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The Oxford Christians: Literary Concepts Becoming Spiritual in
the Relationship, Life and Works of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R.

Tolkien, the Heart of the Inklings

Bakalářská práce

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RESEARCH PLAN:

1. Introduction
2. Background to the lives of the two authors before they met, selected events of influence
3. Meeting of Lewis and Tolkien in Oxford, the circumstances of their friendship
4. The Inklings, how they came into being, the members and the character of their meetings as an environment for the creative realization of Lewis and Tolkien
5. Mythopoeia, the literary and spiritual theory of this concept and its realization in the authors' works
6. Eucatastrophe, the meaning of this term invented by Tolkien and its connection to mythopoeia
7. Sehnsucht, its connection to Lewis, its meaning in literary use in the authors' works.
8. The Friendship of Lewis and Tolkien and its influence
9. Conclusion

List of recommended literature:

Carpenter, Humphrey. The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and Their Friends. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979.
Carpenter, Humphrey. J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography. London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1978.
Duriez, Colin. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, The Gift of Friendship. New Jersey: Hidden Spring, 2003.
Kreeft, Peter. The Philosophy of Tolkien: The Worldview Behind the Lord of the Rings. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005.
Sayer, George. Jack: A Life of C. S. Lewis. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994.

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V dne.....

Podpis

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Introduction

Apart from being famous fiction writers, professors of English, the main members of a literary group called the Inklings and friends, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien were also both Christians. This thesis intends to focus on the relationship between three concepts particular for and discussed by these authors within the environment of the Inklings, namely mythopoeia, eucatastrophe and sehnsucht. The aim of this thesis is to indicate a connection between these concepts and demonstrate their double nature in the understanding and creative realization of Lewis and Tolkien on both the literary and the spiritual level. The further intention is to study the ideological significance of these concepts as viewed by the two authors in their letters and commentaries provided in selected biographical and scholarly material and consequently prove their literary character in selected fictional works of the writers, particularly in *The Silmarillion*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. This thesis intends to argue that the studied concepts are all related to each other and spring from a Christian belief, which Tolkien and Lewis shared and which influenced and connected them as friends and as writers of fantasy literature and of myths. As suggested, this thesis also intends to study the roots of this relation and the shared ideas that resulted from it as being inspired, encouraged and manifested particularly through the existence and the environment of the Inklings. In order to provide a satisfactory framework to the studied subject, it will be endeavored to present a comprehensive background to the circumstances of the personal lives of the writers and the maintenance of the club, as this should complete the overall understanding of the discussed connections.

1. Before Oxford

The aim of this introductory chapter is to provide a brief background to the eventual meeting of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien in Oxford, namely, the University of Oxford. Rather than copying the biographies already written about their lives, the intention of this chapter is to mention specifically certain important events and facts that led to or possibly show their future encounters and attitudes in a different light.

This chapter aims to provide a little glance at their individual separated paths that resulted to share many ideas and passions that led to their special friendship.

They both came from different families as to region, social background or religion. What is interesting is that they both became half-orphans at a very young age, although each by a different parent, Lewis by his mother and Tolkien by his father, which could possibly have had opposite influence on them. The factual information in this chapter was taken from G. Sayer's *Jack: A Life of C. S. Lewis* for subhead 1 and H. Carpenter's: *Tolkien, a Biography* for subhead 2, if not stated otherwise.

1.1 Jack

Clive Staples Lewis, or Jack, was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland to a middle-class family of Albert and Flora Lewis. He was born a second son to the family and the relationship between the two Lewis brothers, Warren and Jack, was going to be an essential foundation until the end of their lives. It was when he was about four years old when he suddenly announced that his name was "Jacksie" which was later shortened to Jack, the name by which all his friends, including Tolkien, since then knew him.¹

Due to health issues, the brothers spent much of their free time during their childhood indoors. They were not just brothers, but best friends, since by the time they started school, they did not meet with many other children of their age. In one of

¹George Sayer, *Jack: A Life of C. S. Lewis* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994), 42.

his letters quoted in Sayer, Warren Lewis comments on these circumstances as having positive consequences:

We would gaze out of the nursery window at the sating rain and the grey skies, and there, beyond a mile or so of sodden meadow, we would see the dim high line of the Castlereagh Hills – our world’s limit, a distant land, strange and unattainable. But we always had pencils, paper, chalk and paint boxes, and this recurring imprisonment gave us occasion and stimulus to develop the habit of creative imagination . . . And so, in circumstances that might have been merely dull and depressing, my brother’s gifts began to develop; and it may not be fanciful to see, in that childhood staring out to unattainable hills, some first beginnings of a vision and viewpoint that run through the work of his maturity.²

Obviously, their imagination and creativity were not limited within the borders of a house. Their nurse Lizzie told them stories and Irish tales from County Down, where she had spent her childhood. Hence the brothers started creating their own imaginary world and made their first attempts at writing.

