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Symbolism in C.S Lewis' *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*

Abstract

The Symbolist movement is a reaction against naturalism and realism. The main goal was to express the ideal, an attempt to spiritualize the literature which was to be reflection. Symbolism becomes an important device for writers in literature. It is literary symbols which help the writers to extend the meaning beyond through analysis and exposition.

This paper will discuss about the magical world of Narnia; how it is symbolically presents limitless imagination of human being, the conflict between good and bad and eventually good wins over bad. This paper will also analyze on symbolic representation of some major characters in the two novels *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The characters are Aslan who embodies goodness and his act of creation, how Aslan's song wove a new land, Narnia. This reflects the Biblical act of creation in the book of Genesis; the White Witch who is evil in nature; Edmund Pevensie who represents negative aspects of human being and Lucy Pevensie symbolizes little children who stand in truth.

Keywords: symbols, creation, magic and redemption

The word symbols characterizes with ideas and meanings irrespective of any natural affinity. Symbols are used for different purpose in different perspectives. There in set the power of symbols this makes the language rich with multiple connotations.

The symbol is the existence of the idea itself in its immediate reality. It is symbols which represent the power of imagination. The value of symbols in literature is its infinity of reference that makes it enigmatic and powerful than allegory with its single meaning. Different people will advance different meaning for the same symbol, for no symbols tell its specific meaning to any person. It gives voices and makes it extra ordinary with its underline, meaning.

Symbolism is a movement in literary and visual arts which was initiated in Nineteenth century in France and Belgium which lasted until World War II. Arthur Symon's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* defines what symbolism in literature is: a form of expression, at the best for approximate essential but arbitrary, until it has obtain the force of a conversation, for an unseen reality apprehend by the conscious.

C.S Lewis was born on 29th November, 1889 in Belfast Ireland. His powerful imagination was always at work, creating his own fantasy world as a child. C.S Lewis believes that his reason for writing symbolism is to explain the real world by the 'dreaming world'.

C.S Lewis is best known for his seven series of fantasy novel *The Chronicles of Narnia*. *The Chronicles of Narnia* is a series which is remarkable consider as one of the best work in literature. The whole series gives a symbolic connotation: *The Magician's Nephew* notifies the creation of Narnia; *The Lion, the Witch and the wardrobe* is about the Crucifixion and Resurrection; *The Horse and the Boy* is the calling and conversion of heathen; *Prince Caspian* conveys restoration of the true religion after corruption; *The Voyage of the Dawn*

Treader portrays the spiritual life of a person; *The Silver Chair* reflects the continuing war with the power of darkness and *The Last Battle* depicts the coming of antichrist, the end of the world and the last judgment.

The stories contain symbols that represent through characters, places, and things. As Lewis was a Christian, many of the symbols are refer to the Bible, Christianity, Christ, God, Sin and other spiritual matter. Even though Lewis did not re-write the biblical story of Christ, he use the characteristics of people from the Bible, he uses the idea behind acts as the creation of the world, death of Christ and resurrection. He also uses the idea behind spiritual journeying to heaven and the problems accompany such journey.

Having revealed God's divine nature, Lewis uses the first novel to address eschatology points- namely the beginning of Narnia. Here Aslan is established as the creator- he sings Narnia into the existence, and gives the animal the ability to speak. Evil enters the young world through a fallen creature: Jadis, queen of dead world Charn. Like the story of Eden, Lewis incorporates a garden with very peculiar and powerful fruit. He even depicts man's role in the creation of Narnia. First we see its descent into wickedness, and its rejection of Aslan's authority.

Lewis sense of imagination was always at work since his childhood days. He creates imaginary land top escape from the sorrow. He creates his own imaginary characters and world which resulted in creating Narnia. The name Narnia is based on *Narni*, Italy, written in Latin as Narnia. He simply likes the sound of Narnia.

By the time Lewis began writing the stories of Narnia; his mind was uniquely filled with usable images and symbols. He had already created many symbols in his writing. He used talking animals in *Out of Silent Planet* (1938) and used them again in Narnia. (Walsh. 59)

The world of Narnia is a country created by Aslan the son of great Emperor. It is a land beyond the wardrobe where all things are possible. A land in which lamp-posts come to life and grow like trees; in which animals talk; and trees are personalities that walk and sing.

