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**Allegoric features in *The Chronicles of Narnia* by Clive Staples Lewis**

**Alegorické prvky v *Letopisech Narnie* Cliva Staplese Lewise**

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## Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně s použitím uvedených pramenů a literatury.

V Praze 14. 7. 2009

Basilka'.....

## Abstrakt

Tato práce se zabývá otázkou užité alegorické psaní v *Leopoldovi Narnie* Cliva Staplesa. První část práce stručně zabývá otázkou významu alegorie, jejího vztahu k literárnímu dílu, k literárnímu kontextu a k literárnímu dílu samotnému. Druhá část práce se zabývá otázkou vztahu mezi alegorií a křesťanstvím. Na základě porovnání Narnie s křesťanskou literaturou jsou zkoumány rozdíly mezi autorovou alegorií a křesťanskou literaturou.

## Poděkování

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## Abstract

This thesis deals with the extent of use of allegory in *The Chronicles of Narnia* by Clive Staples Lewis. For a better understanding of the thesis the first part of the thesis briefly discusses the background of the author *The Chronicles of Narnia* and more profoundly presents Lewis' understanding of allegory, the role of the author, Christianity in literature and the difference between allegory and myth. The second part attempts to analyze the occurrences of allegorical figures and symbols in Christianity and following the text of Narnia books it seeks to show the importance of Lewis' theoretical work and his fantasy writing.

## Key words

allegory, myth, Christianity, imagination, role of the author, secondary world

## **Anotace**

Tato práce se zabývá mírou užití alegorických prvků v *Letopisech Narnie* Cliva Staplese Lewise. Pro lepší porozumění tématu se první, teoretická, část této práce stručně zabývá okolnostmi vzniku díla, podrobněji pak Lewisovým chápáním alegorie, rolí autora literárního díla, křesťanstvím v literatuře a rozdílem mezi mýtem a alegorií.

Druhá část analyzuje výskyt alegorických prvků a odkazů ke křesťanství. Na základě porovnání textu knih s teoretickou částí této práce jsou zkoumány rozpory mezi autorovou teorií psaní a jeho dílem.

### **Klíčová slova**

alegorie, mýtus, křesťanství, imaginace, role autora, „druhotný svět“

## **Abstract**

This thesis deals with the extent of use of allegory in *The Chronicles of Narnia* by Clive Staples Lewis. For a better understanding of the theme, the first part of the thesis briefly mentions the background of creation *The Chronicles of Narnia* and more profoundly presents Lewis' understanding of allegory, the role of the author, Christianity in literature and the difference between allegory and myth. The second part attempts to analyse the occurrences of allegorical features and allusions to Christianity; and following the text of Narnia books it deals with the inconsistency between Lewis' theoretical work and his fantasy writing.

### **Key words**

allegory, myth, Christianity, imagination, role of the author, “secondary world”

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*The Chronicles of Narnia* are my favourite books from my childhood. I have been always interested in the fact that there are parts of the story that remind me of Christianity. When I was considering my theme for the bachelor's thesis, I decided to write about *The Chronicles of Narnia* to find out more details about the stories.

Since I study apart from the Faculty of Education also at the Theological Faculty, at first my aim was to write about how Clive Staples Lewis represents Christianity in his books and how accurate are his stories in comparison with the Bible or Christian doctrine. However, later I discovered that there are several books dealing with similar themes. And I gradually became more interested in the issue of Lewis' understanding of allegory and of the role of the author. In my bachelor's thesis I would like to make a comparison of Lewis's theoretical literary work and his fantasy writing; and consequently to ask whether he wanted to create Narnia as "theological fantasy". The theme also covers Lewis inconsistency in what he claimed about *The Chronicles of Narnia* in connection with Christianity. One of the important points of my bachelor's thesis will be the critical view of Lewis's books, since they seem to be too allegorical and too explicitly Christian. In order to pursue this criticism, I will approach *The Chronicles of Narnia* in two parallel ways: from a literary point of view and from a theological or Christian points of view.

The starting point for my work will be Lewis's conversion to Christianity, because it played an important role in his writing. Lewis was for almost half of his life an atheist, and he described himself as the most reluctant convert, but later he became fervent believer and wrote many books about Christianity. It was because he was so long an atheist that he felt he could understand the atheist mindset with its frequent aversion to church atmosphere. His Christian books display an apologetic character and he was very skilful in writing books about Christianity, which is important for understanding why there are so many Christian features in *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

Since my aim is to ask to what extent did Lewis intend Narnia to be Christian, and whether it is allegorical, my next point will be his literary theory of allegory, which he described in his book *The Allegory of Love* and also in his letters. His understanding of allegory as a literary genre holds significant importance as well as his appreciation of myth (which was the influence of John Ronald Reuel Tolkien). Lewis considers allegory as the best form for expressing invisible ideas or feelings, but not as the highest literary form, because there is only one correct interpretation. Another important aspect of his literary

theory is the role of the author, who, rather than allegorising his ideas, should “sub-create” another world and produce a work more complex, which for Tolkien and Lewis means myth. Lewis as an author intended to create myth. I will consider the question whether *The Chronicles of Narnia* approaches myth or rather allegory, because there is a number of readers who thought that Narnia is an allegory or includes allegorical features, but Lewis denied it several times in his letters.

In the main part of my thesis I am going to present several features of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which are either allegorical or bear an obvious Christian meaning. I list several examples, briefly characterise how they are presented in the book and explain what they allegorise or in which features are they similar to biblical texts. These examples reveal that although Lewis refused to call *The Chronicles of Narnia* an allegory they hold strong allegorical features and there is strong Christian message in them.

The conclusion of this work will summarize Lewis’ understanding of allegory and of the authorial intentionality in comparison with the way he applies these theories in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. I also present Lewis’ remarks about *The Chronicles of Narnia* and Christianity. There are several contradictions in what Lewis claimed about his intention to represent Christianity in his story. I would like to explain Lewis’ inconsistency in what he wrote and what he claimed about his work – on the one hand he said that it is not an allegory at all and on the other hand he expressed his surprise about how much Christianity can one transmit into people’s minds after stripping them of church atmosphere (Hooper, 400). The exact question that is under consideration in the conclusion is Lewis’ intentionality of the use of Christian themes and allegory.

## **1.1 LEWIS’ CONVERSION**

As it tends to be the case of any other author, the work of Clive Staples Lewis is closely connected with his life. A significant number of his books is considered to have relation with his conversion to Christian religion. Religious conversion was not a simple act for him, because he was almost half of his life an atheist. That is why I am going to mention several important details from his early life before his conversion. I will also refer to his university career that formed his view on allegory.



### 1.1.1 EARLY LIFE

Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He and his older brother Warren were close friends and in their childhood spent long hours drawing and writing together. Lewis liked “dressed animals” and tales of knights and chivalry and this he combined into history of his imaginary country Animal-Land. Lewis’ parents were Ulster Protestants and he grew up being taken to church every Sunday, but this did not influence him in the positive way, on the contrary, it caused his dislike for Christianity. (Hooper 3-4; BBC)

In his autobiography *Surprised by Joy* (1955) Lewis described several experiences, when he experienced joy as a very strong feeling. He described it as “a sensation of desire, but before he knew what he desired, the desire was gone” or as “an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it joy” (Hooper 5). This experience repeated several times and later played an important role in his conversion. (Hooper 5, 7)

As he wanted to gain a scholarship at Oxford, he was sent to a tutor William Kirkpatrick to prepare him, he learnt a broader appreciation for literature and he also wrote his lyric poetry. Professor Kirkpatrick was an atheist and under his influence Lewis’ atheism began to take shape. As he wrote to his friend on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1916: “I believe in no religion. ... All religions, that is all mythologies to give them their proper name, are merely man’s own invention” (Hooper 9).