During the holidays, they discovered the attic upstairs, a hole filled with suitcases and books, where they could make all the adventure come true without being disturbed. They drew pictures and wrote stories. Lewis started creating stories with the help of his father even before he could write. He always had a strange love for animals, as it is also apparent from his eventual professional fiction. Many characters, either good or bad, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* are talking animals with human behavioral qualities. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first stories he wrote as a child at the age of six included protagonists such as Sir Peter Mouse or the hero frog Sir Ben. What might seem a little extraordinary is that he went that far as to include a history of Mouse-land throughout the ages of the human era.³ This habit of creating worlds with all the factual details of their origin even at such a young age seems as a slight hint for the deeper insights that he together with Tolkien eventually shared about the concept of myth-making. This rigorous nature in story-inventing does not however compare to Tolkien,

² Sayer, *Jack*, 44.

³ Sayer, *Jack*, 49.

who spent nights awake, calculating the phase of the moon and the winds in his created world, Middle Earth, to make his storytelling faithful.⁴

Lewis' mother used to take her sons to a seaside resort for holidays, as was quite common for middle-class families, also for their health's sake. For boys who did not have too much opportunity to go outside of the house, this must have been a wonderful period of the year. It was then that their pleasure from train rides which lasted their whole lives began, equally as from the sea. As Sayer argues in his book, these seaside holidays at the fascinating northern bays of the Irish coast were perhaps "the seeds of his [Lewis'] romantic love of 'northernness,' of one of the most important of his feelings."⁵ This particular interest that Lewis cherished will be discussed later in the thesis but it is remarkable to assume that he had been collecting these influences back since his childhood when he did not even know any related literature or the term northernness itself, which later embodied these impressions.

Their mother being a housewife, the brothers spent most of their time with her. As Warren had already started school in England and Lewis was the only child in the house, he grew even closer to her. At this time, she was diagnosed with cancer and died a few months later. It must have been a crucial turning point for such a delicate child as Jack, whom his father consequently sent to England to follow the education of his brother. This lack of a mother in the years to come, which were in a way traumatic, especially on the grounds of strict boarding schools, might have affected him more than his father could have noticed. It was many years later, when as a twenty-year-old student of Oxford, he maintained a strange relationship with a middle-aged woman, Mrs. Moore – a mother of his friend, who died in the war. None of his friends seemed to know exactly what the relationship was about. One can assume, if nothing else, he missed the role of a mother, which this sonless woman was keen to provide. She ended up living with him and Warren up to the time of them being old bachelors and intellectuals in Oxford and as Warren is said to mention in his diary, she had a slightly dominating matriarchal personality at their home.⁶

⁴ Humphrey Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1978), 198.

⁵ Sayer, *Jack*, 42.

⁶ Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and Their Friends* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 242.

Another important influence throughout Jack's life was his friend Arthur Greeves. They grew up just around the corner from each other and a great portion of the bibliographical information and insights known about Jack's life today are thanks to his lifelong correspondence with Arthur. It is of particular interest that this unique relationship seems to have started on similar grounds as many years later, another unique friendship of Lewis's, the one with Tolkien. Sayer called it: "A discovery that they shared something they thought of as a rare taste."⁷

The rare taste to which he referred was the already mentioned enthusiasm for northernness. Jack was not a little boy anymore when he found Arthur reading A. Grueber's *Myths of the Norsmen*, hence their friendship started although they did not share much else in common. Its similarity with the origin of Lewis' friendship with Tolkien will be compared in the following chapter.