Lewis believe that there is a clear distinction between good and evil; morality and immorality; and between good act and evil act. The instinctive and educated knowledge of what is good and what is evil is called conscious. In the Chronicles, it is often expressed as the feeling “deep down inside” that something ought to be done or ought to be avoided. (Ford. 372)

When Lucy entered into Narnia, she opens a picture of what this new world looks like for the readers: it is a wide and white medieval fantasy world that contains an immense space, as Bruce Edward writes, “It is larger on the inside than it is on the outside” (21). The inside can be compared to the unconscious of human beings that contain vast and measureless thoughts. Narnia is, “Analogues to the life of mind, high rules parallel to the physical life we lead” (Veith. 35). It symbolizes the limitless imagination in human’s mind. Every time the door to Narnia is opened by the protagonist, some magic occurs and fantastic imagination.

When Lucy takes her siblings to the wardrobe with the intention of proving the existence of Narnia, the door to the magical world is closed for them, while her first entrance is completely achieved when she has no doubt in her mind and is driven by her unconscious. This symbolizes that the door to the new world is only opened when the opener does not doubt but believes in the existence and personality of magic. “Being able to see a fantasy place is the product of believing in the existence, a belief which indicates special gifts of imagination and spiritual vision” (Rigsbee.10).

Humans play an essential role in Narnia affairs: they are responsible for the entrance of evil in the very hour of creation, they influence the course of Narnian history with all their potential for both good and evil, and the true monarchs of Narnia are human. (Huttar. 25)

One of the most important techniques Lewis uses to appeal to a younger audience is his use of children as the main character. This establishes a connection for young readers. Each child symbolizes an idea, a concept or a representation. Aslan, meaning 'Lion' in Turkish language, is the one character who appears in the two novels.

Aslan is a lion, the only character that appears in all the seven series of The Chronicles of Narnia. Therefore it can be assumed that he is the most important and the central element of the message that the author wants to convey to the readers. The first book of the series The Magician's Nephew itself gives beckons of Aslan's as a figure of Christ. Apart from Aslan, the major characters are the four Pevensie children and the Witch.

Aslan possesses two fold of nature – he was fully a lion, he looked like one, he roared like one. At the same time he was the same time fully God. He therefore represents God as capable of anything, even becoming a true lion (Lindskoog.55). This is clearly a reference to the biblical story of Jesus Christ as the son of God, being God himself. That is the very first notion to remember when talking with Aslan, he is the representation of God the son, Jesus Christ. The Emperor-beyond the sea, standing for God the Father, never play active role in the story but Aslan is sent to the land powerful and mysterious "miracles" or deeds that no other lion was capable of. (Ford. 99)

Aslan who created Narnia through his song is parallel with how God is described to create the earth in the Bible.

The Lion was pacing to and fro about that empty land and singing his new song. It was softer and more lilting than the song by which he had called up the stars and the sun; a gentle, rippling music. And as he walked and sang, the valley grew green with grass. (MN. 125)

Aslan is seen as an omnipotent God who can be seen in the first book of the series, The Magician's Nephew. Lewis depicts Aslan as an honorable, personal, intellectual being

who creates them with the same mental qualities, in decision making and expressing their opinions.

The animals, since capable of thinking and acting upon their reasoning, were given the land of Narnia into their management, just as the biblical people, Adam and Eve, were given the earth to rule over it. Aslan says he gives them themselves, he gives them the land of Narnian and all there is to it like fruits, woods, and the rivers. “The Dumb Beast whom I have not chosen are yours also. Treat them gently and cherish them but do not go back to their ways lest you cease to be talking Beast. For out of them you were taken and then you can return. Do not so” (MN. 141). Corresponding portion from the Bible from Genesis offer similar instruction: “Be fruitful, increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it; have domination over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gideon 2).

Aslan is a representation of unchangeable being and the master of stability. One can be sure that when one comes back to Narnia after a long time, he will find the same old Aslan, not touched by time. Here Lewis makes parallel to his belief that the more spiritually mature a person becomes, the greater capacity he will have understood the goodness and the beauty of God. (Lindskoog. 57)

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* four important characters are introduced, the Pevensie children. They are Peter Pevensie, Susan Pevensie, Edmund Pevensie and Lucy Pevensie. They became a yardstick to the plot, giving a significant representation. In *The Lion, the Witch and the wardrobe* Mr. Beaver addressed the four Pevensie as “Sons of Adam, Daughters of Eve” (404) to introduce the children to Mrs. Beaver, and Aslan uses these titles almost exclusively in addressing the children. The use of these phrases by Lewis denotes the theological background against which have fallen from a primordial state of innocence. (Ford.404)

The four children represent things associated with Christianity. The first is Peter, who is the same as Apostle Peter. The Apostle Peter was the one who led the church after Christ. Peter, in Narnia after his ordeals, he is taken as the King of Narnia at the end of the book.