Lewis came to Oxford University in 1916, after four years of studies he graduated with three first-class degrees and he took a lecturing position; in October 1925 he was awarded a fellowship teaching English Literature at Oxford’s Magdalen College. (Hooper 12)

In 1954, as an outstanding literary scholar, Lewis was invited to newly created Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University. (Duriez 113)

It was in Oxford where Lewis joined a literary discussion group called The Inklings. The members, many of whom were Christians, included Lewis himself, Owen Barfield, John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, Adam Fox, Hugo Dyson, Charles Williams and Lewis’ brother Warren. They were meeting during the 1930s and the purpose of the group was to hear and criticise each others writings-in-progress. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* stories were first read at Inklings meetings, as were some of Lewis’ stories.

### 1.1.2 CONVERSION

Lewis' conversion to Christianity was a long process. He always claimed it was logical and rational, not emotional. He was a convinced atheist and he defended atheism against the attacks of his Christian friends. Even at the very moment of his conversion, he felt reluctant.

The most important influence in the process of his conversion were books and a few close friends. Among the books that inspired him, the most important was Chesterton's *Everlasting Man*. Under this influence Lewis' personal philosophy had been gradually changing into theism and in 1929 he claimed "I gave in and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England" (in *Surprised by Joy*, Hooper 14). But he did not yet feel like a Christian.

He debated with his Christian friends at Oxford about various philosophical and literary questions and also about religion. These debates caused Lewis to rethink what he would still call, at that time, "the Christian myth", Lewis then read the Gospels and was struck by the impression that they did not sound like fiction, but more like reports. (BBC)

On September 19, 1931 he dined with Hugo Dyson and a Catholic John Ronald Reuel Tolkien and they discussed myth and its relation to truth all night long. Tolkien convinced Lewis that Christianity was the completion of all the mythology before it. Dyson contributed to the debate by explaining how Christianity liberates believers from their sins and helps them become better people. After this debate Lewis came to the conclusion, that the story of Christ is simply a "true myth, a myth that really happened" (Hooper 14).

He finally converted to Christianity on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1931 when travelling by motorcycle to Whipsnade Zoo: "When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the Zoo I did" (*Surprised by Joy*, Hooper 14). He reinterpreted his former feeling of joy or desire as longing for heaven, for God. Consequently, he wrote a book called *The Pilgrim's Regress* that told the story of his conversion in allegorical form. (Hooper 14)

Often those who experience conversion in adulthood become very active and like a prophet want to demonstrate to other people how wonderful their faith and religion is. Famous examples are St. Paul or St. Augustine. I am convinced that Lewis is such kind of an active convert, because after his conversion he wrote thirteen books introducing Christianity and fantasy books that had Christian content either explicitly mentioned or implicitly present.

## 2. ALLEGORY AND MYTH

In the previous chapter I described how Lewis became a Christian and how important this change was for him, which can be clearly recognized from the number of books he wrote about Christianity. Before I come to analyse *The Chronicles of Narnia* it is necessary to know more about Lewis' understanding of writing. Therefore in the following part I am going to present Lewis' understanding of allegory, as we can find it in his books and letters, as well as his opinions, strongly influenced by Tolkien, about the use of allegory in literature and about the problem of inserting Christianity into fiction writing.

### 2.1 LEWIS' UNDESTANDING OF ALLEGORY

Lewis studied literature and later on taught literature at Oxford University, he wrote several books on literature and in the context of my work it is necessary to mention at least two of his works. The first one is *The Allegory of Love, a study in medieval tradition* (1936) and the second is *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933). They both deal with the theme of allegory, although each one from a different perspective. Lewis' notion of allegory is expressed also in his letters.

#### 2.1.1 THE ALLEGORY OF LOVE

*The Allegory of Love, a study in medieval tradition* is a theoretical book about the medieval understanding of love and allegory. In this book Lewis proves that allegory was used in ancient Greece and Rome and it developed during the centuries and in the Middle Ages it became the dominant form of writing. Lewis indicates the development and different use of allegory in various poems. Although the book deals with medieval literature, Lewis presents general characteristics of allegory, and the book also announces Lewis' own opinion.

When focusing on his explanation of allegory, Lewis assumes that there is no chance of finding the ultimate origins of allegory. He declares that we can trace only the process of how "something always latent in human speech becomes explicit in the structure of poems" (Lewis, *Allegory* 59). Allegory was always present in human speech, in Greek rhetoric, in their myths. He explains that "it is the very nature of thought and language to represent what is immaterial in picturable terms" (Lewis, *Allegory* 59). The reason for it is, as he says, that we "cannot think of an inner conflict without metaphor, and every

metaphor is an allegory in little” (Lewis, *Allegory* 60) and he adds that there is no better way of representing inner world than by allegorical poem.

In the Middle Ages, when most of men were influenced by the idea of courtly love, allegory became the dominant form, because it was the ideal way to express what one felt and had to suffer. Lewis points out that this dominance was not good, because it led to formalization and monotony (Lewis, *Allegory* 232), and even poor writers used allegory, which has given it bad name. (Lewis, *Allegory* 233)

In *The Allegory of Love* Lewis also explains how allegory is created. The author takes the “immaterial fact and then invents visibilia to express it” (Lewis, *Allegory* 45). He also gives an example: “If you are hesitating between the angry retort and soft answer, you can express your state of mind by inventing a person called Ira (Anger) with a torch and letting her contend with another invented person called Patientia (Patience). This is allegory” (Lewis, *Allegory* 45; Hooper 551).

Lewis describes and explains many important details about allegory. Although this book is focused on the medieval understanding and perception of allegory, it is important to know the basic facts, since Lewis himself continued to understand allegory in this way.

### **2.1.2 THE PILGRIM'S REGRESS**

It was probably the long study of allegory and allegorical writers that led Lewis to write the second book, as mentioned above, *The Pilgrim's Regress* (the name deliberately pointing to John Bunyan's title *The Pilgrim's Progress*), which is an allegorical story about Lewis' conversion. This is the only piece of his work that Lewis admits to be allegorical. It was his intention to retell Bunyan's story in the way he himself experienced the long way to Christianity.

In the second edition of the book Lewis wrote a preface that should help the reader to comprehend the complex allegory of the book. In this preface he also explains what allegory means to him: again, he says that it is the best way of describing feelings or emotions – as he says “the sort of thing you cannot learn by definition: you must get to know it as you get to know a smell or taste...” (*The Pilgrim's Regress*, in Martindale and Root 8). Allegory is there to reveal something, to make the inner world more concrete by embodying it. However as if he did not consider allegory sufficient enough as a form of

literary expression, he adds that the best allegory approaches myth. (*The Pilgrim's Regress*, in Martindale and Root 8)

### **2.1.3 LETTERS**

Several other ideas about allegory and its relation to Lewis' work could be found in his letters (when he became famous a great number of people wrote to him to thank him or to ask him about his writing, and he had a habit of answering every single letter). General ideas can be found in a letter from 29<sup>th</sup> December 1958 where he almost repeats what was said in *The Allegory of Love* – that allegory is “pictorial or literary composition in which immaterial realities are represented by feigned physical object” (Lewis, *Letters* 283).

In a letter from 10<sup>th</sup> December 1956 he is warning one of his friends that there is danger in applying allegorical method on any text, because it may happen that you “insert” a meaning that is not there, and sometimes could not be meant by the author – he specifies it by example that in Tolkien's story there is no allegory of the atomic bomb, because it did not exist when he was writing it (Lewis, *Letters* 273).

All the above-mentioned definitions or attitudes towards allegory show that Lewis was deeply concerned about allegory and its use especially in the Middle Ages. He came to the conclusion, that it is natural for humans to use allegory and in some cases it is the only way to express our “inner world” or unseen things. But this explanation would not be complete without mentioning that he did not consider allegory the highest literary form. His opinions about literature were strongly influenced by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien and his theory of myth and imagination. And it is only in comparison with myth that we learn what it is that allegory misses.

## **2.2 MYTH AND IMAGINATION**

### **2.2.1 INFLUENCE OF BARFIELD AND TOLKIEN**

As I mentioned, Lewis was influenced by Tolkien and it is important to notice in what way and why they both regarded allegory not as appropriate and high as myth. Originally it was Owen Barfield who presented his theory of myth related closely to his understanding of language and its origins. His theory, appreciated also by Tolkien, lead Lewis to

understand myth not as a “lie”, on the contrary he started to appreciate it as “invention about truth” (Kuteeva 268-9).

