

Morality and Fantasy: Acritical Study in C. S. Lewis' *'The Chronicles of Narnia'*

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Abstract: *The present research explores an outline to children's literature by discussing the history and growth of these texts which dominated the literary world. The influence of fantasy texts determines the children's books and authors idea in developing the literature into the modern stage. The authors of Children's literature texts open an opportunity for the children to understand the reality from the imagination. This current research examines the fantasy writing and the methods wherein unconventional worlds are used in The Chronicles of Narnia. Whereas C.S. Lewis uses eccentric world to actual dissimilar ends, one to escape the present world and other comprise with the problems which turn into an alarm in this modern world.*

Keywords: fantasy, alternative world, children's literature, chronicles, Narnia

1. Introduction

The Children's literature is the form of written works and associated pictures created so as to amuse or educate the young generation. The genre comprehends an extensive collection of works, comprising the recognized masterpieces of world literature, picture books and easy reading short stories written completely for children, and fairy tales, lullabies, fables, folk songs, and other above all verbal hand on materials.

Primarily, Children's literature openly arose as a different and autonomous form of literature in the second half of the 18th century, previously which it had been at best only in a developing phase. Throughout the 20th century, however, its progression has been so flourishing as to make invulnerable its claim to be observed with the admiration. Though, possibly not the seriousness that is due with any other renowned division of literature.

The literature in the ancient hove into view that children's literature seemed to have no place in it, and if at all a place, only a marginal part. The discussions and studies in the twentieth century substantiate that children's literature, a fast emerging field, as compared to the other literature from at least the mid-eighteenth century, incorporating essentially all genres and thousands of authors. Through the reflection on the numerous and contradictory attitudes and beliefs, one interprets that children's books, ethnically decisive and of massive acclamation scholastically, academically and sociably, cannot be explained by typical textual features either of flair or content. 'Children's book' has been explored in terms that difference it to books for adults; in terms of its technical details; what it does; whom it is addressed to etc., replicating on what has been implicit is given below. The specific term 'Children's book' has a new development from the past. Till then:

[. . .] books were just books: some you liked, some of your ten

-year-old grandson liked, some were read by adults, while many writers such as Dickens were also enjoyed by children. (Tunis, 24)

Even today, this similar state of affairs remains the same. Among the Adult books such as *The Street Lawyer* and *The Runaway Jury* by John Grisham are frequently read by children, and matured readers regularly read and re-read children's books such as *The Wizard of Oz* and C. S. Lewis' *Narnia Series*. Tales of fantasy such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Harry Potter series* or *The Sagas* of J. R. R. Tolkien have a tremendously comprehensive audience from children through teenagers to adults and even the aged people too. And then the classics such as *Gulliver's Travels*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *David Copperfield* and *Mill on the Floss* tailor each and every audience similarly. *Gulliver's Travels* abundant with escapades voyages to the mysterious and difficulties appeal to children however addressed to adults. These books classified as Children's Classics were not explicitly written for children. Therefore, the children read them for their need for suitable reading resources and they did not originate from such books all that they provide more mature and experienced readers. From the text a few favourite passages are relished, huge and problematic portions are frisked to identify the end of the adventure, which is a momentous one and would have fascinated the interest of children. The multifarious and delicate portions and the information are way outside their restricted understanding. The Children's books have been read as literature only in recent times in the American Academy. In subsequent to the 1970s, their study was restrained practically and completely to the fields of education and library science. As a result, it proliferate the attention from literature departments, children's literary criticism in America today ruins interdisciplinary. A fast-growing field, this kind of writing has been comprised in the academics in the west exclusively in Europe, America, and Australia.

In the world of literature, Fantasy appeared as a reaction against the 19th century realism, then also against the ethics of rationality, the consequences of the growth of science and technology (due to the Industrial Revolution). This kind of literature replicated the apparitions of romantic poets, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, in educing the vital artistic function of imagination that forms miraculous spaces, combined with a specific mysticism (George MacDonald wrote a type of religious fantasy that would later influence J. R. R. Tolkien's and C. S. Lewis' writings).