While Lewis was motherless and alone in England, Arthur was his soulmate to whom he confided openly his thoughts, struggles or secrets. Not only was he a close confidante, but Jack himself states in his autobiography how Arthur's taste and different sense to perceive the beautiful in the ordinary influenced him even on literary terms.⁸ Perhaps if it were not for Arthur, Lewis would have never read any of the classical English novels such as those of Dickens, Austen and others, which Arthur was excited about. In contrast, Jack encouraged Arthur in his painting.

The essence of this northern passion might reach to an even deeper and more general level. Lewis was a sensitive boy and man and the spiritual and intellectual experiences were of ultimate importance to him. Apart from studying what it was in particular that he was captured by in northernness, which will be taken a closer glance at later, it was after all, just another of the things and impressions of beauty. He spent his whole life collecting these tokens, in which he later found even deeper spiritual significance. Additionally, it is impressive to find hints of this feeling even back in his childhood, when he was free from theoretical knowledge and for a long time did not consider himself standing close to Christianity at all. In fact, during his studies at public school, his classmates thought he was an atheist.⁹ He called these instances Joy:

⁷ Sayer, *Jack*, 97.

⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace&World, 1955), 151-152.

⁹ Sayer, *Jack*, 84.

But the most important experiences of his childhood, indeed, of his whole life, were not literary. They were mystical experience of the presence of God, rather like those described by Wordsworth, Traherne, and Ruskin. They aroused from seemingly incongruous events. . . . He chose the word joy to describe these experiences. It is the best possible word, the shortest and fullest . . . The first time it came to him from the memory of a small garden that his brother had made for him out of a biscuit tin filled with moss, stones, twigs, and tiny flowers. . . . He valued these experiences of joy more than anything else he had known, and he desired, as all who have experienced them desire, to have them again and again. . . . He was surprised by joy. He spent rest of his life searching for more of it.¹⁰

As Sayer puts it, this particular search for joy was characteristic for Lewis as a man, a writer and an Inkling. It is not surprising then, that at the time of the Inklings, he named his autobiography, looking back at both hard and pleasant experiences, *Surprised by Joy*. In the introductory chapter of the book, he shares some experiences, which left a profound impression on him and proceeds to explain his sense of the word Joy:

I will only underline the quality common to the three experiences, it is that of an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished from both Happiness and Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with them; the fact that any one who has experienced it will want it again.¹¹

This authentic feeling of Jack's for which he eventually discovered an actual German word, *sehnsucht*, is one of the essential points that the rest of this thesis will focus on.

¹⁰ Sayer, *Jack*, 52.

¹¹ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 17-18.

1.2 John Ronal Ruel Tolkien

J. R. R. Tolkien, although an Englishman with his whole heart, was in fact born in Southern Africa. His father Arthur, coming from a family of bankrupt piano makers, found business opportunity in The Bank of Africa and his fiancée Mable sailed after him to be married there and give birth to their two sons. The first of them was John Ronald Ruel. He received the name John from his grandfather and Ruel was his father's second name, but many would often feel uncomfortable when choosing how to address him. Some years later, his friends, and C. S. Lewis especially, called him by a nickname Tollers.¹²

The hot African weather was not suited for Ronald's health. Since Arthur could not leave his work to visit England and its cooler air with his family, Mable was forced to go alone with the boys and a nurse. Ronald was only three years old when he left Africa and his father and unfortunately, never saw him again. Arthur grew ill during their stay at Mable's parents' house in Birmingham. By the time the rest of the family made arrangements to return, he had died. As a result, Ronald spent the first years of his childhood that he could actually recollect with the family of his mother and learned their way of living. His grandfather on Arthur's side followed his son and died. Ronald always felt more identified with the Suffield family. Although they lived directly in Birmingham, the family came from the countryside of the West Midlands, which he associated as his true home and on which basis Tolkien later also modelled The Shire.¹³ Carpenter talks about Tolkien's connection to this region:

Being in a sense a homeless child – for his journey from South Africa and the wonderings that now began gave him a sense of rootlessness – he held on to this concept of Evesham in particular and the whole West Midland area in general as being his true home. He once wrote: “Though a Tolkien by name, I am a Suffield by tastes, talents and upbringing.” And of Worcestershire he said: “Any corner of that country (however fair and squalid) is an indefinable way ‘home’ to me, as no other part of the world is.”¹⁴

¹² Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 21.

¹³ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 180.

¹⁴ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 27.