Further shift was made by Tolkien who placed the highest value on myth-making in imaginative fiction and poetry. For Tolkien this was connected with his belief that God created man as an image of himself, and therefore when writing a fiction, the writer is supposed to create “secondary world with such skill that it has inner consistency of reality” (Tolkien 15-16; Duriez, *Handbook* 194; Duriez, *Encyclopedia* 50). Writing in this way he calls sub-creation (also in Lewis, *Letters* 271). Tolkien, and consequently Lewis, attempted to write in this way, that is to say create myth, rather than make “allegorical interpretation of beauties and terrors of the world” (Duriez, *Handbook* 194). The reason, why Tolkien considered allegory not a good literary form, was that it was too simple, too easy to decode and to find out what the author wanted to say. Similarly Lewis believed that the author should not impose his will or religious beliefs upon the reader (Walsh 197).

### 2.2.2 LEWIS' UNDERSTANDING OF MYTH

As it was mentioned, Tolkien seems to be the one who caused Lewis to consider myth as the highest literary genre and to dislike allegory. In a letter from 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1956 Lewis explains Tolkien's views of myth as highest literary form and of writing as sub-creation (Lewis, *Letters* 271). Lewis then says that his view is similar – he considers myth to be a “story out of which ever varying meaning will grow for different readers in different ages” (Lewis, *Letters* 271). In this sense it is higher genre than allegory, because in myth there are more possibilities of interpretation whereas in allegory there is only one correct interpretation which is already suggested by the author (Lewis, *Letters* 271). In Lewis' words “allegory resides in the purposed domination of the author” (preface to *The Lord of the Rings*, in Duriez, *Encyclopedia* 16). Furthermore he explains that in allegory the only correct interpretation is the meaning the author already knew or experienced, whereas in myth, the author puts something he “does not yet know and could not come by in another way” (Lewis, *Letters* 271).

It is useful for this work to look closer at how Lewis perceives and characterises myth. According to him, myth is similar to allegory in the sense that it also describes abstraction: “in myth we came nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise be understood only as an abstraction” (Goffar 416). In *Selected Literary Essays* he indicates how myth differs from allegory – myth is for everybody, but at the same time it is different for each

person (whereas allegory is the same for everybody). As he said “it is to each man a different dish and to each man the dish he needs” (Martindale and Root 9). This is connected with his opinion, that what is myth to one man, may be just a story for another (Duriez, *Handbook* 133). And not even the author is aware of multiple meanings of his work – Lewis says exactly: “The author does not necessarily understand the meaning of his own story better than anyone else” (Kilby 83).

The plurality of the meaning is one feature that distinguishes myth from allegory; another one is the role of imagination during creation and perception of myth. For Lewis fantasy is an imaginative invention and the imagination is the “organ of meaning” (Duriez, *Encyclopedia* 95), which means it can transmit truth (Manzalaoui 22). Also in the preface to *The Pilgrim’s Regress* Lewis stresses that “myth must be grasped with imagination, not with intellect” (Piehler 81), because he believes that imagination makes people more receptive to truth (Manzalaoui 23-4).

Like Tolkien, Lewis defends fairy tale, because it is like a myth, which “on one hand arouses longing for more ideal worlds and on the other hand gives the real world a new dimension of depth” (Kilby 116).

To sum up the shape of Lewis’ understanding of literature: it is obvious that he spent a lot of time studying allegory and was probably inspired by this study to write his own allegorical story. But his friendship with Tolkien formed his opinion about allegory and he became to appreciate myth as the best literary form. His reasons were that myth is more complex, implies transcendental meaning and leaves the interpretation(s) to the reader, who needs to use his own imagination (which Lewis values higher than intellect).

## **2.3 DISPUTE WITH TOLKIEN**

It is clear what Lewis and Tolkien thought about writing and different genres, and that they both aspired to myth-making in their fictions. The success of each of them in this attempt was different. They were friends and they knew the writing of each other and they expressed what they thought of the work of the other. From what is known, Tolkien seems to be the more successful one.

According to Lewis, Tolkien reached his highest point and fulfilled his attempts in *The Lord of the Rings* – Lewis considers it as myth, as he noted: “What shows that we are reading myth, not allegory, is that there are no pointers to a specifically theological, or

political, or psychological application. A myth points, for each reader, to the realm he lives in most. It is a master key; use it on what door you like” (Duriez, *Encyclopedia* 16). In other words he again specifies that myth is more valuable than allegory, because allegory displays well known or specific features, which can be more or less easily recognized.

On the other hand, Lewis was not considered so successful, at least according to Tolkien, who disliked the “lack of genuine sub-creation” in Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and he regarded this work as too allegorical (Duriez, *Handbook* 195). Clyde Kilby also mentions that Tolkien considered the books “far too allegorical” (136). The main point for which Tolkien criticizes Lewis’ writing is that it is “too conceptually and explicitly loaded with Christian beliefs” (Duriez, *Encyclopedia* 75). Tolkien disapproved of the obvious Christian correspondence (Walsh 155). Tolkien, as a Christian, also admits that there are some christian echoes and themes in his books, but he struggled to have “Christian meaning incarnated in his work, giving it an inner radiance” (Duriez, *Encyclopedia* 75). Tolkien sees the problem in the fact that Lewis too obviously inserts his beliefs and convictions into his work and imposes them upon the reader.

According to Mahmoud Manzalaoui, Tolkien thought *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* almost worthless, because to him

“it seemed like a jumble of unrelated mythologies, effecting a painfully incongruous reading experience. To put Aslan, the fauns, the White Witch, Father Christmas, the nymphs, Mr and Mrs Beaver – all of which had distinct mythological or imaginative origins – into a single imaginative country seemed like a terrible mistake” (Manzalaoui 156).

Although they were friends, Tolkien did not hesitate to express his dislike for Narnia and present a literary criticism based on his theory of writing.

### 2.3.1 LEWIS’ DEFENCE

Tolkien criticised Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia* as being too allegorical, but it was not only Tolkien, but also, as Thomas Peters points out, some of Lewis’ colleagues who condemned his “chosen genre and also the Christian doctrine in his stories and fantasies” (Peters 78). And from Lewis’ letters we learn that several readers recognized allegory in *The Chronicles of Narnia* and wrote to him for explanation or assurance. In all his letters and all his responses he denied that it would be allegory. Reasons for this denial could be seen in his understanding of literary forms. However, he did not deny that there is



Christian message contained in his work, yet he did not make it clear whether he consciously attempted the book to be Christian or not – this will be discussed in the conclusion.

He comments on the fact that many people thought that his books were allegorising and he wants to make it clear that he did not attempt it to be allegorical. He said: “Some of the allegories imposed on my books have been so ingenious and interesting that I often wish I had thought of them myself” (*Reflection on Psalms* 99, in Goffar 28).

He also defended himself in the letter from 29<sup>th</sup> December 1958; he replied to a lady, that Aslan is not an allegorical figure, because he does not represent an immaterial deity. Lewis said that Aslan is an invention “giving an imaginary answer to the question: what might Christ become like if there really were world like Narnia and He chose to be incarnated and die and rise again in the world as he actually has done in ours?” (Lewis, *Letters* 238). Lewis explains, that Narnia is not an allegory, because he did not start with fact (as allegory does), but he started from a supposition and that is the reason why it could not be allegory (Lewis, *Letters* 238). In the same way in another letter (24<sup>th</sup> December 1959) he highlights that it is only supposition what might have happen in another world (that is in Lewis’ secondary world) “I do not say ‘let us represent Christ as Aslan’ I say: ‘Supposing there is another world and supposing it needed redemption, let us imagine what sort of Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection Christ would have there’” (Hooper 425).

Lewis presented a very detailed study of medieval allegory; he explained that allegory is a form of expressing invisible ideas by material objects and that this way of expression is something deeply human. Under the influence of Tolkien he began to understand myth as the highest literary form and he stated several arguments why myth is better than allegory. He then also had to claim more than once that his *The Chronicles of Narnia* are not allegorical, as several people suggested.

