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The Two-Headed Beast: Notes toward the Definition of Allegory

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Abstract
The author provides a literary history of the concept of allegory going back to Homer, describing “allegorism” and “typology” as the two divisions of allegory, distinguishing allegory from symbolism and conceit, exploring modern attitudes toward allegory, and briefly examining the use of allegory and symbol in Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams.

Keywords
Allegory; Lewis, C.S.—Use of allegory; Symbolism; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Use of symbolism; Williams, Charles—Use of allegory
The two-headed Beast: Notes toward the Definition of Allegory

Allegory is a term that crops up from time to time in literary discussions, especially those in Mythlore. But its use is surrounded by confusion as to its meaning. In his article in the second issue of Mythlore, Colin Duriez quotes in the course of one paragraph on page 22: 'Lewis' statement that 'allegory is a mode of expression' and W.H. Auden's claim that any analysis always tends to reduce symbolism to a false and boring allegory; the latter which clearly implies a concept of allegory as a mode of interpretation, not of expression. The same confusion is found in dictionaries of the term in glossaries and dictionaries: Beekson and Ganz, in line with Lewis, define it as 'an extended narrative which carries a second meaning along with its surface story.' M.H. Abrams has a definition that seems to try to include both meanings: an allegory undertakes to make a doctrine or thesis interesting and persuasive by converting it into a narrative in which the agents, and sometimes the setting as well, represents general concepts, moral qualities, or other abstractions.

At first blush this sounds like Lewis, but his omission of validity as well as interest and persuasion as characteristic of allegory implies a certain doubt to whether it is trying to express anything in a true and necessary manner. The confusion is worse compounded by the Oxford Universal Dictionary (the abridged OED), which defines 'allegory' as 'description of a subject under the guise of some other subject of aptly suggestive resemblance' or an 'extended metaphor,' but defines the verb 'allegorize' as 'to make or treat as allegorical;' to expand allegorically; to construct or utter allegories,' italics mine, thus tainting in the interpretative as well as the expressive sense. The literal meaning given for allegoria is simply 'speaking otherwise that one seems to speak,' which is capable of almost infinite extension, in actual use, 'allegory' does have a double meaning. The two senses of the word are equally ancient, going back to Hellenistic times, but are quite different in meaning. In essence, to read allegorically (henceforth referred to as allegorical) means to seek something in a text beyond the literal meaning, and in fact, as the process developed, to discard the literal meaning. To write allegorically (henceforth called allegory) means essentially to write figuratively; to choose a literal meaning that can carry further significance without being distorted on the literal level; the process embraces everything from simple metaphor and simile ('A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed;' 'O my love is like a red, red rose') to complex extended narratives like The Pilgrim's Progress and The Faerie Queene.

Allégorism and Typology

Allégorism, the interpretative mode, is pre-Christian in origin. The nature and motives of allegorism are concisely summarized by K. J. Woolcombe, in Essays on Typology:

The Iliad and the Odyssey were at a very early date adopted as the basic text-books in Greek education; not even the vigorous protests of Plato could oust them from the established position which they occupied in the schools by the fourth century B.C. Moreover, because the sages were believed to contain eternal truths, they were accorded greater reverence than mere literary admiration. They owed their place of honor not to their literary beauty, but to the high ideals of chivalry and ethics which they enthralled. The attitude of the Greeks to the Iliad and the Odyssey thus resembles the Jewish attitude to the Pentateuch...

From the sixth century B.C. onwards, this popular, quasi-religious admiration of Homer raised certain problems with which the philosophers were obliged to grapple, and this need to inquire whether a collection of writings which contained a high proportion of humble folk-lore merited such reverence. They had also to show that it was morally justifiable to admire deities, who not infrequently were recorded as having committed acts of gross immorality. Discussion of these problems is almost as old as Greek prose: from the earliest days philosophers sought to attach a more profound significance to the homeric folk-tales in order to render them philosophically respectable and morally justifiable.

Celsus hints that one of the earliest Greek writers, Philo of Alexandria (c. 50 B.C.), had already begun to understand the words of Zeus to Hera in a sense neither literal nor literal.