Second is Susan. She becomes the Queen of Narnia. The horn which the Christmas father gave to her becomes the symbol of hope.

The third is Edmund. He was struggling with his elder brother, Peter, who is always considered better than him, and his elder sister, Susan, who has appropriated to herself the role of his mother. The only person he ranks above is his younger sister, Lucy. Out of this tangle of sibling relationships comes his will to power, his desire to have a life his own way. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe become more symbolic because of Edmund's treachery and his redemption. Edmund is tempted away from his brother and sisters in Narnia by the White Witch, her Turkish delight, a sweet which she offers as a temptation for the promise of power. His betrayal has been compared to Judas of the New Testament and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Edmund becomes the symbol of "everyman" for whom Jesus died on the cross for the whole humanity.

Edmund started to imagine being the King of Narnia and plan the things he will do.

When I'm King of Narnia, the first thing I shall do will be to make some decent roads. And of course that set him off thinking about being a King and all the other things he would do and this cheered hi, up a good deal. He had just settle in his mind what sort of palace he would have and how many cars and all about his private cinema and where the principal railways would run and what laws he would make. (*LLW*. 84)

Edmund's imaginations show the nature of human beings. It symbolizes how a human starts to imagine things without doing anything. It is a symbolic in conveying the importance of hard work. Nothing will make a person prosperous without him doing anything.

Edmund is greedy for power. When power comes, everything will be controlled by him. He does not know the impact for his decisions. He could have been saved from the White Witch's trap if he shared about her with his siblings. However, he did not, as he wanted to become a king as the Witch promised so. It symbolizes how man has always desired to take everything for oneself. His character is akin to mankind seeking money and power.

Lucy's character is also one of the important elements in the discovery of Narnia. When the children explore the house and stumble into the spare room with the wardrobe, they find nothing interesting and so go out the room, but Lucy's stays behind. The following sentence in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, "She thought it would be worth while trying the door of the wardrobe, even though she felt almost sure that it would be locked" (Lewis.12) shows that Lucy is a curious person with a spirit of adventure and she is not frightened of new challenges even though she knows that it will not be easy. She has fertile imagination gifted intuition to the new things. "Lucy's discovery of the magical passageway to Narnia signifies her spiritual superiority over her siblings, who entered Narnia only by following her" (Rigsbee. 10). This spiritual adventure is an important quality and foreshadows Lucy's later involvement in the adventure in Narnia.

Lucy was the first child to travel to Narnia, given the reader the first glimpse of the new world, through the eyes of a child. Not only did she wonder, but she innocently believed without question, all that she had been told. She met Mr. Tumnus and trusts him immediately, her first contact from the new world, Narnia. She was confused when he eventually divulged that he had been working for the White Witch, and that he intended to deliver her to the Witch. After deciding that it was against his conscience to do this, he took Lucy back to lamp post, so that she would again be safe from the witch.

While Lucy's first encounter Tumnus was an excellent example for the readers on how Christians are expected to forgive even worst of personal offences, this made her story

seems even more preposterous to her siblings. This symbolizes forgiving others, regardless of severity of their offences.

Lucy is a symbolic representation of every little child who believes in God without any doubt. She stands firm in her faith about Aslan. She later becomes and known as Queen Lucy the Valiant.

She does not question the ways of Aslan similar to the way that kids do not questions what they learn from the society.

The White Witch is named as Jadis. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the Beavers explain what and who the White Witch is by saying, “She comes to your father Adam’s first wife, here they called Lilith. And she was one of the Jinn” (LWW. 76).

