at his word about *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950), *Prince Caspian* (1951) and *The Voyage of the “Dawn Treader”* (1952) being the first three books he wrote in the series, which were published in an order of his publisher’s choosing, not his own. This would suggest that all the books were completed or nearly completed when *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* was published in 1950. The internal references in each novel to events that occur in later novels also suggest that Lewis knew what he was putting into all the books before the publication of each. Further, it is plain that the publisher issued one book per year not because Lewis wrote one per year, but to maximize sales of each volume. In 1954, *The Horse and His Boy* was published, and in 1955, the same year *The Magician’s Nephew* was published.

Lewis then became a professor at Magdalene College, Cambridge University. He had long been denied promotions at Oxford University. Atheist faculty members detested his writings about Christianity, did their best to deny him any honors, and they were by and large successful. Colleagues were suspicious of his popularity; even his most scholarly works seemed to be written with clarity that appealed to general readers. Their belief was



that popular works could not be deep works, as if *Hamlet* were shallow. Other faculty members were jealous of Lewis's popularity, not only as a writer but as a teacher. Further, Lewis was an argumentative man who loved a good argument. Some of his colleagues resented how he had defeated them in debates. On the other hand, the faculty and administration at Cambridge University, by-and-large, thought they had done well to attract a distinguished man of letters whose books on literature had become standard reading for students and professors. Lewis remained living at The Kilns after he took the Cambridge position; a train ran directly between Oxford and Cambridge, and he rode it almost daily. His autobiography, *Surprised by Joy* (1955) is mostly about his spiritual life and the joy that came when he recognized God as God. To him, his life had been dreary and sad until his religious conversion. Thereafter, he thought himself a happy man. Later, his "joy" would be severely tried when he lost the woman he loved.

Statement of the Problem

Many prior studies have focused on the religious aspects of the *Chronicles*, referring to religious views of Lewis and the spiritual-religious content of the stories. Many researchers also seek theological concepts and Christian doctrines beyond the themes and characters of the *Chronicles*. In looking for another meaning beyond the themes of the stories one is faced with uncertainty about the details, as Schakel asserts that this uncertainty appears in this question: "“what does it stand for?”" (*Reading* xi). This question leads the reader to approach the *Chronicles* through allegories. According to Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (1981):



Allegory is a narrative fiction in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived to make coherent sense on the “literal,” or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of agents, concepts, and events (4).

Therefore the reader looks at the *Chronicles* as stories which are not complete in themselves and ignores their individual significance as a masterpiece. However, Lewis does not purpose that the stories’ characters or plot become replaced with a relevant reality in our world or in Christian stories. Ryken and Mead in *A Reader’s Guide to Caspian* state: “C. S. Lewis repeatedly denied that the Narnian stories are allegories” as he believes that “allegorical readings often shortchange the imaginative nature of a good story by too quickly moving from creative image to abstraction” (93-97). “Lewis expects his readers to remain, for the most part, within the work” (Schakel, *Reading* 10). Lewis creates in his stories a “Secondary World” which he expects readers to enter imaginatively and to respond to, initially, with their hearts rather than with their minds (Schakel, *Reading* 3). According to Schakel:

It is such a “secondary” or “suppositional” world that Lewis creates in Narnia. As we enter Narnia we encounter an imaginary world in which animals can talk, in which creatures mythical in our world are real, and in which creatures unknown in our world have an important place. And as we pass through the wardrobe into that world, we must accept it as real, we must embrace it imaginatively and yield ourselves to it so long as the story lasts (*Reading* 3).

Furthermore, many studies and dissertations have focused on mythological aspects of the *Chronicles* because of Lewis’s personal interest in mythology and usage of Greek, Roman, Norse and Christian myths in his *Chronicles*. Besides, some critics have



examined the mythical pattern of Hero myth and his quest concerning the heroes of the *Chronicles* based on theories of some mythologists like Rank and Campbell. Despite the importance of archetypal aspects of the *Chronicles* there is no major study on archetypes such as Initiation and Wise Old Man. This is an approach which has been ignored by researchers and critics. And this study seeks to fill this vacuum, focusing on Initiation and Wise Old Man as the two major archetypes in the *Chronicles*.

Objectives of the Study

This research focuses on the characteristics of archetypal aspects of Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* based on archetypal theory. The researcher will identify the archetype of Initiation in the most significant characters of this series regarded as initiates. Hence, to illuminate the nature of Initiation; Henderson's theory that focuses on the archetype of Initiation is used. Henderson's experiences have brought new vision to contemporary study of initiation, distinguishing tripartite phases in the rites of initiation, including Submission, Transformation and Immanence.

As for the archetypal character of Wise Old Man, it will be illustrated as another important archetype in the *Chronicles*, using Jung's theory of "spirit in fairy tales" to clarify the vital function this archetype plays in such adventurous journeys. It will show when and where he appears, and how he aids the adventurer to accomplish his mission or his journey.