Woolcombe suggests that the earliest allegorizing impulse was a desire to escape from the literal meaning of the text, but to preserve the esteem in which the literary work was held by proving it somehow was really saying something better than it appeared to be saying.

Typology, which appears on the surface to be another form of allegorism, rests on radically different foundations. It is the method used by the first Christians, and developed extensively by the early Church Fathers, to demonstrate the way in which the New Covenant, disclosed in the New Testament, was a fulfillment of the Old Covenant of Hebrew scripture. Like allegorism, typology recognizes both a literal sense and an undersense; but unlike allegorism, it insists that both are equally true and necessary.

In Woolcombe's words: Typological exegesis is the search for linkages between events, persons or things within the historical framework of revelation, whereas allegorism is the search for a secondary and hidden meaning underlying the primary and obvious meaning of a narrative. This secondary sense of a narrative, discovered by allegorism, does not necessarily have any connection at all with the historical framework of revelation.

The locus classicus of New Testament typology is the speech of the prophet Amos before the council which accused him of blasphemy against the Law (Acts vii). It is simply a summary of Old Testament teaching on the relations between God and Israel from Abraham to Solomon, to show that to believe in these things and to believe in Christ are necessarily one and the same thing: the life and acts of Christ are both the consummation and the recapitulation of the factual history of the Jews. The undersense is there because the Author, God, has put it there; it is not merely a product of human ingenuity.

The allegorism of St. Paul is almost a special case of typology, rather than another version of Hellenistic allegorism as exemplified by Philo of Alexandria (Philo Judaicus) around 50 A.D. The chief example in Galatians iv. 22-31 (KJV):

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

But he who was the bondmaid was born after the flesh; but the one by the freewoman was by promise.

Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

But as then he was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Woolcombe's comparison of this exegesis with that of Philo on the same passage is instructive:

In Gal. 4, Hagar is said to represent the Old Covenant given on Mount Sinai, and Sarah the New Covenant with the children of promise: the way in which God dealt with Abraham's two wives is used as an allegory of the way in which he deals with Christians and with those Jews who do not accept the New Covenant.

Philos, on the other hand, wrote that, 'Sarah, virtue, bears the same relation to Hagar, education, as the mistress to the servant-maid, or the lawful wife to the concubine, and natural knowledge to the mind which are in contrast to gain knowledge, the mind we call Abraham, will have Sarah, virtue, for his wife, and Hagar, the whole range of school culture, for his concubine.' In the Pauline interpretation, the historical pattern of the story of Sarah and Hagar is used as a parallel of
Unfortunately, the extravagant method of Philonic allegorism was far more influential on the early Fathers than the firmly historical Philo method. It led the way to the mid-fourth-century controversy, with the school of Antioch. The concept of allegorism which passed into Christian popular tradition was one in which there was always implicit a certain disregard for the literal meaning—a concept brilliantly summed up in Harington’s metaphor of the rim and the pith, quoted below.

The Middle Ages appear to have had a clear-cut conception of allegorization, one which in effect put it in its place, summarized in the famous dictum which goes back at least to the twelfth century; and possibly to Carolingian times, Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria.

Marulis quid agas, quo tendas academiam.

The literal level tells what happened; the allegorical, what is to be believed; the moral, how to behave; and the anagogical, whether we are tending (the mystical meaning). In actual practice, however, it was the famous distinction which goes back at least to the twelfth century; and summed up in Llari ton’s metaphor or the rim and the pith, quoted below.

Thus we have the vast fourteenth-century Ovid moralized, with its attempt to make the nymph Daphne (of the Apollo-and-the-laurel legend) into the blessed Virgin Mary; Chastel de Paris’s Othello which was the famous distinction which goes back at least to the twelfth century; and summed up in Llari ton’s metaphor or the rim and the pith, quoted below.