The Pevensie children think the White Witch has two faced – nice when she wants to trap Edmund, cruel as soon as she has done the deed. (Colbert. 31) when Jadis first saw and discover Edmund in the snowy Narnia and learn that he is a human – what she needs as a Queen of Narnia is to defeat Aslan, she immediately set to work: “My poor child, she said in a quite different voice, ‘how cold you look! Come and sit with him here on the sledge and I will put my mantle round you and we will talk” (LWW. 36)

When Peter, Susan and Lucy see the White Witch for the first time they could feel her malice: “The three children who had not seen her before felt shudders running down their backs at the sight of her face; and there were low growls among all the animals present. Though it was bright sunshine everyone felt suddenly cold” (LWW. 127-128). The White Witch is pure evil and tries to kill everyone who stands on her way of being the Queen of Narnia. She seems to enjoy killing and torturing her victims, mostly by turning them into stones with her wand. She holds Edmund as a hostage and treats him very badly. Edmund is forced to walk with his hands tied behind him. “He kept on slipping in the lush and mud and wet grass, and every time he slipped the dwarf gave him a curse and sometimes a flick with

the whip” (LWW. 110). We find how the White Witch hits him through the line, “As for you, said the Witch, giving Edmund a stunning blow on the face” (107). Finally, she is going to slit Edmund’s throat with her knife but in the last minute stopped by Aslan’s friends. (144)

Allegorically, the White Witch could be a symbol of Satan. In the novel, the Witch has the right to kill any Narnian caught in the act of treachery. The White Witch plays on the moral weakness and distorted view of the world that is inside Edmund inherited sin from Adam and Eve. (Colbert. 35) The Witch’s role is parallel to the role of Satan, to whom the souls of damned sinners is a literal representation of Satan’s capacity to impose spiritual death of the body. Traitors belong to Jadis because she’s playing the role of Satan. As told in the Bible story of Job, God allowed Satan to test people’s soul, and to take those souls if the person failed. That is why Mr. Beaver calls Jadis “the Emperor’s hangman” (LWW. 128)

Lewis found another source for Jadis in a story connected to the Bible (Colbert. 39). In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Mr. Beaver mention Jadis to the Pevensie. She is described as the daughter of Lilith. “... but she’s no daughter of Eve. She comes of your father Adam’s – your father Adam’s first wife, here they call Lilith. And she was one of the Jinn. That’s what she comes from – no one side. No, no there isn’t drop of real human blood in the Witch” (LWW. 76)

In the myths of ancient Mesopotamia, Lilith was a demon who seduced men and stole children. Her story survives on the edges of the Jewish and Christian tradition (Colbert. 39). Though Lilith is not mentioned in the Bible, this pagan legend dates from dark Ages. In Babylonian legend, Lilith was a “demon of desolate places”, and in later Jewish law, she is believed to have deserted Adam and haunted the night.

The Magician’s Nephew is an important novel because it shows all the comings and goings between the world and the land of Narnia. We find Lewis illustrating the biblical act of creation. The song of Aslan brings wonder and awe as he creates sun, moon, stars, and all

living things. These events reflect what Bible tells us when it says of God. In the Holy Bible, the book of John 1:3, it says, “All things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that were made.”

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* we find the biblical act of substitutionary atonement and redemption, symbolically presented when Aslan offers his own life in exchange for Edmund. The act is symbolic of Jesus sacrificing His life on the cross for the sins of humanity. In the end of the novel there is a battle fought between the Lion and the Witch, where the Lion won. This action has a particular wealth of symbolism which serves not merely to convey ideas but to create moods.

Aslan's sacrificial death, which Aslan himself chose to endure in place of Edmund, is a direct illustration of the death of Jesus, who Christian believed died for mankind. Aslan did so willingly, and specifically as payment for the contractually obliged death due to one of Edmund's mistakes. He also exhibited extraordinary forgiveness and benevolence to Edmund, even when the substitution came at great cost. Furthermore, after his torture and death, he was resurrected in the same way as in the story of Jesus.

A person who is similar with the Bible will easily relate the Chronicles to Biblical theme. Each characters, actions and place itself has its own symbolic meaning to convey. The magical world of Narnia brings forth with beauty and horror. Beauty of love and truth, we find in the character of Aslan. Horror of greedy, cruel and betrayed that we find in the character of the White Witch. As a reader we find catastrophe in Narnia, the death and resurrection of Aslan. In both the novel a similar turn of events occurs, bringing deliverance and redemption in unanticipated ways. The structure of the plots thus reflects the fairy tale and theological position of the author, C.S Lewis.

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