This chapter provided important context – Lewis’ religious and literary background, that are both important for his writing of Narnia stories. The result of what he created and how it could be perceived will be studied in the following chapter.

### 3. NARNIA

In this part I would like to present *The Chronicles of Narnia* and analyse them in the light of Lewis' theory of allegory as it was expressed in the previous chapter. Thomas Peters considers it a mistake to read *The Chronicles of Narnia* with attempt to "decipher the exact theological or doctrinal referent for every character and situation" (Peters 78). I am not going to decode every single character or place; I will focus on those that are most obvious and significant. In the following chapter I will try to discover through those examples where the truth lies – whether Narnia is too allegorical as Tolkien stated it or it is not, as Lewis declared.

I would like to mention only basic information about the publication. *The Chronicles of Narnia* were published between the years 1949-56. Lewis' first book was *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (I will refer to it as "LWW"), which he wrote in 1949, published 1950. At first his editor did not want to publish the book. Since the editor thought it would sell better if the book were part of a series, he persuaded Lewis to write the following episode (BBC). Lewis then wrote *Prince Caspian* (1951) (I will refer to it as "PC") and later *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (VDT, 1952) and he continued by *The Silver Chair* (SC, 1953), *The Horse and His Boy* (HHB, 1954), *The Magician's Nephew* (MN, 1955) and *The Last Battle* (LB, 1956). The books as Lewis successively wrote and published them, were not in chronological order of the actions described. This later provoked discussion whether they should be published according to the time when they were written or by the chronological order. I prefer the order in which Lewis wrote them, because in the later written books he made remarks about the action in the previous books.

In connection with his notion of allegory it is remarkable how the whole story came into existence. Lewis told to Chad Walsh that his inspiration was "mental picture of a faun carrying parcels in a snowy wood, a picture that went back to about age of sixteen" (Walsh 129; Manzalaoui 10). Other pictures followed spontaneously and then he, with deliberate invention, joined it up to form a story (Manzalaoui 10). Chad Walsh suggests that it might have coincided with the arrival of several schoolgirls at Lewis' house. The girls had been evacuated from London in fear of air raids (Walsh 129), which made him think about fantasy or fairy. Probably the last known source of inspiration was from a fantasy of his former pupil, who did not want to publish it (Story about three children in a wood) (Walsh 129).

From what we know about creation of allegory, the first steps to create Narnia reveal that Lewis did not write allegory or did not intend it. In allegory the author has the idea and finds the material things to express them, whereas Lewis claimed to see the pictures in his mind. But it is necessary to study *The Chronicles of Narnia* to discover more – because it is important what features he inserted into the story and which were not in the pictures, but in his conscious or unconscious mind.

By using the word allegory in this chapter I mean that Lewis created characters or images of something invisible, but these invisibles had already counterparts in another literature (he uses biblical imagery – in this way he does not create a proper secondary world).

Although Lewis denied that *The Chronicles of Narnia* are allegories, he did not deny that there is Christianity and Christian features contained in them (Lewis, *Letters* 283). In this part I will go through the Narnia books in attempt to find these.

It is not necessary to retell the plot, as it is out of reach of my work. I would like to briefly introduce the books – there are seven of them and in each one children from our world get into another world called Narnia where they experience various adventures. I am going to present those characters and places that I find being an allegory or that bear Christian meaning (there are several authors who think the same: Kathryn Lindskoog (49), Chad Walsh does not mention allegory, but theological themes (130); it is also suggested in *Letters* 283).

Generally speaking, what might indicate Narnia being an allegory, are its black and white characters, they have no psychological depth and it is always clear whether they are good or bad. Also the storyline is usually quite straightforward (This is obvious in comparison with Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, but it is only an example as I am not going to compare these two books).

### 3.1. NON-BIBLICAL ALLEGORY

Although I am going to focus on the Christian motifs, there are several motifs that could be characterised as “general or common allegories” that are widely known. Among those I would include Bacchus (Lewis, PC – *Narnia* 407, 409, 413) – originally in Roman mythology the god of wine and ecstasy (in Greek mythology Dionysus) (Ford 47); in Narnia he is the allegory of festivity and merriness, dance and also of vivacity – wherever

he goes there grows ivy and appear good food and wine. In Narnia he provided also food for trees – “trees are going to eat various kinds of earth” (Lewis, PC – *Narnia* 414).

Another allegorical person is Father Christmas (Lewis, *Narnia* 159-160), who in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* symbolises the forthcoming end of the hundred-year winter created by the White Witch. The Faun and the Beavers refer to the winter as “always winter and never Christmas” (Lewis, *Narnia* 159). Paul Ford supposed that it is linked with Christianity – as Father Christmas says that Aslan is on the move and the spring will come, just as Christians at Christmas celebrate the birth of Christ, which means new hope (Ford 126).

Albatross (Lewis, VDT, *Narnia* 510) is a bird which is almost sacred for sailors, who believe it is the symbol of good luck (to shoot one is to court bad luck – Ford 3). On one level it might be understood only as an allegory of good fortune for sailors, but it is also possible to interpret it as Holy Spirit, which will be discussed further on.

In all these tree examples we can find parallels either in older literature or in fables. They are easily recognizable and generally known.

## **3.2. BIBLICAL, CHRISTIAN ALLEGORY**

The second category of motifs in Narnia are Christian or biblical motifs. It is not of great importance for this work to formulate precisely whether they are theologically correct or not. I would focus on how easily recognizable they are or show how clearly Lewis created his characters and situations in accordance with his Christian world view.

### **3.2.1 ASLAN**

The most significant and most evident character is Aslan. He is an enormous Lion who, as Lewis admits, represents Christ, but is not an allegory (Lewis, *Letters* 238). To distinguish whether Aslan is allegory or not, I am going to demonstrate how he is presented, how he acts and how he influences other characters. With references mostly to biblical texts I will indicate how many links Lewis made to Christian beliefs and tradition.

Aslan is the central character of all the Narnia books, he is the Son of the Great emperor-beyond-the-sea, he has the real power, and he is the one who is the true and highest ruler over Narnia, although he often leaves for a long time and has somebody to rule instead (governor or king). The Narnians always long for his help and expect him to come and help when it is needed.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* Aslan is at first mentioned by Mr and Mrs Beavers (Lewis, *Narnia* 141, 146). The very first time the children hear his name, it evokes in them strong emotion, feeling of something delightful, awesome, numinous (Lewis, *Narnia* 141). He is described as lion that “is not tame lion and is not safe” (Lewis, *Narnia* 146). When they first meet him, they do not know what to do, they are afraid of approaching him and they feel he is good and terrible at the same time (Lewis, *Narnia* 168). His role in this book (similarly in the others) is to lead the children and good talking animals and to help them to conquer the White Witch. As one of the children betrays the others and the White Witch wants to kill him, Aslan offers himself instead of him (Lewis, *Narnia* 176, 179) and the White Witch and her helpers kill him (Lewis, *Narnia* 180-181). However, the other day he rises from death (Lewis, *Narnia* 184) and explains to the children, that he has risen because of the “deeper magic from before the dawn of time” – when an innocent “victim was killed instead of the traitor, Death itself would start working backwards” (Lewis, *Narnia* 185).

I believe this is the part where most of the readers realize it really is a Christian story; the sacrifice instead of someone, then death and resurrection, which is the climax of the story, and overpowering of evil are clear indicators of Aslan representing Christ. It is Christian belief that Christ, himself innocent, sacrificed himself for our sins: “Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1John 2:2; 1Cor 15:3), and after three days he was resurrected (see Matt 27:53; Mark 16:6; 1Cor 15:4; Rom 4:25).

There are some other characteristics or indicators showing how Aslan treats talking animals and how he manifests his power and how he makes himself perceptible to the animals. In *The Magician Nephew* Aslan is seen as the creator of Narnia, who sings and dances and thus creates (64-66) and later he crowns the first king and queen of Narnia (Lewis, *Narnia* 81). This is clearly an allegory of God the creator (Gen 1:1-31).