The application of allegorism to secular literature has a curious history. The classic example of medieval imposed allegorism is Jean Molinet’s moralization of the Romances, composed ca. 1489. He takes a work which actually was an allegory of the psychology of a love affair and turns it into an exposition of Christian doctrine, in which the literal sense disappears entirely from the scene. In the Renaissance, Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso underwent a similar fate at the hands of his commentators, who were concerned at the quite justified charges of amorality leveled against it. Its English translator, Sir John Harington, given in his preface the ultimate rationale of allegorism:

The ancient Poets have indeed wrapped it as were in their writings divers and sundry meanings, which they call the senses or mysteries thereof. First of all for the literal sense (as it were the utmost bare or ryne) they set down in manner of an historic the acts and notable exploits of some persons worthy men; and then in the same, and somewhat more fine, as it were nearer to the pith and marrow, they place the Morall sense profitable for the active life of man, approving virtuous actions and condemning the contrary; and sometimes also whereby they comprehend some true understanding of natural Philosophy, or sometimes of politike government, and now and then of divinitie: and these same senses that comprehend so excellent knowledge we call the Allegorie, which Plintarch defineth to be one thing told, and by that another understood.

Persuas some of Jupiter is fainied by the Poets to have slain Gorgon, and, after that conquest achieved, to have flown vp to Heauen. The historical sense in this; Persuas some of Jupiter by the participation of Jupiter’s virtues which were in him, or rather conning of the stock of one of the kings of Croat, or Athens so called, slew Gorgon, a tyrant (sic) in that country (Gorgon in Greekes signifieth earth), and was for his triumphs rewarded by men vsually. Moreover he signifieth this much: Persuas a wise man, some of Jupiter, endowed with virtue from above, slayeth vice and vice, a think base & earthly signified by him, and so mounteth vp to the skie of vertue. It signifieth in one kind of Allegorie thus much in one man is contained by God, and so children of God killing and vanquishing the earthlinesse of this Gorgonical nature, ascended vp to the understanding of heauenly things, of high things, of eternal things, in which contemplation consisteth the natural man. This is the natural allegory, because man (sic) one of the chief works of nature, it hath also a more high and heavenly Allegorie, that the heavenly nature, daughter of Jupiter, procuring with her continual motion corruption and mortality in the inferior bodies, assitteth it at last from these earthly bodies vp to high, and there remaineth for ever. It hath also another Theological Allegorie: that the angelical nature, daughter of the most high God the creator of all things, killing & overcometh all the bodes of death, signifying, Gorgon ascended into the sky of vertue. It signifieth this much: Perseus a wise man, some of Jupiter, endowed with virtue from above, slayeth vice and vice, a think base & earthly signified by him, and so mounteth vp to the skie of vertue. It signifieth in one kind of Allegorie thus much in one man is contained by God, and so children of God killing and vanquishing the earthlinesse of this Gorgonical nature, ascended vp to the understanding of heauenly things, of high things, of eternal things, in which contemplation consisteth the natural man. This is the natural allegory, because man (sic) one of the chief works of nature, it hath also a more high and heavenly Allegorie, that the heavenly nature, daughter of Jupiter, procuring with her continual motion corruption and mortality in the inferior bodies, assitteth it at last from these earthly bodies vp to high, and there remaineth for ever. It hath also another Theological Allegorie: that the angelical nature, daughter of the most high God the creator of all things, killing & overcometh all the bodes of death, signifying, Gorgon ascended into

The use of “allegory” as a term denoting a mode of writing, in which the sense in which it is used by C.S. Lewis, is even older than its use as the name of an interpretative method:

It should be borne in mind that the word allegoria was not extensively used until the Hellenistic period. Earlier writers used periphrases in which synonymia played the greatest part. When allegoria came into common use, it first referred to allegory as a mode of expression, i.e., it meant figurative language. Later on, it was used to denote allegory as a method of exegesis, i.e., it meant allegorical interpretation. But the latter usage is not found in pagan literature before Plutarch.

