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Extracts from:  
*The Voyage of The Dawn Treader &  
the Voyage of Roverandom*

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In Dr. Olsen's Signum University course on Lewis & Tolkien, students examine side-by-side comparable works from each author. I'd like to continue that tradition by examining, C.S. Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, from *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and J.R.R. Tolkien's children's novella, *Roverandom*. In both stories, an ill-tempered youth is whisked away from his mundane home and sent on a marvelous journey to a series of wondrous islands, and to the very end of the world. Along the way, he encounters magicians and mermaids, talking animals, personified celestial bodies, dragons and sea-monsters. The protagonist is transformed (physically and emotionally) by the time he returns home. *Roverandom* and *The Dawn Treader* share a number of similarities, not only with one another, but also with the medieval Irish literary genre known as *immrama*. William Flint Thrall defined the *immram* as "a sea-voyage tale in which a hero, accompanied by a few companions, wanders about from island to island, meets



Otherworld wonders everywhere, and finally returns to his native land" (quoted in Mac Mathúna 276). But the *immrama* are more than adventure tales; they are also spiritual quests. Thomas Owen Clancy notes, "these are tales about the saving of souls which use a voyage on the sea as the means of redemption" (197). . . .

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C.S. Lewis wrote *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* over the winter of 1949-1950. Notes he made in preparation for writing reveal quite a different plot than the one he eventually published, but the notes show that, from the beginning, Lewis envisioned a journey in which "Various islands (of [the] Odyssey and St. Brendan) can be thrown in" (Hooper 403). David C. Downing argues that Lewis did not, in the end, make "much use of Homer's epic poem," but drew major inspiration from the voyage of St. Brendan (43). Huttar and Lawyer also find numerous similarities between *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and the medieval Irish *immrama*, particularly the voyage of St. Brendan.

Tolkien specifically mentions Brendan, as well as another *immrama* hero, Maelduin, in "The Lost Road" (*Lost Road* 80) and *The Notion Club Papers* (*Sauron* 270), the abandoned time-travel stories he worked on in the 1930s and 40s. His 1924 poem "The Nameless Land," mentions Brendan as well as Bran, another legendary Irish mariner (*Lost Road* 99). "The Nameless Land" was published in 1927, the same year Tolkien published another *immrama*-influenced poem, "Fastitocalon." *Roverandom* was developed during this same period. The story originated in 1925 as an oral tale invented to comfort Tolkien's son Michael, who lost his favorite toy dog on the beach during a family holiday, and was likely written down during the Christmas holidays of 1927 (Tolkien, *Roverandom* xii-xiii). In my master's thesis for Signum

University, I argued that Tolkien's occupation with *immrama* material during this period is one piece of evidence that *Roverandom* was influenced by this storytelling genre. Other evidence includes *Roverandom*'s narrative frame structure, plot and traditional Irish motifs (Swank 36).

Since *Roverandom* and *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* have each been compared to the Irish *immrama*, I thought it would be interesting to compare the two stories to one another, and also to see how closely they exhibit the hallmarks of this medieval genre.

The medieval *immrama* exhibit a particular narrative structure:

1. a frame story which **begins and ends in the mundane world**;
2. a commencing motive of **exile**, either as the result of a crime, or a self-imposed exile in order to come closer to God;
3. a sea-voyage to a number of **Otherworld islands** in the ocean,
4. where the Exile gradually moves from transgression to **penitence**;
5. and finally, the **reconciliation** of the Exile with his victim, or with God.