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The fantasy worlds in cinema are being exhibited and performed by using refined tools, proving that such movies can symphonically combine the imagination of fantastists and film directors with the instruments of science and technology. These predicaments refabricate a third space, in which the astounding and the means of its production come to life. A high quality fantasy movie uses special effects in order to depict the imaginary world and make the viewer perceive it as reality. A vivid fantasy movie director has a fantastist's talent, if we were to follow George MacDonald's and J. R. R. Tolkien's line of arguments. Such a fantasy director has the mission to recreate autonomous worlds, coherent and in accordance with the inner laws they uphold. Therefore, the viewer must never sense that he or she is part of an illusion. That is why the internal laws of fantasy movies have to be exactly composed, both on the level of the imaginary and in the methodological production stage. Such an effort deliberates reliability to the secondary worlds and eludes mistakes that could origin the end and dismissal of the created alternative reality.

Fantasy and Morality in 'The Chronicles of Narnia'

The Chronicles of Narnia contain several passages which can quite easily be read, and indeed frequently are, as allegorical of biblical episodes. Most obviously the beginning of Narnia in *The Magician's Nephew* allegorizes the beginning of the world in Genesis; Asian's murder in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* allegorizes Christ's passion; and the final scenes in *The Last Battle* are allegorical of Judgment Day. There are also other elements of allegory in Narnia but these are the most apparent episodes. In particular, the presence of Asian who appears to be an allegorical Christ figures. However, it is important to acknowledge that Lewis said Asian was not allegorical and instead said that he was a supposal: "an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, 'What might Christ become like if there really were a world like Narnia and He chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in that world as He actually has done in ours?' This is not allegory at all." (Lewis, 1958)

The Magician's Nephew (1955), chronologically the first, begins by negating the present in favour of the past. Lewis idealizes the past by tempting the child with its beneficial constituents. *The Magician's Nephew* is set in the 'days when Sherlock Holmes was still living in Baker Street' and Lewis says 'meals were nicer; and as for sweets I won't tell you how cheap and good they were, because it would only make your mouth water.' (MV, 9) Examples of this nostalgic sentiment are found throughout the chronicles. The reader's attention is continually drawn to elements of the present which are outdone by their past equivalents with an explicit authorial comment. However, it is not only linguistically that Lewis rejects the present in favour of the past. The very foundations of Narnia negate the present. Its political structure rejects modern democratic governing systems and returns to an elite monarchical system derivative of a pre-medieval English monarchy; the clothing worn by the human characters is similarly drawn from English medieval times; even the language of the characters at times, though not consistently, reverts to old-fashioned sentence structures, simulating a mock medieval courtly speech. In *The Last Battle* (1956) King Tirian muses on the news that Asian may

be returning to Narnia: "I can think of nothing but this wonderful news. Think you we shall hear any more of it today... How can they choose but be true?" (LB, 17)

Though Narnia remains a place of innocence after the reworking of the fall myth in *The Magician's Nephew*, Digory's earlier weakness has already caused evil to enter Narnia. Lewis shows here that humans are weak and that such weakness is the cause and root of evil. Though his allegory is not complete and there is never any explanation of how other countries and races (almost all enemies) come to exist, the cause of the first evil entering the world is a human weakness to temptation. Perhaps this is in part due to Lewis' own claim that Narnia is not allegorical. Peter Schakel says that it is true that the books have a religious significance beyond their plots... but that a reader must crucially remember that not everything is an allegory. (Schakel, 1979, xii) By striking the bell in Charn and waking the Empress Jadis, Digory has awoken and brought evil into Narnia. Asian says, "before the new, clean world I gave you is seven hours old, a force of evil has already entered it; waked and brought hither by this son of Adam... Evil will come of that evil, but it is still a long way off..." (MV, 126) The implication is that without the Witch, the first evil to enter the world, there would be no such thing as evil or indeed sin in Narnia. Lewis' theology here is unclear for it is not known whether he sees humans as destined to sin or evil as something imposed on the good from without. Nevertheless, Lewis suggests at the inevitably corrupt nature of human beings. It is Digory's weakness and susceptibility to temptation which has brought evil into the world, and his sinful nature which is the source of corruption in Narnia in *The Last Battle*. Lewis creates a new world, an Edenic paradise, rejecting this world, whilst simultaneously burdening it with the same flaws as his own world.

