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### Speaking in Parables

#### Abstract

Examines how Lewis achieves the many levels of meaning in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by “use of mythic characters, references to everyday aspects of British culture, and Biblical symbolism.” Shows how Lewis “maintains the close relationship between these elements [...] and the form of the Fairy Tale”—creating a parable.

#### Additional Keywords

Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*—Form; Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*—Moral and religious aspects; Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*—Symbolism

# Speaking in Parables

Kath Filmer

C.S. Lewis' book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* has become a modern children's classic. It is a book which appeals to children and adults on many levels, because although it deals, as all fairy tales do, with the triumph of good over evil, it does so by means of a truly magical juxtaposition of mythic elements, British cultural traditions, and Biblical symbolism. The result is a literary collage which serves to enrich the meaning of Lewis' story and to heighten the responses of his readers.

The responses generated by Lewis' book are those which are aroused by the deeper levels of meaning he has provided by creating a tale from pictures he saw "in his head."<sup>2</sup> The pictures came first: as Lewis himself notes,

Everything began with images; a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion. At first there wasn't even anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord.<sup>3</sup>

Lewis chose the Form of the Fairytale in which to place his "images" because he fell in love with "the Form itself: its brevity, its severe restraints on description, its flexible traditionalism, its inflexible hostility to all analysis, digression, reflexions and 'gas'." (Ibid.) Of course, the text of the book bears witness to the fact that the "Christian element" became integrated with the fantastical images and the Form of the Fairytale.

This integration took place because Lewis remembered how the "obligation to feel" a proper response to God and to the sufferings of Christ had, in his own childhood, paralyzed his feelings:

The whole subject was associated with lowered voices; almost as if it were something medical. But supposing that by casting all of 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 not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could.

(Ibid., p. 37)

The resulting book, the first-written of the seven Narnian Chronicles, attests to the fact that Lewis succeeded in his aim. By adhering strictly to the Form of the Fairytale and providing a simple, surface meaning which can be appreciated for itself, while also providing deeper, and more profound levels by the use of metaphor and symbol, Lewis succeeds in "baptizing the imagination," making it receptive to holy things, so that he invites from his readers an imaginative, as well as a spiritual, response.

This article, then, examines how Lewis achieves these "levels of meaning" by his use of mythic characters, references to everyday aspects of British culture, and Biblical symbolism, and how he maintains the close relationship between these elements of his story and the form of the Fairytale throughout the

book. By using metaphor and symbol, Lewis, like his Master, speaks in parables.

Within the context of this fairy tale, Lewis' characters function according to roles traditionally associated with the genre. There are heroes (the four children, especially Peter who performs heroic deeds in the chivalric mode of the medieval knight); there are donors (the Faun, the Beavers, and Father Christmas); and there is a Helper of supernatural origin (Aslan).

As with the traditional fairy story, the plot of Lewis' tale is determined by the function and form of the characters. The heroes are introduced, and one or more of them absents himself; the villain appears suddenly in a reconnaissance episode, disappears, and is later sought out. The donors are encountered by accident when the heroes are in a forest. All of these narrative elements are commonly found in fairy tales.<sup>4</sup> The "magical helper" in Lewis' story is the Lion Aslan, the supernatural counterpart of the magical genies, fairy godmothers and fairies which are to be found in traditional fairy tales. (Ibid.)

By constructing his gospel-inspired story in the form of a fairy tale, Lewis has already done much towards achieving the removal of the "stained-glass and Sunday-school associations" from its meaning, for it is ineluctably argued that many readers delight in the fantastic and fairy tales in particular are enjoyed by adults as well as by children.<sup>5</sup> Lewis continues to liberate his theme from undue religious solemnity by approaching the concepts of good and evil in terms of behavior which is considered acceptable or unacceptable by cultural rather than religious standards, and by creating heroes with whom his readers may easily identify.

Among the morphological elements common to fairy tales is the "initial situation" in which the "ordinary" characters are placed before encountering the fantastical world in which the plot unfolds. (Propp, p. 25). In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, four children named Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy are introduced. They have been evacuated from London during the war because of the air-raids and are staying with and old Professor and his housekeeper in the country. Such an arrangement was, of course, commonplace during the war years in England, and the children themselves are also "ordinary." Their names are common English names, and none of them appears to possess any special virtue, although it becomes apparent that there is a marked contrast in the behavior of the two youngest children, Edmund and Lucy.