The fact that Tolkien looked at the Midlands as his true home is an obvious reason for his inspiration of The Shire in *The Lord of the Rings*. One can see the way he felt about this region even more clearly, when it is considered that because of his love of myths, he himself wanted to create one for England, which will be studied more deeply in chapter four, but it is worth mentioning that this region was not merely his favourite place but that he intentionally chose it for this representative function.

Another way that this region, or rather period of his life, left a mark on him was when his mother decided to move out of her parents' house and take the boys to live to the nearby countryside for "four years, but the longest-seeming and most formative part of my life," as he himself is reported to have said when he looked back after many years.¹⁵ It was a time for Ronald and Hilary to explore, to play outside in the countryside, to collect berries and make up stories about the neighbours. It was also the time when Ronald learned to read and write. Their mother taught them at home. She soon noticed Ronald's gift and interest in languages. He learned Latin with her and the curiosity about sounds and shapes of words later turned out to be his extraordinary philologic sense. As he started reading books, he came across one piece that awakened in him a similar passion as in Lewis. It was the *Red Fairy Book* by Andrew Lang and the "story of Sigur who slew the dragon Fanfir in the nameless North."¹⁶ Apart from an obvious hint of northerness, this tale absorbed him also with the epic idea of a dragon, which can be seen in his own fiction as well.

The family of Ronald's mother were members of the Church of England. There was a great deal of consternation when she decided to convert to Catholicism. Much of the financial support of her family ceased but she still did not change her mind and led the boys in the same way. She sent them to a Catholic school and had much help from the local priest, their friend Father Francis. Nonetheless, it was not easy and she focused much of her energy on faithfulness to her new doctrine. Her health problems were increasing, she collapsed one day and died a few days later. Ronald became an orphan and the death of his mother would affect him perhaps much more than the lack of a father. One of its main consequences, however, seems possibly completely opposite than the effects on Lewis, as he lost his own mother. Tolkien

¹⁵ Carpenter: *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 32.

¹⁶ Carpenter: *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 30.

remained a Catholic all his life and that was also one of the major differences he had with Lewis, who later became a Protestant, although it was also by Tolkien's influence that he converted to Christianity.¹⁷ Humphreys Carpenter commented on a passage written by Tolkien nine years after the death of his mother where he mentions that she "killed herself with trouble to ensure us keeping faith."¹⁸

It is some indication on the way in which he associated her with the membership of the Catholic Church. Indeed it might be said that after she died his religion took the place in his affections that she had previously occupied. The consolation that it provided was emotional as well as spiritual. Perhaps her death also had a cementing effect on his study of languages. It was she, after all, who had been his first teacher and who had encouraged him to take an interest in words. Now that she was gone he would pursue that path relentlessly.¹⁹

It was not only the religion that he associated with his mother. The ideal countryside house, where they spent their happy childhood and which they had to leave now, was forever connected to the memory of her and to her personality. Father Francis became their guardian and took care of their education.

Ronald continued his studies at King Edward's school in Birmingham and as a part of his basic education, he attended classes of Latin and Greek, which he very much enjoyed. Apart from learning the languages themselves, he was also interested in comparing them and looking for the features they shared in common. These years can be seen as the beginnings of his philological career. The greatest point though, was when he discovered Anglo-Saxon. He was sixteen years old and started studying this ancestor of his own language. He was fascinated by *Beowulf*, which he was eventually able to read in the original Old English version. The poem included another glimpse of the passion for northerness and dragons.

Later, during his academic career, he delivered one of his celebrated lectures

¹⁷ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 42-45.

¹⁸ Carpenter: *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 40.

¹⁹ Carpenter: *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 40.

about this epic poem. As he passed through Middle English, which was very similar to the dialect spoken by his mother's ancestors in West Midlands,²⁰ and delighted in another mythological poem, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, he went still further and took on the challenge of Old Norse, which caused him to return to the tale that first awakened this passion in him, the story of Sigur and the dragon.