Allegory and Metaphor

The use of “allegory” as a term denoting a mode of writing, in which the sense in which it is used by C.S. Lewis, is even older than its use as the name of an interpretative method:

In the famous Letter to Raleigh expounding his intentions in the Faerie Queene, Spenser describes his poem as being "a continued Allegory, or darker conceit," "conceit" at this time meant hardly more than image or metaphor, although the term was generally used to denote a particularly ingenious one. The fact that the conceit is called "dark"—a stock cliche—does not have any heavy mystical implications; if it is not a paraphrase for "figurative," it probably refers to the fact that Spenser does not make his own allegory. But in the preface he relies on the fact that the rose possesses qualities, such as sweetness and beauty, which are equally possessed by the girl.

C.S. Lewis distinguishes between allegory, so called, and symbolism, which is in effect the allegorism treated above. His use of the term is quite legitimate in context, since the allegorizing approach to images is characteristic of the symbolistic school of poetry originating with Baudelaire and his followers in the nineteenth century and still a dominant force in modern poetry when Lewis wrote. But the term is an awkward one, because symbolism is used in a particular way today. When Mr. Duriez compares it favorably to allegory in the article previously cited, the terms of his praise make it obvious that he does not have this definition in mind. I myself am aware of using the word in at least three senses. One is that of allegoristic or metaphorical sense, another sense dissolves away the literal meaning, like some sort of corrosive acid eating through its container, and stands alone: a character "is" Christ. This, incidentally, never happens in Spenser; his characters remain human, in varying degrees, and can never be totally equated with the virtues they represent, The Redcrosse Knight is not Holiness, but a heroic Everyman in quest of that virtue. A second sense of symbolism is in effect allegory in the expressive sense: the rose both is itself and stands for something else. I should like to call this form natural symbolism, a term which expresses both the fact that such symbols are usually taken from nature, rather than contrived (if contrived, they are usually allegoristic, like the equation of Hagar with education), and my contention that the relation between symbol and thing symbolized a natural one, perceptible to the senses. A third sense is the literal sense, which is the literal level without making it constantly applicable or translating the literal meaning of the word into a consistent undersense. An example would be John Crowe Ransom’s poem, “Furniture,” in which a young soldier discovers that his old comma has been wound (italics mine):

"They got you? I have only lost a hat, I would have sold the affair for three thin dimes. But they have stuck your side. It must be looked at. And mended."

"No, it’s an old puncture," said Grimes, "which takes to bleeding sometimes."

"Why, Grimes, I never knew your mortal blood had wasted for my sake in scarlet streams, and no word said, A curse on my manhood if I knew anything!"

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From this extract alone, it would seem that "Punctury" is pure allegory, and Grimes is a classic Christian allegory, in the context of the whole poem, it is clear that this equation is not intended. Ransom is invoking the image of the Atomism as a context for human suffering and heroism and for the dependence of the young soldier upon Grimes.

The symbolism is thus a kind of allusion. It should be clear at this point that when people like Mr. Daries express a preference for "symbolism" over "allegory," they are actually preferring what I call allegory to what I call allegorism. Auden's "false and borting allegory" and Rosemond Tuve's "imposed allegory," I should really like to return to Spenser’s definition to show how allegory, metaphor, and conceit are related.

When Spenser used the word, it is clear that he thought of all three as qualitatively the same, the exploitation of natural symbolism. The difference is basically quantitative, and Spenser calls his "a continued Allegory," meaning that he saw it as differing from simple metaphor primarily in its extension, in the number and variety of resemblances worked out. When the Shulamite in Canticles speaks of herself as a "rose of Sharon," the image works like Burns’s simile: a limited but not explicit comparison is called up. We can think of the girl and the rose as being alike in beauty or sweetness or both. Other qualities of the rose, its color and its short life span, are not evoked by the Hebrew poet and are touched on so lightly by Burns that they do not enter into the relevant metaphor. The conceit, a term which became popular as a name for the kind of image used by Petrarch, was an elaboration of an analogy, particularly an ingenious one. Here is a translation of a Petrarchan sonnet by Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-42):

My galley charged with forgetfulness,
Through clear seas in winter nights doth pass,
Twen rock and rock, and eke mine eye alas,
That is my lord, steereth with cruelness.

And ever o’er a thought in readiness,
As though that death were light in a case,
An endless wind doth tear the sail space
Of forced sighs and trusty fearfulness.