Both of these children enter a wardrobe and accidentally discover that it provides an entrance into a fantastical world called Narnia. Lucy meets a Faun with whom she has tea by a roaring fire in a cozy cave; Edmund encounters an icily-white creature who gives him magical Turkish Delight and who tricks him into telling her all about his brother and sisters, and about Lucy's earlier visit to Narnia and her meeting with the Faun.



Lewis uses these situations adroitly to establish the nature of his characters in relation to social, rather than religious, concepts of good and evil. For example, when Lucy enters the wardrobe, she remembers that "it is very foolish to shut oneself into any wardrobe," a dictum iterated several times in the opening chapters. Edmund pulls the wardrobe door shut behind him so that the subtle distinction is made between Lucy the wise and Edmund the foolish.

Once in Narnia, Lucy meets a Faun, a creature derived from Greek mythology. Although his appearance is unfamiliar, however, his behavior is not, and the Faun offers Lucy hospitality which conforms to British social and cultural conventions: shelter from the cold, a hot meal, and the security of a cave furnished like an English cottage as a refuge from the wintery inclemency without.

Edmund, on the other hand, encounters the White Witch on his first visit to Narnia. Her human form does not prevent her appearance from conveying a subtle warning, for her face is "white like snow or icing-sugar" (p. 33), a description which connotes disease, especially nausea which is associated with the sickly sweetness of icing sugar. The idea of disease in association with the White Witch is compounded later by the realization that it is she who has brought "dis-ease" to Narnia. The White Witch does not offer Edmund shelter from the cold, but promises him admission to her house only if he performs satisfactorily the service she requires of him.

A further contrast between good and evil is achieved by the kind of food offered by the Faun and by the Witch to each of the children. The Faun offers Lucy plain, wholesome food, such as may be served for an English nursery tea; the White Witch gives Edmund a sweet drink and "several pounds" of Turkish Delight, both conjured into existence by magic. In every society there are categories of food which are appropriate to particular occasions. Upon this basic principle individual cultures superimpose their own structured traditions so the processes of food prepar-

ation and the categories of food served on various social occasions are culturally determined.<sup>6</sup> For example, the menus for a nursery tea or a wedding breakfast involve different methods of preparation and serving of food, the appropriateness of which is determined by English social tradition. While the Faun's hospitality and the "good food" he offers conform to those accepted in English culture as suitable for the situation (a lost child in inclement weather), the behavior of the White Witch is anything but culturally acceptable. The Witch tempts Edmund into breaking the cultural taboo (which exists in English and most Western cultural traditions) against children accepting sweets from a stranger. Moreover, the donor of such sweets is traditionally regarded as malevolent, and if malevolence is measured by the quantity of the sweets offered, "several pounds" of Turkish Delight ensure that the witch is identified completely with evil. The Faun, however, since his behavior is culturally acceptable, is properly seen to be a "good" character.

Because of this, the Faun's revelation that he is in the pay of the White Witch and about to betray Lucy raises no undue alarm. The "good" images are too persuasive and are reinforced by the Faun's genuinely contrite confession. Lucy responds to these cultural signs and fully expects to be set free, and the Faun, despite the risk he incurs to himself should the Witch discover his disobedience, immediately complies.

The White Witch fulfills her role as villain once her malevolence has been signified by her appearance and the sweets she gives Edmund as she plays on Edmund's foolishness. Edmund misses the significance of the "sign" of the stranger offering sweets, and compounds his folly by making himself sick on them, so that Edmund is now also metaphorically "infected" with the Witch's "disease."

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Edmund should ally himself with the villain, and that he should return to the nonfantastical world in order to contrive some method of delivering the others to the White Witch in return for more Turkish Delight. In pursuing this end, Edmund lies, and induces Peter and Susan to believe that it is Lucy who is lying. The surface signification in this instance is Edmund's anti-social behavior which identifies him as "a bad boy." But underlying this there is the Biblical concept of enslavement to appetite or "the works of the flesh": jealousy, creating factions, greed, sorcery (Galatians 5:19-21),<sup>7</sup> which contrasts with Lucy's truthfulness, and her unselfish delight when she believes Edmund shares her joy at the discovery of Narnia, which are attributes of the Spirit: love, joy, kindness (Galatians 5:22). The surface level is autotelic, but the deeper level is available for those who are familiar with the Scriptures.