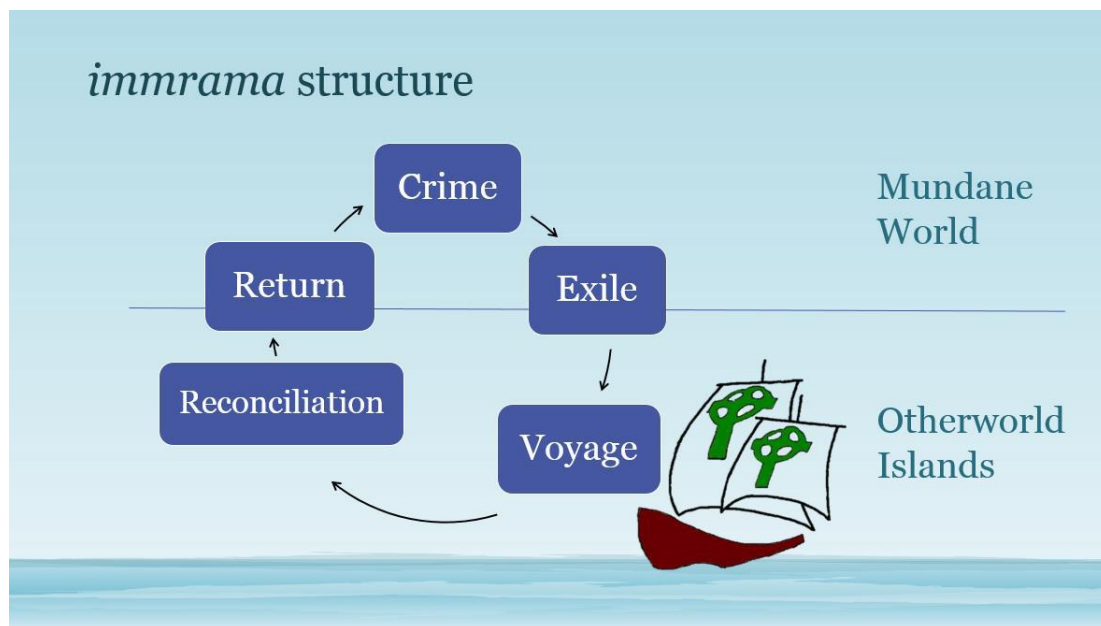


Figure. Cyclical structure of *immrama*

**Table. Some immrama motifs in The Voyage of the Dawn Treader & Roverandom**

<b>motif</b>	<b>Irish immrama</b>	<b>Roverandom</b>	<b>The Voyage of The Dawn Treader</b>
crime	Mael Duin seeks revenge on his father's killers	Rover bites a wizard in the trousers	Eustace eavesdrops & is a "record stinker"
exile	Mael Duin & Brendan both go into self-exile, one to find his father's killers, one to find The Land of Promise	Rover is whisked away from his yard	Eustace, Edmund & Lucy are pulled through the painting
magical figure sanctions or initiates voyage	<i>Mael Duin</i> : Nuca the wizard; <i>Brendan</i> : St. Enda	Psamathos the sand sorcerer	Aslan
entering the Otherworld thru mist or wind	<i>Mael Duin</i> : "a mighty wind"; <i>Brendan</i> : "clouds overshadowed us on every side"	"a mist was on the sea"	first, through the painting into the Narnian ocean; second, a mighty storm after the Lone Islands
Otherworld islands	Mael Duin visits about 30 islands; Brendan visits 12	Rover visits 5 "islands": Mew's Bird Cliffs, The Isle of Lost Dogs, The Moon, The Deep Blue Sea, Elvenhome	Dragon Island, Burnt Island, Goldwater Island (a.k.a. Deathwater Island), Island of the Voices, Dark Island, Ramandu's Island, Aslan's Country
Paradise of Birds	<i>Mael Duin</i> : Island of Chanting Birds; <i>Brendan</i> : Paradise of Birds	Mew's Bird Cliffs	Ramandu's Island
undersea realm	Mael Duin sees an undersea country with a shepherd	Rover visits the Deep Blue Sea	Lucy sees an undersea city and a shepherdess
blessed realm	<i>Brendan</i> : The Land of Promise of the Saints	Elvenhome	Aslan's Country
metamorphosis	in the <i>immrama</i> , humans & angels are frequently turned into birds	Rover is turned into a toy; and later gets wings & fins	Eustace is turned into a dragon
holy hermit	<i>Mael Duin</i> : Hermit from Torach; <i>Brendan</i> : St. Paul the Spiritual	The Man-in-the-Moon	Ramandu, the retired star
deserted mansion	<i>Mael Duin</i> : the House of the Salmon & the House of the Cat <i>Brendan</i> : the Mansion of the Dog	When Rover and the moon-dog return to the Moon-Tower for their dinner, they can rarely find the Man-in-the-Moon	Coriakin's House appears to be empty; the banquet table on Ramandu's Island appears to be laid out for travelers, but no host is about
bird guide	<i>Brendan</i> : the bird messenger from God, on the Paradise of Birds	Mew the Seagull	the albatross that leads them from Dark Island
aerial monsters	<i>Mael Duin</i> : the Ancient Eagle <i>Brendan</i> : the Gryphon & the other great bird	The Great White Dragon	Eustace as a dragon
sea-monsters	<i>Mael Duin</i> : the huge beast in the undersea country <i>Brendan</i> : the fish of enormous size	the ancient Sea-serpent	the Sea Serpent

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