When he began school, he spent his playtime with his cousins, inventing their own language and even singing rhymes in it. This is not so uncommon among children, Ronald however, was not ordinary and he went much further. He loved the sounds and forms of language and wanted to make one of his own just for his own enjoyment. He took inspiration in the Spanish books of Father Francis or his classmate's Gothic dictionary. He developed their own phonetics and grammar and did not stop there but continued to work on them from the diachronic point of view, that is, he created the words from which his new language was supposed to have evolved.²¹ This does not sound like a typical hobby for a teenager. This habit never tired him and years later, as the father of three children, he spent his nights recreating and improving what was to be an Elvish language in a book that was to become a worldwide success. During these years, Ronald met his future wife Edith, but Father Francis did not encourage their romantic courtship and forbid Ronald to pursue it, which led to a commitment over distance and long waiting in separation. Meanwhile, Ronald focused his attention on school. He had a different experience than Jack and enjoyed the school life with his mates. He and another senior boys formed a group and called themselves the Tea Club and later changed it to Barrovian Society.²² Apart from drinking tea, they all shared a knowledge of Latin and Greek and each was expert in another field and could enrich the others. Obviously, Tolkien had experience with literary and discussion groups before the Inklings began meeting.

Tolkien spent his last semester before going to Oxford leading debates in Latin, illustrating a school paper on Norse Sagas, discovering the Finnish language or giving a lecture on Modern Languages. Although he worked hard to be accepted to Oxford, he was partly sorry to leave his life at King Edward's, in contrast to Jack's traumatic feeling about his boarding school. New things were about to come for both of them.

²⁰ Carpenter: *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 43.

²¹ Carpenter: *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 44-45.

²² Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 53-54.

2. Jack Meets Tollers

2.1 Coalbiters

Eventually, Jack Lewis and Ronald Tolkien both arrived in Oxford to pursue their studies, mainly in English language and Literature. As could be already seen in the previous chapter, Tolkien was more focused on the linguistics and etymology of English while Lewis also pursued studies in Greek, Latin and Philosophy.

After he had graduated and was in financial need, Lewis was offered a position at University College in Oxford to undertake tutoring and give lectures in place of a philosophy tutor who was spending the year in America. Jack put much effort into preparing his lectures and reading books for his tutorials. Apart from tutoring, he earned money by grading English Literature papers for the Oxford and Cambridge Schools of the Examination Board, which he found “cruelly dull.”²³

Jack was, however, to reach a crucial position in his life only a year later, when he was given a fellowship at Magdalen College. It was an esteemed position. Magdalen was the college Lewis regarded as “beautiful beyond compare”²⁴ and the one where he was to spend most of the time of the many years to come, and where he would meet his new friend Ronald as well. He was to teach English and Philosophy.

As for Tolkien, starting his studies in Oxford was a fresh start after leaving Birmingham, his guardian father Francis, the sorrowful times after his mother’s death and the separation from his love Edith. As Carpenter expressed in the biography: “Already as the car bowled into Oxford he had decided that he would be happy there.”²⁵ He was reading Classics, but soon, his attention was attracted by Comparative Philology and he began to focus especially on English, Anglo Saxon and Middle English. Even as a first year student, apart from joining the Dialectical society, he also founded his own club to debate and share writing with his classmates.²⁶ Obviously, Tolkien enjoyed intellectual male company as it was also pointed out in the previous chapter. Humphrey

²³ Sayer, *Jack*, 180.

²⁴ Sayer, *Jack*, 185.

²⁵ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 61.

²⁶ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 61.

Carpenter described him as “at his happiest in groups of cronies where there was good talk, plenty of tobacco . . . and male company.”²⁷ It appears that ever since he started school, he was always a member of some literary club or even founded one.

Consequently, it seems natural that these stages led to another unofficial society, specifically at Magdalen College, the Inklings, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

By the time Jack and Ronald met, they were both tutors of English at the same college. Tolkien had left Oxford to teach English at Leeds University and now he was back, in his mid-thirties, and enthusiastic to bring reforms to the philological studies. Although they taught at the same college, the first time they met each other and had a conversation was at a discussion of faculty business two terms after Lewis started his tutorship. Lewis consequently recorded in his diary concerning Tolkien: “He is a smooth, pale, fluent little chap – can’t read Spencer because of the forms – thinks the language is the real thing in the schools . . . No harm in him: only needs a smack or so.”²⁸

He did not know that eventually, this man would become one of his closest friends who shared one of his greatest passions. It was already mentioned that the moment Jack became friends with his neighbour Arthur was when he found him reading northern myths. He had cherished the love for northernness since his early childhood. At the same time, independently from him, there was Ronald Tolkien, fascinated by Gothic, Old Norse and Icelandic languages. He learned them so well that he formed another club, this time already as a professor at Magdalen. The club was called Coalbiters, which is a term from Icelandic meaning “men who lounge so close to the fire in winter that they bite the coal.”²⁹ Its purpose was to read and translate old Icelandic sagas and myths. Despite the fact that C. S. Lewis did not have much knowledge of these languages, he joined the sessions of Coalbiters. It must have been thrilling for him to be able to read the stories that evoked in him so much enthusiasm in their original version. What seems curious is that it took him three years to find out that these authentic feelings were shared by Tolkien as well.³⁰

²⁷ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 61.