Having introduced his "heroes," his villain and her accomplice, together with his fantastical world, Lewis allows his story to develop in accord with the traditions of the fairy tale. All four children enter Narnia and become lost in the Narnian forest, where the disparity between good and evil is further indicated by means of cultural and literary signs, the first of which is the reference to Secret Police in the notice which has appeared on the door of the Faun's now deserted cave.

To a generation newly emerged from the Second World War the sinister connotations of this image would immediately be apparent, and the sign is no less

potent today, carrying as it does the reminder of totalitarianism, whether Fascist or Communist, and the stark reports, which emerge from such regimes, of mass murders, of broken bodies, minds, and spirits. The name of the Captain, Maugrim (or Fenris Ulf in the American edition), suggests in its pronunciation the idea "more-grim" so that the total effect of these images is the generation of an awareness of the sinister and dreadful power which is evil, a power which has, in Narnia, pervaded its very atmosphere to produce the long winter, the symbol of the thralldom of the White Witch.

Winter as an indication of disorder and "dis-ease" in the natural world is a literary archetype which symbolizes the triumph of the powers of darkness and dissolution and tragedy. Witches and ogres are traditionally associated with this archetypal pattern,<sup>8</sup> which symbolizes, on a deeper level, the Biblical concept of the cosmic effects of evil, a concept with which Lewis deals more fully in his story of Eildis and Oysereru in *Out of the Silent Planet*.<sup>9</sup>

At this stage the sense of tragedy is compounded by both the metaphorical signifiers and the syntagmatic progression of the narrative elements: the evil White Witch holds Narnia in thrall, the Faun has been captured by the Secret Police, the children are lost and Edmund has been trying to lead others to the Witch. A note of hope is introduced, however, by the appearance of a robin, the significance of which is explained by Peter: "Still -- a robin, you know. They're good birds in all the stories I've ever read. I'm sure a robin wouldn't be on the wrong side" (p. 59). The robin is thus recognized as a literary symbol for "goodness." Lewis demonstrates here his awareness of the symbolic potency of literary signs. Moreover he indicates quite clearly his expectation that his readers will share this awareness. For example, in the passage where Edmund questions Peter's assumption that the robin is not "on the wrong side," two levels of literary signification are present. Edmund asks,

"If it comes to that which is the right side? How do we know that the Fauns are in the right and the Queen (yes, I know we've been told she's a witch) is in the wrong? We don't really know anything about either." (pp. 59-60)

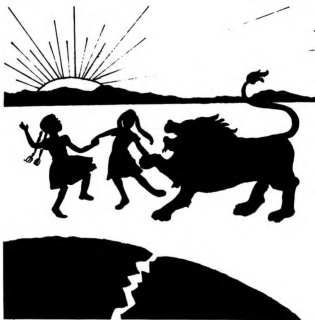
Peter replies, "The Faun saved Lucy," but Edmund continues to raise doubts. Edmund, however, has already been established as an unreliable, untruthful, and foolish character, so that his attempt to cast aspersions on the nature of the robin serves instead to support the evidence that the robin is not on the side of Edmund and the White Witch and is, therefore, good. But also, Edmund's "How do we know?" (italics mine) points implicitly to the operation of a literary sign "system" (which Edmund himself fails to read) from which Lewis has drawn his symbolism and imagery and which may be "read" by the fictional children as well as by readers of the book. For example, the "good bird" features in the legend that when Christ was on His way to Calvary, a robin removed a thorn from His crown, and as it did so, its breast was stained red by the blood which issued from the wound. Young readers would also be familiar with the robin's kind gesture in the story of the *Babes in the Wood*, when it covered the bodies of the two lost children with leaves.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in answer to Edmund's query about the White Witch, Peter might well have pointed out that "good" characters do not use Secret Police.