A rain of tears, a cloud of dark disdain,
Bath done the weary cords great endurance:
Wretched with error and eke with ignomion:
The storm be hid that led me to this pain.

Drowned reason is that should comfort me,
And I remain despairing of the port.

When this poem was printed in Tate’s Miscellany (1567), it was given the title, "The Lover Compareth His State to a Ship in Perilous Storm Toosed on the Sea." This is a clear and simple explanation of just what is going on in the conceit (except that it is perhaps inaccurate in assuming that a lover may be speaking: lines 3-4 suggest that the theme is estrangement from a noble friend and patron). The title alone states the metaphor: it becomes a conceit, a mini-allegory, when Wyatt makes his lord’s (or love’s) forgetfulness of him a cargo; his enemy or love, the pilot; his troubles, oars; his sighs, gusts of wind; his tears; rain; his port, happiness; etc. The conceit is essentially like metaphor in that it insists on finding real ways in which estrangement in love or friendship is like the condition of a storm-tossed ship; it differs in that it is interested in elaborating the comparison in many ways as possible. The full-scale allegory of a narrative like the Faerie Queene again involves a quantitative, not a qualitative, extension.

An allegory, as the term is applied to a work like The Faerie Queene or The Pilgrim’s Progress, stands in the same relation to a conceit and a conceit to a simple metaphor. Indeed, the terms may be used interchangeably to describe a short poem like the Wyatt sonnet: Spenser called his poem "a continued Allegory, or darke conceit." But a long poem like The Faerie Queene would not be called a conceit according to normal Renaissance usage. The allegory is basically an extended elaboration of both stanza and process. By extension of stanza I mean an elaboration of details leading to the discovery of multiple correspondences: the poet takes a static relation or equation—ladyrose or unhappy lover:storm-toossedhip—and works it out in as many ways as possible. By extension of process, I mean that the allegory also elaborate a movement of events, a process in time. The chief and obvious example is the quest, which is at one and the same time a physical journey (the literal level) and a spiritual one. Spenser’s knights, who set out on such journeys, meet helpful hermits and hostile dragons, find out how to accomplish their quests, and finally achieve victories, are at the same time spiritual "knight-errants who seek, learn the nature of, fail to encompass, meet opposites of, finally achieve or do the work of, some virtual beast." Either of these processes of extension is called either allegory or conceit; it is the combination of the two in one work that creates the more complex figure which we usually call allegory.

It is impossible, in the scope of a short article, to elucidate a full-length allegory. I would like to give a hint of his poem, one of the most exquisite lyrics of the seventeenth century, which is actually an allegory in form, though the fact is seldom noticed. It is the famous 4th Song1 by Edmund Waller (1606-87):

Go lovely Rose,
Tell her that wastes her time and me,
That now she knows,
When I resemble to thee,
That fair she seems to be.

"Song" by Edmund Waller (1606-87):

Go lovely Rose,
Tell her that wastes her time and me,
That now she knows,
When I resemble to thee,
That fair she seems to be.

Tell her that’s young,
And shuns to have her Graces spy’d,
That hadst thou spurn’d
In Desarts, where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended dy’d.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retir’d;
Did her come forth,
Suffer her self to be desir’d,
And not blush so to be admitt’d.

Then die, that she,
The common sight of all things rare,
May read in thee:
How small a part of time they share,
That are so wondrous sweet and fair.

Comment, after this, seems an impertinence, but I will endeavor nevertheless. The first stanza, a pure conceit, is a fanciful meaning given in the last line. The next two stanzas make an analogy between the rose, whose sweetness is wasted if no one sees or scents it, and the maiden, whose graces are vain if they are not beheld by other people. This is difficult to classify as either extension of stanza or extension of process, but it is closer to the latter in that it deals with the qualities of the rose and the lady in relation to its environment rather than as contained within themselves. The last stanza is purely process, as the process of blooming and fading which the rose goes through is likened to the brief flowering of youth and beauty, the most transient of human attributes. The structural allegory of this poem is a microcosm of the full-scale allegory of a Dante, a Spenser, or a Bunyan.