²⁸ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 23.

²⁹ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 27.

³⁰ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 28.

Carpenter recorded an entry from Lewis' journal about this revelation: "One week I was up till 2.30 on Monday, talking to the Anglo Saxon professor Tolkien, who came back with me to College from a society and sat discoursing of the gods and giants of Asgard for three hours, then departing in the wind and rain – who could turn him out, for the fire was bright and the talk good."³¹

Lewis wrote in his study of love called *The Four Loves* many years later that a friendship is born when mere companions discover that "they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden). The typical expression of opening Friendship would be something like, 'What? You too? I thought I was the only one.'"³² Considered in the circumstances previously referred to, it appears that northernness was the unique treasure thanks to which a great friendship of two unique men was born. Sayer refers to this moment as a discussion that "was the germ of the Inklings and the beginning of one of the most literary friendships of the twentieth century."³³ It is interesting and yet clear that he used the attribute "literary" as literature and language actually were the centre, the shared "treasure" of these men and their relation, however, it was not only this. After all, one's taste in literature is partly determined by and reflects the person's taste in the outside world itself. In this way, when Sayer called their friendship literary, it goes far beyond the fact that they both enjoyed reading and writing books. It goes deeper into the source of their attraction. Possibly, Lewis would have called this source Joy, all the things and hints that evoked in him something that he described by this word. As I have already shown, one of the things that brought him Joy and that were the grounds for his friendship with Tolkien, was enthusiasm for all things that carried some reminder of the old mythological wild and manly northernness. Another such concept, which was not really a common impulse at the beginning of their meeting but eventually became a crucial part of both their literary and personal life as well as their relationship, was Christianity.

³¹ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 27.

³² C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 62.

³³ Sayer, *Jack*, 250.

2.2 From an Atheist to a Theologian

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Tolkien was a devout Roman Catholic. Apart from it being his lifelong custom as well as personal conviction, it appears to also have carried some personal significance connected to his deceased mother. He revealed some of what religion meant to him in his writing, which will be studied more deeply in the rest of the thesis. Nonetheless, when Lewis and Tolkien met, Lewis was not a Christian. Ever since his childhood he had been searching for Joy and collecting different instances that hinted at such an impression, but he never really accredited these feelings to a possible God. For a long time, he did not even give much importance to these experiences until, thanks to his friend Owen Barfield, he admitted them to be relevant and instead of deceptive, being rather “the moments of clearest consciousness we had.”³⁴

He had gone through many different phases, which started at praying and reading the Bible as a boy but never actually acknowledging Christianity since then again.³⁵ Sayer mentions that in some of his school letters to Arthur, he attacks Christianity and he “writes that he believes in no religion because there is no proof of any and that religions should be called mythologies.”³⁶ It is interesting to mark that it was exactly through a comparison with mythology that he later believed in Christianity. The first book that he published was called *Spirits in Bondage*, where he addressed the conflict of good and evil and the balance between rationalism and romantic imagination, ideas that he himself was struggling with. At this point, he is said to have talked about a spirit he believed he had in him but denied any personal nature of God saying that any God that exists is outside of the cosmic system.³⁷ When he met Tolkien, he was probably closer to deism, a belief in the existence of some sort of intelligent god, in works but not necessarily personally affecting the world. He seemed to be keeping some sort of resistance to even thinking about the possibility of Christianity. Carpenter mentions that Jack recorded being “frightened of what he called ‘the danger of falling back into the most childish superstitions’, by which he presumably meant belief in God

³⁴ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 40.

³⁵ Sayer, *Jack*, 62.

³⁶ Sayer, *Jack*, 113.