In *The Horse and His Boy* Lewis raises the question of Aslan’s incarnation – that he is a true lion, which he proves to the horse (Bree) by asking him to touch him (Lewis, *Narnia* 299). In the Bible there is a similar example of Christ proving that his body is real after his resurrection – he said to Thomas and other disciples “Put your finger here, see my hands, reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop doubting and believe” (John 20:27). Aslan’s speech does not take place immediately after his resurrection, but he wants to prove that although he is powerful, he is the same as talking beasts. This should be seen as Christian doctrine about Jesus being true God and at the same time true human – this doctrine was accepted on the council in Chalcedony in 451 AD (Lohse 214).

These were the major themes, the major points of Christian beliefs (in chronological order: creation of our world, incarnation, sacrifice and resurrection). There are also some minor allegories closely connected with Aslan. I am going to list them according to their significance.

Towards the end of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* there is another important notion that helps to decode Aslan as Christ. The children land on the shore and there is a Lamb waiting for them who offers them breakfast – a roasted fish (Lewis, *Narnia* 540). They ask the Lamb if this is the way to Aslan's country and the Lamb replies that their way to Aslan's country is from their world, and then he changes into Aslan. They are sad that they have to go back to England, but Aslan explains to them that they could meet him even in England, he adds "but there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name... By knowing me here (in Narnia) for a little, you may know me better there (in England)" (Lewis, *Narnia* 541). By this remark Lewis expressed his intention that his books are not only about fantasy in Narnia, but they have connection with ordinary life in England (and consequently in the whole world). He makes this scene clear by presenting Aslan as the Lamb, because it is Jesus who is referred to as a "lamb" – e.g. "Look the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29) and in the Bible there is similar scene where Christ is saying "come and have a breakfast" (John 21:12).

Another illustration is from *The Silver Chair*; Aslan is pictured as lying very closely to a stream of fresh water. Jill is thirsty and wants to drink that water, but she is afraid of the Lion. Her thirst became very bad. She wants to make sure he would not do anything to her, so she asks him to move or to promise not to do anything to her, but he says, "I make no promises" (Lewis, *Narnia* 557). After a while, she decided to find another source of water, but he replies, "there is no other stream" (Lewis, *Narnia* 558). This is allegory of biblical text where Jesus Christ said: "Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst; but the water I will give him will become in him a spring water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:37).

Still in *The Silver Chair* the reader learns that it is Aslan who calls upon his helpers to come. Eustace and Jill decide not to "draw circle on the ground, write queer letters and recite charms and spells" (Lewis, *Narnia* 552). Eustace says it is not right "to try make Him do things, we can only ask Him" (Lewis, *Narnia* 552) and they started to call Aslan's name. They get into Narnia, but later Aslan explains, "you would not have called to me, unless I had been calling to you" (Lewis, *Narnia* 558). Kathryn Lindskoog understands

this part as referent to Calvinistic idea of God seeking his own followers (62). It is also mentioned in the Bible, when Jesus said: “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16). Eustace and Jill did not hear his calling, but it was Aslan who brought them into Narnia to tell them what is their task.

In *Prince Caspian* Lucy is surprised by the fact that Aslan seems bigger. He explains that he is not, but “every year you grow, you will find me bigger” (Lewis, *Narnia* 380). This short dialogue suggests, according to a C. S. Lewis specialist Kathyne Lindskoog, that our faith grows with our age (57). As well John the Baptist said: “He must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30).

In the last book *The Last Battle* there is a comparison between Aslan and another god-Tash. Tash is pictured as a terrible creature “shape of a man, but head of bird with cruel, curved beak and claws instead of nails, it carries with it deathly smell and grass seemed to wither beneath it” (Lewis, *Narnia* 712). It is very fearful, and wants human sacrifices, but if you are serving him with good intentions, you belong to Aslan and to “real Narnia” (which stands for Heaven, because there is eternal life and no evil). Lewis describes the story of one Calormen (who comes from the nation that believes in Tash) who was longing to find Tash and to be with him, but who was so brave and so earnest, that he was allowed to be in “real Narnia” with Aslan (Lewis, *Narnia* 755-757). The idea for this image appears in Lewis’ letter: “Every sincere prayer, even to a false god, is accepted by the true god; Christ saves many who do not think they know him” (Lewis, *Letters* 247). Narnia is friendly to other religions as long as they are sincere. For Lewis it is not important how exactly you call your God, but you should act “rightly”.

There are certainly several other allegorical features that show Aslan to be Christ, but I consider this enumeration sufficient for the purpose of this work. This list reveals how Aslan is portrayed and that in each book we can find the reference(s). Lewis admitted that Aslan stands for Christ, so it is possible to find and understand other parts of the Narnia story as allegorical. It is as if Aslan was the key that indicates what the other events or characters stand for.

### 3.2.2 ALBATROSS

As I mentioned before, albatross is a good sign for sailors. However in the context of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* it might be understood as an allegory of Christ or The Holy Spirit. The children and Narnians are sailing on a ship and steer into darkness,

because they are curious what they would find there. They find out that in this darkness all nightmares become true, as soon as they realized it, they want to get out. They sail long time without finding the way out, they begin to be desperate and it is only after Lucy calls Aslan's name and is pleading for help, that there appears a beam of light, "at first it looks like a cross", but it is an albatross and it leads them from the darkness. When the albatross comes and flies past Lucy, she hears a voice and is sure it is Aslan's (Lewis, *Narnia* 511). The Holy Spirit is symbolized similarly (as a dove with light): "He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him" (Matt 3:16). Also in the Scriptures we read, "I will do whatever you ask in my name" (John 14:13). Lucy asked for help and she received it (similarly in Matt 7:7; Matt 21:22 or Luke 11:7). Also the light that comes from the albatross has its counterpart in the Scriptures "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness" (John 8:12).

### 3.2.3 EDEN

In *The Magician's Nephew* Aslan created Narnia and after that he sent Digory to a garden west of Narnia to bring back an apple (Lewis, *Narnia* 84). But he must not eat any of the apples – they shall be taken only for others, not for selfish reasons (Lewis, *Narnia* 92). The connection with the story of biblical Garden of Eden (Gen 2:8 "God planted garden in the east") is indicated by Digory's going to the garden soon after the creation and the fact that there are apple trees that no one shall eat from. We can find similar description in the book of Genesis; in the middle of the garden there were the tree of life and the tree of knowledge (Gen 2:9) and also the warning: "You must not eat from the tree of knowledge" (Gen 2:17). It is also Digory's experience inside the garden – the temptation when he is hungry and sees beautiful apples. The temptation continues when evil witch Jadis tries to persuade him, that it is the apple of life, and he would live forever, and then offered him vision of giving that apple to his seriously ill mother, who would be cured by one bite. Jadis suggested, that he should not keep the promise to Aslan (Lewis, *Narnia* 93-94). Similarly in the Bible there is a description of a snake persuading Eve and she persuading Adam – "You will be like God...She took and ate and gave her husband" (Gen 3:5-6). However, Lewis made a significant difference, because in his story, Digory did not take the apple and thus did not sin. But the obvious parallel remains there.



### 3.2.4 LAST JUDGEMENT

*The Last Battle* describes how Narnia came to its end. The inhabitants became capricious and started to believe an old monkey whose orders lead to the destruction of the countryside and invasion of Calormens (neighbour country to Narnia). Consequently an extensive battle breaks out (Lewis, *Narnia* 730-738), which is the beginning of the end. Those, who were good followers of Aslan, can pass through the door that leads into the “real Narnia” that will never be destroyed. Aslan is the one who judges and distinguishes by his look who should pass on his right side. Those who did not follow Aslan in their lives and who did not love him were sent to pass on his left side and remained in the darkness (Lewis, *Narnia* 751). The actual end is described as flood and later freezing (Lewis, *Narnia* 752-753). Then Aslan shut the door and gave Peter the keys to lock it.