From the appearance of the robin, the atmosphere of oppression steadily lightens, so that, in spite of Edmund's defection to the White Witch, a sense of the gathering of the forces of good begins to develop although the evil is still active; a conflict between the two becomes inevitable. The children follow the robin, and as it leaves them they encounter a beaver family who offer them the same kind of hearty, healthy hospitality as that extended to Lucy by the Faun. At this point, however, the levels of signification deepen and the progression from the ordinary world to the fantastical is extended by the introduction of talking animals. A sense of the numinous is introduced and Biblical parallels become more apparent, but Lewis distances the reader from these by imbuing them with a sense of mystery and adventure so that the progression of the narrative is not hindered by obtrusive symbolism. Indeed, Lewis' handling of the Biblical parallels is such that the traditional roles of the *dramatis personae* as fairytale characters are not impaired and the sense of the numinous which is invoked is as much magical and mysterious as it is spiritual. For example, "They say Aslan is on the move -- perhaps has already landed" (p. 65) suggests a science-fictional character as much as a supernatural one, while "on the move" is a phrase which is pregnant with a sense of adventure, power and mystery.

Mr. Beaver's hospitality signifies his goodness, but his occupation as fisherman and the meal of fish he and his wife serve the children are signs which operate on a deeper level. The surface level is autotelic; beavers do catch fish. In relation to the plot of the fairy tale, the Beavers are donors who assist the heroes, and this function is sustained. At the deepest level, however, Mr. Beaver also parallels those apostles of Christ who also were fishermen.

The parallel is completed by Beaver's familiarity with the Narnian legends and prophecies concerning the return of Aslan and the coming reign of the four children at Cair Paravel, legends which themselves constitute, as it were, the Narnian "scriptures."



Moreover, Mr. Beaver's role in announcing the coming of Aslan parallels that of another Biblical character, John the Baptist. The Beaver's pronouncement invokes immediately the sense of the numinous for the fictional children as well as for the reader. The effect is heightened by Lewis' self-conscious echoing of scripture in the words, "At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in its inside" (p. 65), which, to those familiar with the scripture, calls to mind the words, "...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (Phil. 2:10). A further Biblical parallel operative here is the occasion recorded in St. Luke's gospel when Mary went to visit her relative Elizabeth, whose unborn child leapt in the womb in acknowledgment of the coming Saviour (Luke 1:41-44). Nevertheless, the surface levels of signification retain their potency as adventure, while the sense of the numinous, to those unfamiliar with the New Testament, would serve adequately as a sense of awe and mystery such as that which surrounds the Wizard of Oz in the story of the same name. The deeper levels of signification are available but are by no means obtrusive or insistent.

As the children journey to the Stone Table according to Aslan's direction, there occur several events which signify that the coming of Aslan means also the coming of joy. Firstly, the snow ceases; some hours later, the sound of bells introduces Father Christmas, a traditionally jolly legendary character who is an integral part of the celebration of Christmas in western societies. In the context of Lewis' book, he retains much of his familiar image, but is depicted with much more solemnity. His coming lightens the atmosphere, but he brings joy, not jollity; the gifts he brings are "tools not toys." He jollity is a mythical and fantastical character made "holy" in this story, and his gifts parallel the spiritual gifts available, according to the Bible, to believers. Like the gifts of Father Christmas in the story, they are not to be played with, but are either tools with which others are to be served or armor for the battle against evil. Father Christmas gives Peter a sword and a shield which bears the sign of the lion, items which parallel "the shield of faith" and "the sword of

the Spirit" (Eph. 6:16 and 17) which are included in "the whole armor of God," needed to fight evil; Susan is given a quiver of arrows and an ivory horn which suggests a means of defense and of summoning help, obliquely referring to the fact that God is "a very present help in the time of trouble" (Ps. 46:1), while Lucy's cordial is a healing unguent, a parallel to the spiritual gift of healing (1 Cor. 12:9).

Father Christmas functions as a donor in the surface meaning which is related to the progression of the plot; on a deeper plane, he is, like the angels at the birth of Christ, a messenger of joy. The coming of spring confirms this, since spring is traditionally associated with joy and hope, and is also a literary archetype which symbolizes the defeat of the powers of darkness (Frye, p. 16); it is noted in the text that "something had gone wrong...with the Witch's schemes" (p. 113). Implicit in this realization is the fact that a power which can defeat another is a greater power, so that the triumph of good, in true fairy tale tradition, is imminent.