³⁷ Sayer, *Jack*, 144.

and Christianity.”³⁸ Perhaps he felt frightened because he saw the possibility of believing that Christianity was true. He came to a stage where he had experienced and accepted that he believed in God although he could not see the relevance of Christ to religion and humanity, in which case even if he was willing, he could not accept Christianity.³⁹

There were probably many different factors and experiences affecting this process, but it seems relevant generally and for the points of this thesis in particular, to include and put an emphasis on the one event that influenced the transition of Jack’s beliefs. Humphrey Carpenter recorded and reconstructed this occasion in great detail.

Both Jack and Tolkien enjoyed intellectual discussions within a male company. One evening, after they had already discovered that they shared quite a few interests in common, the talk led to God. They stayed up late also with their colleague Hugo Dyson and discussed why Tolkien and Dyson believed in Christianity. The way they tried to explain their ideas to Jack was very unique and there will be provided a closer exhibition of this conversation along with the expansion of their conception of mythopeia in chapter four. Conclusively, this conversation in essence was an eye-opening experience for Jack and, along with other circumstances, had in effect that he became a Christian.⁴⁰ C. S. Lewis captured this moment of the long process of his conversion in his autobiography:

You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.⁴¹

Even though it was partly thanks to Tolkien that Lewis became a Christian, he did not join the Roman Catholic Church but became an active Protestant. This detail, however, did not matter in the fact that since then, they shared another fundamental

³⁸ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 40.

³⁹ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 41.

⁴⁰ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 42-45.

⁴¹ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 228-229.

thing in common, not just an interest but a common objective. Even though they had quite a strong denominational difference, Tolkien wrote in his diary that “besides giving constant pleasure and comfort, has done me much good from the contact with a man at once honest, brave, intellectual – a scholar, a poet, a philosopher – and a lover, at least after a long pilgrimage, of Our Lord.”⁴² He was obviously above all else, thankful for Lewis’ conversion.

3. Hwæt! we Inclinga . . . ⁴³

3.1 The Beginnings

Such are the opening lines of a poem written by Tolkien about the Inklings, parodying the opening lines of Beowulf in Anglo-Saxon.

Lo! We have heard in old days of the wisdom of the cunning-minded Inklings;
how those wise ones sat together in their deliberations, skillfully reciting
learning and song-craft, earnestly meditating. That was true joy!⁴⁴

There is not much evidence or mention of when exactly and how this group of friends gathered around C. S. Lewis began or became an actual group with a name. The name, however, was not invented by any of them. The factual information concerning the origin, the members of the Inklings and the proceedings of their meetings in this chapter, was taken from Carpenter: *The Inklings: C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and Their Friends*, if not otherwise stated.

There were quite a few literary societies in Oxford concerned with reading unpublished works and seeking advice, and Lewis and Tolkien were both involved in some of them, including the original Inklings. It was an undergraduate society founded

⁴² Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 52.

⁴³ The original version of the poem by Tolkien in Anglo-Saxon included along with the translation in Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 176.

⁴⁴ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 176.

by Edward Tangye Lean, which met at University College. The club soon dissolved after Lean's departure from Oxford.⁴⁵

Sayer shows that although literary societies were quite common at that time there was a lack of them at Magdalen College due to the ban by the previous president in order to encourage and protect the prestige clubs of rich undergraduates. Such clubs were still popular and their major interests included drinking or rowing.⁴⁶

When his schedule allowed it, Lewis tended to spend evenings in the Common Room where the professors met to enjoy great conversation with the celebrated wine from the university cellars. These meetings were called wines and were held exclusively among the professors and the students were not involved.⁴⁷ Carpenter mentions that later in the 1940s, however, there was a club largely attended by the undergraduates, which was supposed to serve as a forum for religious arguments. It was called The Socratic Club and Lewis became its president, participating in the regular disputes between atheists and Christians. Carpenter observes that Lewis often ended up as leading the intellectual combat and becoming the key figure of the sessions or rather performances.⁴⁸ That was however, a few years after the Inklings already came into being.

Since their first conversation, C. S. Lewis and Tolkien began spending more time together, joined also by Lewis' brother Warnie who lived in the same house. Lewis remarked about these reunions as "one of the pleasantest spots in the week. Sometimes we talk English School politics; sometimes we criticize one another's poems; other times we drift into theology or the state of the nation."⁴⁹ They would read their favourite books in the original version together or go on walking trips around the country with other dons and friends. By then, Tolkien had begun writing tales that would be eventually known under the title *The Silmarillion* and consulting them bit by bit with Lewis. *The Hobbit* had already been written as a story to amuse Tolkien's children⁵⁰ and it seems proper that after reading it, Lewis wrote about it in a letter to Arthur, the old friend who shared his love for northerness:

⁴⁵ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 57.