The doors being an allegory of Christ who is the passage from life to eternal life is in John “I am the gate for the sheep. I am the gate, whoever enters through me, will be saved” (John 10:7,9). Although in the Bible the world is going to end in fire, the picture of God as a judge is well known “All the nations will be gathered before him and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates sheep from the goats. Sheep on his right; goats on his left. Depart from me, you who are cursed” (Matt 25:32-34). There is also an obvious similarity with the Christian symbol of Peter having the keys of heavenly doors – “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 16:19).

## 3.3 MOTIFS RELATED TO GOOD

### 3.3.1 BRAVERY AND COURAGE

Throughout the story bravery and courage are highly valued by Aslan. The most important character, who shows bravery (almost in the medieval sense) and who could be considered as allegory of bravery is the talking mouse Reepicheep. All talking animals are bigger than normal ones, so Reepicheep is referred to be about half a meter tall and wear a little rapier; he has no hopes and no fears (Lewis, *Narnia* 352). Although he is not very tall, he shows his bravery at every opportunity possible (Lewis, *Narnia* 352) and offers his service devotedly to the kings. For example he and his companions fought in the battle against Telmarines (Lewis, *Narnia* 406) and he wants to be the first volunteer who passes through the door to the other world, because he wants to show that he believes Aslan (Lewis, *Narnia* 417).

In one battle Reepicheep is wounded and has his tail cut off, which is for “the highest mouse” very awkward as tail is the “honour and glory of a mouse” (Lewis, *Narnia* 412). He asks Aslan if anything could be done about it; and his companions, devoted to him, are ready to cut their own tails if Reepicheep must be without it. This “love between him and his people” moves Aslan, and also in memories of their good deed, when they rescued Aslan from the stone table, Reepicheep gets his tail again. And after that he is knighted (Lewis, *Narnia* 413). In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* there is a description of Reepicheep’s perception of knighthood: “death-or-glory charges, forlorn hopes” (Lewis, *Narnia* 455). He keeps the crew on the path of adventure, punishes Eustace for insulting him, he is for fighting the invisible enemy (land of Duffers), in the Dark Island he is the only one unaffected by the nightmares, he is the second to tell Caspian ‘no’ in an important moment of decision (Lewis, *Narnia* 573). He only throws away his sword when he is sailing towards the “end of the world”.

However, the readiness to fight is surpassed by Reepicheep’s loyalty to Aslan (and consequently to the king) and by his readiness to help, or the determination to risk and possibly lose his life for the king. Reepicheep should be perceived as an allegory of knighthood or chivalric behaviour and as a very sharp contrast to cowardice. There is no excuse for the feeling of fear; everyone should act bravely despite fear.

### 3.3.2 FAITHFUL FOLLOWING

A part of *Prince Caspian* is an allegory describing the inner conflict of faith and reason. Children in the forest are trying to find their way, they have doubts whether they are going the right direction; and suddenly Lucy sees Aslan pointing to the opposite direction. She tries to persuade the others that they should follow him, but the other children do not see him. Although they know that Lucy never lies and she is the one who sees Aslan most often, they do not listen to her and go the wrong way (Lewis, *Narnia* 373). Later Aslan explains to her that she should have “left the others and come up and follow Him” (Lewis, *Narnia* 380).

Because Aslan wants to show them the way he asks Lucy again in the middle of a night to wake the others and convince them to follow him. This is a difficult task, since Lucy is the youngest and the others are tired and fast asleep. Again, the others do not see Aslan at the beginning but as they proceed they start to see him. (Lewis, *Narnia* 380-381)

When Susan sees Aslan, she apologizes to Lucy for not believing her and she admits, “I really believed it was him, deep down inside. Or I could have, if I’d let myself” (Lewis,

*Narnia* 386). Aslan replies to her, that she listened to her fears and he breathes on her to give her courage (Lewis, *Narnia* 386).

This part of the story reveals the difficult role of a prophet. Lucy sees Aslan and she has to lead the others, but they do not see Him, they have to believe what Lucy says; they have obvious objection, as Susan said: "I cannot see anything. Because there is not anything to see" (Lewis, *Narnia* 383). This situation describes that it is not easy to be the one who has to persuade the others, to explain and to be an example. On the other hand, the position of those who do not see and should follow is not easy either. About those who follow the Scriptures says: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

### **3.4 MOTIFS RELATED TO EVIL**

#### **3.4.1 EVIL**

In the *Narnia* books there are various evil elements and characters, but the most significant are Queen Jadis and the White Witch (from Lewis' writing it is not clear whether they are two witches or only one with different names). Their characteristics are very similar – they are generally characterised as cruel, capricious, and self-centred, they want all the luxury and possession for themselves, they want to dominate the others and they do not respect any rules.

Queen Jadis desires power so much, that in *The Magician's Nephew* she destroys the town Charn and kills all the inhabitants only to prove that she is the most powerful and clever ruler (Lewis, *Narnia* 40-41). Shortly after *Narnia* was created, she tempted Digory in the garden, trying to make him disobedient to Aslan (see above). She is present in *Narnia* from its very beginning and she is kept away by Aslan's magic.

The White Witch in her time becomes the Queen of *Narnia* and makes the inhabitants desperate by casting a hundred-year winter upon them (Lewis, *Narnia* 159). In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* she wants to kill one of the children, because she wants to remain the Queen, but Aslan offers himself instead of the child and later the witch is defeated and killed (Lewis, *Narnia* 191). Jadis as well as the White Witch represent the highest evil that can be overpowered only by Aslan.

They are clearly an allegory of evil and in the allegorical way Lewis says that evil can be overpowered only by the ultimate good. It, again, has its counterpart in the biblical message – that evil could only be destroyed by Christ. As the Scripture says: „He who does

what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1John 3:8), or "by his death he destroyed him, who hold the power of death – that is of devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

### 3.4.2 PRIDE, GREED

In *The Chronicles of Narnia* there are at least two characters who are allegorical examples of human faults, particularly pride, selfishness and laziness. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* it is Edmund, the younger boy who gets to Narnia and is flattered by the White Witch who gives him Turkish delight; he joins her side, betraying his siblings. Later Aslan talks to him, he recognizes the wrong he has done and he feels sorry. Consequently his character changes – Aslan is the one who is able to "awake" the good character in him.

*The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* shows another example of a boy's character change. Eustace thinks himself superior to everyone else, he is lazy, arrogant, selfish, complaining about everything and proud, his behaviour is described at many occasions (Lewis, *Narnia* 425-430, 436-8, 452). The most important part of his story comes when the ship lands on an island and everybody is busy repairing the ship. Only Eustace does not want to work and he walks away, in the inland he drinks water from a pond near the place where a dragon used to live and Eustace himself changes into a dragon (Lewis, *Narnia* 462-466). At first he is happy that he can fly and that he has no one to be afraid of, because he is scary himself, but later he feels lonely and misses the others and begins to appreciate their company. Unfortunately, as a dragon he cannot communicate with them, but he starts helping them and he experiences the feeling that the others like him and he likes them (Lewis, *Narnia* 466-472). Later Aslan comes to him and tells him what he is supposed to do to become human again. But Eustace finds out he cannot do it on his own and it must be Aslan who pulls his dragon skin off with his claws, which is painful ("You will have to let me undress you" Lewis, *Narnia* 474). Afterwards Eustace has to swim in a round bath. When he gets out of the bath, he is a boy again and his behaviour changes completely. (Lewis, *Narnia* 473-475)

The allegorical meaning of this story is that one cannot dispose of his sins alone, our attempts are not sufficient, it is Aslan (Christ) we need. Aslan can rescue us, only he can turn us into new people. It is not without our effort, and sometimes it is painful. Also Eustace's swimming in the water could be understood as baptism. The change is not complete instantly, but it is the beginning and gradually one's life changes. It is Christ who

delivers us from our sins as it is noted in the Bible: “Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38). And it is Christian understanding of baptism that it “washes away our sins” (Acts 22:16); and by baptism, which is done by water, Christians belong to God.