The character of Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is easily recognizable as a Messianic figure because of Lewis' self-conscious use of Biblical parallels which would be recognizable to any reader who possesses an elementary knowledge of the Christian gospels. For example, Aslan is the "son of the great Emperor-over-the-sea," whose coming is announced by a prophet and heralded by a messenger who brings "tidings of joy." Aslan represents the complete antithesis of evil as represented by the White Witch, he suffers and is sacrificed vicariously for Edmund, he dies and is restored to life, and on his death the Stone Table on which "deep magic" is carved is broken as Aslan operates according to a "deeper magic," a paralleling of the temple veil which was rent upon the death of Christ and which finalized the old covenant between God and man and ushered in a new covenant. Prior to his death, Aslan is jeered at and humiliated, bound and muzzled by the minions of the Witch, all of which detail parallels the suffering of Christ.

There is some dispute, however, concerning the question of whether or not Aslan is an allegorical representation of Christ. Lewis himself emphatically denied that Christ was allegorically presented in the character of Aslan. Allegory, Lewis wrote, is

a composition...in wh[ic]h immaterial realities are represented by feigned physical objects; e.g. a pictured Cupid allegorically represents erotic love, or in Bunyan, a giant represents Despair.<sup>11</sup>

Lewis' definition of allegory, however, does permit the interpretation of Aslan as an allegorical figure, since God is immaterial; although Lewis probably followed the traditional view that the incarnate Christ was not immaterial. Other definitions allow for a broader concept of allegory as a symbol "with a double meaning: a primary or surface meaning; and a secondary or under-the-surface meaning,"<sup>12</sup> or, again, "an extended metaphor in which characters, actions and scenery are systematically symbolic, referring to spiritual, political, psychological confrontations (Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*, Orwell's 1984)."<sup>13</sup>

Defending Lewis' position, Charles Huttar points out that to call a work "an allegory" is to say that the author constructed his work as an allegory and the

reader, therefore, must use it in interpreting; and there is no such imperative in this book.<sup>14</sup> There is no doubt, however, that Aslan metaphorically represents the form the Second Person of the Trinity "might have taken" had there been a real world like Narnia in which He wished to manifest Himself. (Lewis, *Letters*, p. 283.)

The metaphorical representation of the Son of God as a Lion in Narnia is achieved by the proportional analogy between the lion, the king of beasts, and Christ, the king of heaven. (The name "Aslan" is derived from the Turkish word "arslan," which simply means "a lion."<sup>15</sup>) This analogy is a theological commonplace based upon the scripture where Christ is referred to as "The Lion of Judah" (Rev. 5:5). In the sign systems of both literature and mythology, lions also signify regal dignity, the struggle against evil, and victory. They were sacred to the Egyptians and to Phoenicians, and they symbolized godlike power to the Greeks and Romans. The symbol was adopted by King Richard I (also called "the Lion-Heart"), in the twelfth century; and since 1164 when it was adopted by Philip I, Duke of Flanders, the lion has figured in heraldry.<sup>16</sup>

As a heraldic symbol, the Lion is associated with the strength of the British nation, and indeed, English customs and English culture abound in Narnia, in the meals served by the Faun and the Beavers and the cup of tea provided by Father Christmas. The Narnian countryside closely resembles an English countryside, featuring English trees (oaks, elms, beeches) and English flowers (caladines, hawthorns, and primroses). Together with the heraldic symbol of the lion adopted in England and Narnia, the proliferation of these images serves to show that Narnia metaphorically represents England, (although Lewis most probably did not consciously intend it) making Aslan, and by association Christ, an English king.

One of the difficulties Lewis faced in presenting his Messianic figure in a way which would invoke both an imaginative and a deeper affectionate response in his readers, was to present the power, the justice, and the mercy and love of God convincingly. Therefore Aslan is described as being "both good and terrible," with "great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes" (p. 117); he is golden in color, the color of royalty; and gold is the metal which represents immortality and perfection since it does not rust or tarnish. Moreover, Aslan "isn't safe" (italics mine) (p. 75). By contrast, however, Aslan is soft and lovable. Lucy's gesture in the wardrobe of rubbing her cheeks against the soft fur coats, metonymically prefigures her later impulsive embrace of the great lion, when she and Susan "buried their cold hands in the beautiful sea of fur" (p. 136). After Aslan is restored to life, he romps with the children and allows the girls to ride on his back. As a king, he is royal and solemn, but also benevolent, entertaining the children at feasts and at a high tea.