Modern Attitudes towards Allegory

Having shown (I hope) that allegory as a mode of expression is a perfectly legitimate form, I would like to consider some of the reasons why it has fallen almost completely into disfavor.

The first and most apparent reason is a transcendence to it of a totally justifiable dislike of allegory. The triviality or irrelevancy of the interpretative method, which generally manifests itself as a refusal to come to grips with the actual work of literature itself, is an objection to it as any other form of wrong-headedness. And the transference of this attitude is aided by the fact that there are so few great allegories: except for the medieval Roman de la Rose, Dante, Spenser, and Bunyan, I can think of no really successful large-scale allegories before C.S. Lewis and the March sisters in Little Women. Allegory is an extremely rigorous and demanding form; it is an art rather like juggling and making a scale model at once and the same time. It is much easier to do it badly than to do it well, and even easier not to do it at all and to say what you have to say in some other form. For very similar reasons, there are very few great English lyricisms written in the more difficult verse forms, like the rondeau and the villanelle, and there are far more bad sonnets than good ones.

In addition to the confusion of allegory with allegorism and the search for good allegories, something must be said about the preference for symbolism over allegory implicit in much of modern literary thinking. I believe that this is often something other than the justifiable rejection of allegorism, and approval of what I earlier called natural symbolism, that I think Collin Davis is expressing. The very rigor of thought and expression demanded by allegory are cut of fashion in our age. We like our art abstract, our politics rhetorical, and our philosophy mystical and sensory, if not actually hallucinatory. Allegory, demanding the perception and explanation of real and precise analogies, and the rejection of false ones, is an art in which the senses are disciplined by reason. The modern artist often does not care to work this way, and the modern critic even more often resents being asked to read this way.

As Northrop Frye has said:

We have actual allegory when a poet explicitly indicates the relationship of his images to examples and precepts, and so tries to indicate how a commentary on him should proceed.

The commenting critic is often prejudiced against allegory without knowing the real reason, which is that continuous allegory prescribes the direction of his commentary, and so restricts his freedom. Hence he often urges us to rekindle Spenser and Bunyan, for example, for the story alone and let the allegory go, meaning by that he regards his own type of commentary as more interesting. Or else he will frame a definition of allegory that will exclude the poems he likes.

A Final Word

I should now like to re-examine my comments from MYTHOLOGY in the light of the definitions and distinctions established in this article. There I distinguished between the work of Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams in terms of myth, allegory, and symbol respectively. The question of myth is worth an article in itself, and I shall set it aside here in order to consider how the three, use various types of symbolism, allegory, and
and allegorism. If the fundamental nature of metaphor and allegorism is the perception of resemblance between two unlike elements, then Tolkien could be said to be an allegorist. The people, objects, and events of his world exist in and for themselves. Resemblances are there, but they are not necessary: Frodo may in some ways resemble Christ, but the similarities are inherent in a certain conception of heroism which applies to both, not in a necessity for Frodo to imitate an archetype. Tolkien does use certain powerful natural symbols like kingship, the quest, and the broken sword, but he does not use them allusively. Aragorn's sword which is reforged has certain things in common with Siegfried's, but it is not meant to suggest Siegfried's. In literature, things equal to the same thing are not necessarily equal to each other.

Tolkien also uses natural symbolism in another way which is like that of the allegorist, but it is based on magic rather than metaphor. An example is Frodo's wounds, which pain him annually on the anniversaries of the occasions when they were inflicted. This is magical rather than natural: ordinary wounds either hurt constantly or when aggravated physically, by exertion or damp weather. In this case, the actual physically experienced pain is used as a kind of natural symbol for the fact that Frodo has been permanently scared spiritually by his experiences: he cannot relapse naturally into the world of everyday experience that the Shire typifies, in the way that Sam, Merry, and Pippin can. It would be equally wrong to read Frodo's recurring pain as simple descriptive detail or as the stigma of Christ. The difference is there, but it does not evoke the literal sense.