### 3.4.3 CLOSING ONE’S MIND

In *The Last Battle* there is a description of dwarfs who refuse to be “taken in”. They are pictured as sitting in the middle of “real Narnia” (Heaven) – it is a beautiful garden, the sun is shining, there are nice smells around and everything is perfect – but they do not see anything of it. They believe they are sitting in “pitch dark, poky, smelly little hole of a stable” (Lewis, *Narnia* 746). Lucy tries to make them see, so she tells them how good it is around them and also Aslan gives a low growl and make glorious feast to make them see. But they are said to have “closed their minds and refuse to be taken in. They have chosen cunning instead of belief. Their prison is only in their own minds” (Lewis, *Narnia* 749). The dwarfs do not want to risk believing anything someone else said, they are afraid of being influenced by someone else. They want to be only for themselves “Dwarfs are for the Dwarfs” (Lewis, *Narnia* 749). This allegory is a warning against being narrow-minded, and encourages trying to see things around us, to open our minds and be prepared to see Aslan (Christ) and understand his message.

### 3.5 PLATO’S CAVE

In *The Silver Chair* an allegorical picture of Plato’s cave is used. The children get into the Underland and they are debating with the Queen of Underland about the Overworld (Narnia). The Queen’s aim is to make them forget the Overworld and thus persuade them to stay in the Underland. She throws a stupefying powder into the fire, which produces “sweet and drowsy smell” and makes it “hard to think” and difficult to remember the real world (Lewis, *Narnia* 629-633). As they are discussing, the children try to prove that in the Overworld the things are more real than in Underland, whereas the Queen says the opposite – that it is only their fancy or dreams. “The lamp is real thing, the sun is but a tale. You have seen lamps and so you imagined a bigger and better lamp and called it the sun. You can put nothing into your make-believe without copying from my world” (Lewis, *Narnia* 631). They almost got under her spell, but Puddleglum saves the situation by stamping on the fire and extinguishing it (Lewis, *Narnia* 632).

Similarly in Plato's cave the souls are imprisoned in the cave and all the things they see, seem real to them. However, when one of them ascends out of the cave into the open world above, he sees that the insides of the cave are only inferior copies of yet more original realities – real living beings and the sun (Platón 315-318). The fire in the Underland, as well as with Plato, plays an important role in creating the illusions (disables one to think clearly) (Platón 315).

Also in *The Last Battle* Plato's conception of world is communicated. At the end of Narnia history, the children, as well as good animals, get through the door into the "real Narnia" that is bigger and even nicer than the ending Narnia. Professor Digory explains that the old Narnia "was only a shadow or a copy of a real Narnia which has always been here and always will be here", and he adds to himself "it is all in Plato, all in Plato. What do they teach them at these schools?" (Lewis, *Narnia* 759). Later Aslan calls the destroyed Narnia "Shadowlands" and he says, "the dream is ended, this is the morning" (Lewis, *Narnia* 767).

According to this theory, everything in our world (the material world) is a shadow of a higher, more perfect reality.

There are probably more events and themes that could be interpreted as allegories, but my point was not to find every single one. I chose those greater or larger ones that I consider illustrative. My purpose was to find that in each book there is Aslan presented as Christ and he is at the centre of the whole plot. All the books are thus evidently Christ-centred, and as I indicated, there are numerous allegories in them. They are not minor, but they are not complete (in the sense the whole book being one allegory) either. But these allegories, as I presented them, are easy to recognize and it is easy to find their meaning or their counterparts. I tried to be careful and cautious not to put more meaning into the story than it really contains. I must also refer to parts of the books that are not allegorical at all – such as epic descriptions of countryside, geography or history of Narnia.

To clarify to what extent Aslan really is allegorical or rather a "supposed character", I need to make comparison of what exactly Lewis said about his writing and what features, according to him, allegorical literature has. This I am going to present in the following chapters.

## 4. RESULTS

In the last part of this essay I would like to focus on the extent of Lewis' use of allegory and ask whether his fantasy series *The Chronicles of Narnia* corresponds with his theory of writing and with his understanding of allegory. I would like to demonstrate where his stories approach myth (mythopoetic writing) and how relevant was the discord between Lewis and Tolkien, who considered Lewis' books too explicitly Christian.

I would like to divide the conclusion into two parts: at first I would like to present the literary point of view, where I would like to demonstrate the extent of allegory used in Lewis' books, and in the second part I will deal with the theological, Christian point of view and the dispute with Tolkien. These two parts are closely connected and in fact they are only one unit, but for the clarity of the text I am separating them.

### 4.1. LITERARY POINT OF VIEW

First of all it is clear that *The Chronicles of Narnia* are not allegory as a whole. There is not one-to-one correspondence of all the characters and places to realities in our human world and it is not possible to decode the meaning of every action. As Lewis said about his work: "You are mistaken when you think that everything in the books 'represents' something in this world. Things do that in *The Pilgrim's Progress* but I'm not writing in that way" (BBC). It is true that these seven books are not an allegory in the way Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* or his own *The Pilgrim's Regress* are.

However, if the search is more detailed and focuses on smaller parts, there are several occurrences of allegorical use to certain extent. I tried to reveal what is allegorical in the previous chapter and now I would like to make a list of his basic ideas about allegory as it was mentioned in the first chapter and indicate whether Lewis uses such type in Narnia.

The first characteristic or possible theme that could be expressed as an allegory is one's inner conflict or state of mind, feelings or emotions (Lewis, *Allegory* 60). These are not, in my opinion, so frequently used. Lewis often describes one's feelings but not in the allegorical way. The parts that could be seen as allegories of inner conflict are clear for instance when Lucy tries to persuade the others to follow Aslan, or when the dwarfs are unable to see that they are sitting in the middle of a beautiful garden. In this way Lewis tried to "make inner world more concrete by embodying it" (Lewis, *Allegory* 61).

Another use of allegory applies to immaterial facts or realities that the author embodies to express them (Lewis, *Allegory* 45, 59). Into this category belong such characters and themes as Bacchus, Father Christmas, Aslan, Lucy's calling in Dark Island, Eden, End of Narnia, the idea of knighthood represented by Reepicheep, Evil incarnated in Queen Jadis, Eustace's adventure and Plato's cave (and perhaps others, I do not attempt to make a complete list). These characters and themes introduce various ideas or immaterial realities. Several of them are what I would call a double allegory, because they retell an allegory already mentioned by somebody else (this is closely connected with Lewis' notion of originality – see below).

Although Lewis did not consider allegory the best genre, he wrote short episodes in allegorical way. Allegorical writing seemed to Lewis too straightforward. He himself said that such writing has only one correct interpretation and it is “too easy to decode what the author wanted to say” (Walsh 197). Also by means of allegory the author conveys ideas that he already knows perfectly well and that could be said or explained in another way (could be expressed literally, without allegorising) and the use of allegory in such case is only to make them more interesting. According to Lewis it is for this feature that allegory does not belong to “good” literature. Nevertheless, Lewis not only uses allegory and admits using allegorical features, but he also makes his writing transparent, especially in the case of Aslan, by using biblical quotations or exact biblical events (e.g. the Lamb on the shore offering fish for breakfast) or by mentioning Plato's name.

To demonstrate what is mythical or in what way *The Chronicles of Narnia* approach myth – since the best allegory should approach myth (Martindale and Root 8) – is more difficult than to indicate allegory, because myth cannot be easily translated and clearly defined. Myth is characterized by its inexplicability, myth transmits to us realities that are impossible to express in any other way. These realities are beyond us (transcend us) and they even stand beyond the author. From this point of view it is difficult to say whether Narnia is a myth or contains mythical features. However, according to another criterion – claiming that in myth there are “no pointers to a specifically theological or political or psychological application” (Duriez, *Encyclopedia* 16), it is possible to assume, that Narnia is not a myth, because the Christian character of the story is not difficult to prove – and this is the “theological pointer” that is present in the whole series of Narnia.

To state it clearly, Narnia is neither allegory nor myth. It is possible to imagine these two – “pure” allegory and “pure” myth – as two extremes on a scale. Therefore rather than



saying it is (not) allegory it is better to define whether the book is closer to myth or to allegory. From what I explained in the previous paragraph, it is possible to assume that Narnia is closer to allegory.