Aslan's divine nature is thus expressed in terms which would elicit the affectionate response Lewis seeks from his readers; and while he includes in his portrayal of Aslan the awesome and the wondrous, Lewis does not forget to include the energy and the joy, so often omitted from those texts which impose the "obligation to respond" and which generate the "Sunday-school associations" which can "paralyze" or "freeze" religious response.<sup>17</sup> Lewis has, I believe, created in Aslan a character who can be loved for his own sake, but his real success would lie in the extent

to which a reader, turning from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* to the gospels, would experience delight in recognition, and detect in the Biblical Christ the fun and the joy, as well as the solemnity and royalty, of his fictional counterpart.

Of all the Biblical elements treated by Lewis in this story, that most successfully handled according to his stated aim is the cosmic status of man. Again this success depends upon the operation of several levels of meaning. For example, the Narnian characters address the children as "Sons of Adam" and "Daughters of Eve," titles which serve on the surface level of signification to express recognition by the Narnian characters of the children's earthly origin.

On a deeper level, however, these titles identify the human race generally as superior even to the unfallen animals of Narnia, and this in spite of the fall of Adam and Eve. The state of innocence in which the Narnian characters remain is demonstrated by the fact that when redemption takes place on Narnia it is for Edmund, a human, not for the inhabitants of Narnia, so that on a deeper level again, the sublime elevation of humankind through the incarnation of Christ and the divinely imputed value of even one human being is subtly but insistently signified.

That man's value is divinely imputed is signified also by the fact that Aslan appoints the children to reign over Narnia at Cair Paravel. While the word "Cair" comes from the Welsh word "caer" meaning a fortress or castle, the word "Paravel" appears to be an adaptation of the word "paravai"<sup>18</sup> which implies a tenancy under a lord who is himself a tenant. Aslan, "the Son of the Emperor-over-the-Sea," imputes to the four children his own royal authority and indeed his other qualities; "they made good laws and kept the peace...saved good trees...and liberated young dwarfs and satyrs...and encouraged ordinary people (p. 166, italics mine); Their titles include the terms "magnificent," "gentle," "just," and "valiant" (pp. 166-7), all of which apply to Aslan, and all of which are developments from the children's "ordinary selves" as seen at the commencement of their adventures. Their goodness is not an inherent characteristic but an imputed one; this is of course a fundamental tenet of protestant Christianity. It is the one over-riding factor by which readers can identify with the four children as they rule in Narnia, but to many readers it is by no means an obtrusive one. Its universality and profundity identify this as the deepest level of meaning achieved in the book and the one most effectively distanced, since the term "Cair Paravel" is comparatively obscure, and because on the surface level of signification, the rule of the King or the Queen effected by the magical helper often constitutes the "happy ending" of the traditional fairy tale.

As in the traditional tale, evil is vanquished, prisoners set free, and good is rewarded. But Lewis departs significantly from the traditionally fairy tale ending in that, in this book at least, his characters are not happy "ever after." The four children return to the non-fantastical time and places from which they left, and an unwritten question remains: what happens to Narnia when four rulers suddenly disappear? The ending allows for the writing of sequels, while remaining satisfactorily "happy" on the surface level.

It is possible to detect again, however, a deeper level of meaning. If the children's adventures in

Narnia are metaphors for religious experience (which, on the deepest levels, they are seen to be), then Lewis is subtly reminding those who are most responsive to these experiences that the real world awaits, that such experiences are not a matter for boasting, and that there are others who share the same secret.

The device by which Lewis succeeds in his attempt, in this book, to present the elements of the Christian gospel "in their real potency," is that of compiling a literary collage into which he has gathered familiar characters such as Father Christmas and the White Witch, (who surely is a development of Hans Christian Andersen's character, the Snow Queen; making use of the same literary archetype of the long winter which probably refers ultimately to distant memories of an ice age). From Classical mythology Lewis has drawn the faun, the nymphs and the naiads, the centaurs, unicorns and the satyrs. In Narnia, an unfallen world, these mythical characters are subjects of Aslan and an illustrious Lewis' view the pagan myths contain "real but unfocused gleams of Divine truth," and that "Myth is the mountain whence all the different streams arise which become truths down here in the valley; in hae valle abstractionis"<sup>20</sup>. Nevertheless, Lewis maintained that the truths conveyed by these myths was only partial; the incarnation of Christ, the "myth became fact," transcended and encompassed all the other myths of divine intervention on the earth. (Ibid.). In the *Narnian Chronicles*, Lewis is careful to show the mythic characters in the service of Aslan so that the Christ figure is always given pre-eminence.