Historically Narnia does not carry on in the same ways as ours; it is suspended in a state of idealism for the majority of its history. The build-up of the final judgment is the most explicitly critical commentary on our world in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Chad Walsh draws parallels between the history of Narnia and our world. In *The Last Battle*, Asian's appearances have become sparse. Narnians are beginning to question his existence.

In reality, World War II highlights the fact that war was no longer only fought on the battlefield and no longer was the victims of war exclusively soldiers. World War II saw heavy bombing of civilian areas of Britain forcing the realization that anyone could be a victim of war. This reality has informed the literature by Lewis; however, Lewis does not include this shift in warfare in his Narnia books. Interestingly it is from these air-raids that the Pevensie children are removed in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and one which they can win, in Narnia. Egoff emphasizes the importance that the world events of the first half of the twentieth century had on fantasy writers.

The early twentieth century experienced two world wars and Nazism. Until then it had probably never seen so clearly that ordinary people could become agents of malevolence, caught up in a great awesome evil that seemed beyond the power of the individual to combat. (Egoff, 1981,91)

In the face of this epic threat, Lewis created Narnia with its Arthurian landscape, morality, and battles in which it is not beyond the power of the individual to combat evil. In Narnia enemies are clearly defined (be it crudely by the colour of their skin), battles take place on battlegrounds and are fought by the elite and battles *are* won.

The children of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* are taken to a world whereas individuals they can make a difference. There is not a sense in which the wars involve everyone: they are fought by the elite for the good of the proletariat. This is in accord with a medieval ethos of warfare and once again negates the military climate of Lewis' world. 'The world of Narnia embodies the Lewis' belief in the ordered, hierarchical world of medieval Christianity. (Swinfen, 1984, 149)

Not only did Lewis write with two world wars behind him, but also with the contemporary threat of nuclear weapons and the cold war. In the 1950s the threat of nuclear destruction was at the forefront of the British, even international, consciousness and Lewis wrote *The Chronicles of Narnia* at a time when such a colossal threat was not only a new concept but also a very real threat.

The implied incompetence of modern education is present throughout the *Chronicles* and here it is suggested that not only is stupidity inevitable, but that one grows stupid with old age. Lewis continually implies that growing up is undesirable. Also in this sequence, it is explicitly stated that dying for a good cause is morally preferable to living a long and non-eventful if peaceful, life.

2. Conclusion

It is conclude that Lewis work in three different ways. Fantasy, it has been shown, is a genre which habitually comments upon reality and contemporary issues; this is despite its vital escape from the real world through creating an unconventional fantasy world. Children's literature has traditionally been a literature which discuss with morality and it is clearly a leading issue in Lewis' children's literature. Finally, *The Chronicles of Narnia* highlights the conflicting messages which are communicated by the author in children's literature.

However, Lewis precedes contradictory methods to the images of their modern realities in their fantasy work, on the other hand he remarks upon their contemporary world in the creation of the secondary world. As Ann Swinfen says, fantasy is 'a method for approaching and evaluating the real world.' (Swinfen, 1984, 230). The new world of Narnia deviates from what Lewis sees as the primary fault of our world by delaying the expulsion of man from Eden. In the beginning he throws the creation of this perfect world.

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