In connection with Tolkien's objection that Narnia is not a well-developed story (according to Tolkien it is not very good subcreation, because he disapproved of the mixture of mythological creatures inhabiting Narnia – BBC; Duriez, *Handbook* 195), it is illuminating to mention Lewis' conception of originality. The above-mentioned list of allegorical examples implies that many of his allegories are not originally his, but they are variations of allegories already made by someone else (Bacchus, Father Christmas, Biblical events, Plato). In Lewis' understanding this "unoriginality" is not a problem, because he "disdains any attempt to be original" (Hooper 596); however, he did not disapprove of originality itself. He believed that "we can create nothing new, but can only rearrange our material provided through sense data" (Hooper 596). Together with the concept of sub-creation, as I understand it, the writer's aim is to aspire to subcreate in his writing. However, he should not try to be original, Lewis adds that he should "tell the truth as he sees it, try to do it as well as it can be done, and originality will come unsought" (Hooper 596). Lewis claimed that when a writer tries hard to be original, he will never succeed, whereas when a writer writes as best as he can for the sake of the work, he finally may attain originality. I comprehend his understanding of originality as an appeal to be humble when writing, to be aware that he is not the real creator, but only the "sub"creator.

In Narnia stories Lewis seems to achieve originality only partially. To illustrate the notion of originality clearly, it is useful to look at Tolkien's theory of subcreation. Whereas Lewis uses "prefabricated" characters, Tolkien insists on careful picking from the stock of characters and uses them only after they are transformed by the author's imagination so that they cohere and together create a "secondary world". Tolkien explains this in his essay *On Fairy Stories* as "rearrangement of primary material and creating inner consistency of reality" (Tolkien 15-16). From the literary point of view Lewis does not fully follow his theory in his writing (in Narnia).

## 4.2 CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

There is one important feature connected with allegory that I did not mention above. It is the author's presentation of his own ideas. The negative aspect of it, as Lewis and

Tolkien see it, is that ideas are easily recognizable and it is not difficult to comprehend their meaning (as it was said above, these ideas could be retold in non-allegorical way). They also draw attention to the fact that in a good literary work, the author's opinion and beliefs should not be explicit in the text (Duriez, *Encyclopedia* 75). This could not be ultimately achieved, because the author cannot forget what he believes and what he considers important. However, according to Lewis and Tolkien he should try to do so. Obviously, the author writes because he wants to convey something; according to Tolkien and Lewis he should convey an experience or impression or certain atmosphere, but he should not "preach" any religious or political opinions or beliefs.

Considering this point of view, it is not surprising that Tolkien disliked Narnia and called Lewis' writing too allegorical (Kilby 136) and too explicitly Christian (Duriez, *Encyclopedia* 75; Walsh 155). In the previous part I showed that there is a large number of Christian imagery in Narnia books, furthermore there are several biblical quotations that make it easy to decode the meaning.

It might be interesting to enumerate the exact occurrences of Christian motifs in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but there is always the danger of imposing a meaning that is not in the text. I assume that since it is the author who imposes his ideas, it is more utile to find his commentaries about his writing. In the chapter about allegory I quoted Lewis' reply to a lady that Aslan is not an allegorical figure and I would like to mention more arguments that Lewis uses.

In an essay (which is part of the collection *Of This and Other Worlds*) Lewis says that some people think that he started with the idea of writing about Christianity for children and that then he chose a fairy tale and made a list of Christian truths and invented the allegories. Lewis says clearly that this opinion is a nonsense. He opposes this idea by explaining that before he started writing he had in his head images of faun and snowy wood etc., he claims that "at first there wasn't anything Christian about them; this element pushed itself in of its own accord" (BBC, Hooper 400-401).

Similarly in a letter he mentioned the fact that when he started writing *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* he did not foresee that Aslan was going to suffer – "He just wanted to behave in his own way and I just understood it and then the whole series became Christian" (Hooper 425). In this way he denied that he wanted to insert Christianity into his stories.

Furthermore there are his letters (Lewis, *Letters* 238; letter to schoolchildren in Hooper 425) in which he explains that Narnia is not an allegory and he also denies Aslan being an allegory because he said he started from a supposition. In this letter he also admits that the whole story is about Christ and he presents a list of the Narnia books with references which theme is in which book (Hooper 425-6).

Walter Hooper quotes Lewis' remark (probably closely connected with his childhood memories) about the feeling about Christianity – that in the church people ought to feel certain way and that they are not capable of it, because they were told they ought to. Lewis was probably considering this problem and he developed a supposition that

“by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday School associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one thus steal past those watchful dragons?” (Hooper 400).

After the publication of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, when many people wrote to him asking about Christianity in his books, Lewis expresses his surprise that, although he did not intend it, a large number of people recognized the Christian motives and more surprisingly these motives could find their way to people's minds and hearts more easily when they were presented outside the church context. However, this is precisely what Tolkien disliked. Tolkien not only emphasized the importance of the characters being transformed and thus creating a new unity together, he also insisted upon hiding author's political or religious beliefs.

I would like to make a short digression concerning the theme “what is the impact of Lewis' fantasy on the reader”. Chad Walsh poses an interesting question: “Do Christian doctrines seem dragged in by their heels, converting the stories at their most theological moments into sugarcoated Sunday school instruction?” (131). His answer is no, because the children are very often unable to see the allegorical meaning, although he does not deny that children recognize the second level in the story (whether they connect it with the church depends on the background the child has – Walsh 131). Children may or may not recognize the Christian character of the books. I believe this was Lewis' aim – to write it unrecognisable at the first sight but with features that would help children to understand better the life of Christ. George Sayer speaks about “a sort of pre-baptism of the child's imagination” (BBC). Lewis wanted to reveal Christian values and beliefs in a different way, more approachable to children. Colin Duriez sees Lewis' writing as an attempt to

“remythologise central Christian beliefs”, that particularly in Narnia he wanted to create “stories that would put over central Christian meaning in a modern way” (Duriez, *Handbook* 136).

The understanding of Narnia books is different for an adult reader, who is more likely to recognize the Christian content of the stories. For adults it is partly an allegory, but Lewis’ intention was that the books (although written primarily for children) should be read also by adults and again and again and “each time in a different way and on a different level” (Peters 79).

Since such a large number of his letters, essays and other material is available and since there is a large number of people who collect these materials and write books about Lewis, we may encounter a number of inconsistencies in his declarations.

I have explained what Lewis thought about allegory and about the best type of writing and also his remarks about the creation of Narnia stories. He could not say that it is allegory, because the whole story is not complete allegory in every aspect. The reason why he denied Aslan being an allegory of Christ might be that if he said so, he might have been accused of heresy, because not all the comportment of Aslan is in accord with Christian doctrine (for example the sacrifice on the table, where Aslan is offered to the “devil”). He declared that some people imposed on his stories allegories he did not know about (Goffar 28). By this notice he clarifies that he did not want people to search in his books deciphering the meaning of every single event.

#### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

In this essay I tried to present *The Chronicles of Narnia* in connection with Lewis’ approach to literary theory. In the first part I indicated that Christianity played an important role in his life. Then I presented his view of good writing with reference to his books, letters and Tolkien’s remarks. From the later arose the conflict that put into question the literary value of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Since my attempt was to find the connection or inconsistency between Lewis’ theoretical work and his fantasy writing, the following part was dealing with themes that are allegorical or that show Narnia books as approaching allegory or that bear Christian meaning. Furthermore, in the next chapter I aspired to make clear in what aspects Lewis’ theory differs from his fantasy writing and what aspects made Tolkien to view Narnia as too allegorical and too Christian.

Tolkien and Lewis both considered myth as the highest literary form. On one hand Lewis declared he did not intend it to be allegorical; and Narnia is not an allegory (because allegory has a counterpart in literal language). On the other hand it is not myth either (because myth conveys realities that cannot be expressed literally, because they are beyond us). Although Lewis in his stories reflects something that transcends us, from the point of view of literature in his fiction writing the inner consistency of reality is not complete, because his characters do not create sufficiently coherent group and his beliefs are stated too plainly. From this point of view *The Chronicles of Narnia* are on the scale between allegory and myth closer to allegory, because the meaning of the stories is rather definite, obvious and explicit.

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