Charles Williams, as usual, is a special case. His method is an unabashed allegorism (which partially explains his much narrower popularity), which is based on magic rather than metaphor. An example is the lion, which is drawn again and again in the world of ordinary reality regains its primacy. When they are demonic, they represent a danger, and the thrust of the story is the incarnation of the archetypes in The Place of the Lion, where Anthony, in sacramental allegorism, becomes the Adam in order to prevent the real world from becoming truly sacramental and losing its proper reality. Williams's novels present a daring and, I think, usually successful attempt to exploit allegorism as a valid mode of expression.

As I see it, Tolkien's method is that of the allegorist, now to be understood in terms of this discussion. He has certainly the greatest allegorical imagination since Bunyan. His allegories fully fit my definitions, in that they analogize both static relationships and processes of events. In so doing he employs natural symbolism in two different ways. One is to exploit, in a semi-allusively fashion, the ready established symbols in new ways. Aslan the Lion is an appropriate symbol for Christ because the lion has the traditional symbolic import of royalty: he is the King of Beasts, the Lion is in fact an ancient Christ symbol, but such an unfamiliar one that Lewis cannot exploit it allusively: he wrote for children, not art historians. Another example is his use of the Stone Table as a symbol for the Cross: this works instantly because it is the representation of a very obvious and ancient pagan symbol of sacra ment, the stone table which is the altar on which the victims were slain. His other use of the Stone Table as a symbol for the Cross: this works instantly because the lion has the traditional symbolic importance of the Cross of Christ because the lion has the traditional symbolic import of royalty: he is the King of Beasts.

Lewis's purpose in doing this is partly artistic: it is the allegorist's proper delight in perceiving or devising, and exploiting, true resemblances. Lewis found it possible to translate the lion into a man's self-interest; and the Miltonic thesis that possession of the prohibited thing was possession of the imperfect form, if Tinidril had chosen to spend a night on the Fixed Land, she would have forfeited her destiny of dwelling permanently on the Hill of Life, Tai Harendrimor. By eating the fruit of knowledge and gaining the experiential knowledge of good and evil, Eve lost the chance to know them intuitively, without having to suffer evil.

Lewis's purpose is to evoke such sensory reactions to Christian truths, which in our time suffer the double handicap of being abstract and being trapped in a fixed system of myth and metaphor that are in many ways out of tune with the modern age (or vice versa), so that they tend to be rejected for superficial rather than essential reasons. By framing these truths in a new system, with freshly minted natural symbols, Lewis is able to get in under the guard of the secularly prejudiced reader and awaken first impressions, and then his imagination, and ultimately his reason and will, so that he becomes convinced of the truths he had refused to look at before but can now see clearly and distinctly from the new angle provided by the new allegory.

Footnotes
4. Ibid., p. 40, Italics in the original.
5. Ibid., p. 56, Italics in the original.
7. Ibid., passion.
9. Woollcombe, p. 50, n. 1, Italics in the original; I have transliterated the Greek words.
13. Tuve, p. 90n.
17. J.Milton, Paradise Lost, IV, 368.

THE LANGUAGE OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN in The Lord of the Rings

by Judy Winn Bell

J.R.R. Tolkien, best known as author of The Lord of the Rings, was an accomplished linguist whose work began in the modern period. Tolkien's interest in language study, it is interesting to examine his use of language in creating The Lord of the Rings to see how Tolkien as a language technician interacts with Tolkien as literary artist. This paper will discuss 1) his attitudes toward language, 2) his use of language in telling his story and building his world of Middle-earth; and 3) the styles of prose and poetry -- and the separate languages -- of the characters and groups of Tolkien's concern with -- and love of -- language manifests itself in many ways in The Lord of the Rings. Throughout the story, there is an implication that there is a kind of magic, a power in the words themselves, and that they are not to be taken lightly. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis's reflection of the ring inscription in Black Speech at the Council of Elrond is cause for much consternation; suddenly it became menacing, powerful, harsh as stone. A shadow seemed to pass over the high sun, and the ground for a moment grew dark. All trembled, and the Elves stopped their ears.