Lewis has achieved, however, by his use of legendary and mythic characters a sense of the wonderful and the faerie; his moral instructions are determined by cultural and social practice; his "good" is wise and his "evil," though attractive, is foolish. He has written a fairy tale which is completely satisfying in its own right, but he has made accessible the deeper levels of meaning to those who seek them, and even at the deepest levels, Lewis has imbued the Biblical elements with new potency by virtue of their contextual link with the fairy tale. He has succeeded in presenting the gospel elements freed from their solemn, reverential and "paralyzing" associations, and for many readers he has succeeded so well that the Scriptures themselves will now exert an appeal to the imagination as well as to the spirit.

## NOTES

- 1 C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (New York: Collier, 1976).
- 2 C.S. Lewis, "It All Began with a Picture" in his *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, Ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966), p. 42.
- 3 C.S. Lewis, "Sometimes Fairy Stories Say Best What's to be Said," in *Of Other Worlds*, p. 36.
- 4 V. Propp, *The Morphology of the Folk Tale*, Second ed., revised and edited with Preface by Louis Wagner, with new introduction by Alan Dundas (Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1979), pp. 25-64.
- 5 C.S. Lewis, "Sometimes Fairy Stories, etc." p. 38 and J.R.R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories" in *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine, 1966), pp. 33-46.
- 6 Edmund Leach, *Levi-Strauss* (London: Fontana, 1970), pp. 31-5.

- 7 All Biblical references in this text are taken from the Revised Standard Version.
- 8 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 16.
- 9 C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (London: The Bodley Head, 1938).
- 10 Bowers Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, Revised ed. (London: Cassell, 1936).
- 11 C.S. Lewis, "To a Lady," letter dated 29 December, 1958 in *Letters of C.S. Lewis*, Ed. W.H. Lewis (London: Bles, 1966), p. 283.
- 12 J.A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (London: Deutsch, 1977).
- 13 Roger Fowler, ed., *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).
- 14 Charles Huttar, "The Heresy of Allegorizing Narnia: A Rejoinder" in *C.S.L.* Vol. 11 No. 3. January 1980. Italics his.
- 15 Martha Sammons, *A Guide Through Narnia* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), p. 134.
- 16 Jane Garai, *The Book of Symbols* (London: Lorimer, 1973), pp. 46-7.
- 17 "Sometimes Fairy Stories" etc., p. 37.
- 18 O.E.D., also see Martha Sammons, *A Guide Through Narnia*, p. 132.
- 19 C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1969), p. 138.
- 20 C.S. Lewis, "Myth Became Fact" in *his God in the Dock*, ed. Walter Hooper (Glasgow: Fontana, 1979), p. 43.



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arcana continue to persist, that makes Williams' perspective an intensely sympathetic one. For precisely that reason his demonstration of the untenable errors in post-Christian paganism are that much more forceful, even, surprisingly, in *Shadows of Ecstasy*, because although Considine is not proven wrong, Williams maintains an ambivalent attitude toward him and, in addition, we are given alternate visions that are almost as attractive and certainly less destructive: Sir Bernard's faith in intellectual skepticism; his "faithless" dedication to the faith through which he and the Archbishop are able to sever Considine's hypnotic hold on Inkamasi; Isabel with her selfless love for Roger and her suggestion that defeat is necessary before man can become fully human; Phillip with his passion for Rosamond. Therefore, although Considine's position is not established as either wrong or right, the respective positions of these characters are also not proven to be wrong. Perhaps they are merely the shadows of ecstasy, while Considine's way is nearly the real thing; however, while wine is a very good thing, the implication is that perhaps tea should be the daily staple. One can come down from the heights of poetry and enjoy the more homely things of life, and, while one may not be ennobled, at least one will be stimulated.

## Endnotes

- 1 Charles Williams, *The Shadows of Ecstasy* (rpr. 1973, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1950), p. 74. All subsequent citations are to this text.