⁴⁶ Sayer, *Jack*, 200.

⁴⁷ Sayer, *Jack*, 194.

⁴⁸ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 214.

⁴⁹ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 55.

⁵⁰ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 126.

Since term began I have had a delightful time reading a children's story which Tolkien has just written. I have told you of him before: the one man absolutely fitted, if fate had allowed, to be a third in our friendship in the old days . . . Reading his fairy tale has been uncanny – it is so exactly like what we would have longed to write (or read) in 1916: so that one feels he is not making it up but merely describing the same world into which all three of us have the entry.⁵¹

It can be seen in the letter quoted by Carpenter that even though their interests evolved independently from each other, Lewis had probably found a sort of soulmate in Tolkien, the kind of friend he described in *The Four Loves*. It is still notable to see that a story Tolkien wrote primarily for pleasure and without much intention, reminded Jack of the Joy that he had been seeking since his childhood. It was the beginning of more stories to come. Lewis once said to Ronald: “Tollers, there is too little of what we really like in stories. I am afraid we shall have to write some ourselves,”⁵² and so they did.

3.2 A Literary Society or a Group of Friends?

Humphrey Carpenter recorded that the first reference to any official meeting of what could be called a literary club, was in 1939 in a letter from Lewis to his brother Warnie: “On Thursday we had a meeting of the Inklings.”⁵³ The name was transferred from the society of undergraduate students to a group of Jack's friends that met in his college rooms and a local pub. As to the name, Tolkien explained its meaning as well as the reason they maintained it: “It was a pleasantly ingenious pun in its way, suggesting people with vague or half-formed intimations and ideas plus those who dabble in ink.”⁵⁴

They were “a literary club of practising poets,”⁵⁵ as Tolkien called it. They read the work they were working on, discussed all kind of topics from politics to religion, smoked pipes and drank beer and tea.

⁵¹ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 57.

⁵² Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 65-66.

⁵³ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 67.

⁵⁴ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 67.

⁵⁵ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 115.

There were never any official members of the Inklings or any particular way of becoming one. They were rather an “undetermined and unelected” group of friends who shared different interests.⁵⁶ “There were no rules, officers, agendas or formal elections,” as Warnie Lewis is reported to have declared.⁵⁷ He even recorded in his diary an instance that shows that although there were not rules and elections, there were preferences: “Jack and I are much concerned this evening by the gatecrashing of — Tollers, the ass, brought him here last Thursday, and he has apparently elected himself an Inkling.”⁵⁸ Apart from Jack, his brother Warnie and Tolkien, some of the regular visitors were Hugo Dyson, R. E. Havard, Adam Fox, Owen Barfield and they later were joined by Charles Williams and Tolkien’s youngest son Christopher. O. Barfield was Jack’s good friend with whom he went on walking tours. He was a writer and an anthropologist. Jack dedicated his essay *Allegory of Love* to him as to “the best and wisest of my unofficial teachers”⁵⁹ and the first of *The Chronicles of Narnia* was dedicated to Barfield’s daughter Lucy. Barfield wrote a book called *Poetic Diction* that influenced both Lewis and Tolkien. He argued that Myth had an essential place in language and that mythology was associated with the origin of language and literature. He claimed that originally, people did not make a distinction between the literal and the metaphorical but used words in a mythological manner.⁶⁰ These ideas were essential for the conception of literature that Jack and Tolkien shared. This view on mythology and the way it influenced them will be discussed in the next chapter. Hugo Dyson was “a man who really loves truth: a philosopher and a religious man; who made his critical and literary activities depend on the former . . . ,” as described by Lewis.⁶¹ He lectured in English Literature at Reading University, but his regular visits to Oxford enabled him to join the sessions quite often. He much preferred the conversation to the reading.⁶² R. E. Havard was the Lewis family doctor. He did not consider himself a writer but sometimes shared his own productions as well.

⁵⁶ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 67.

⁵⁷ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 163.

⁵⁸ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 163.

⁵⁹ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), v.

⁶⁰ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 41.

⁶¹ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 42.

⁶² Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 131.

Charles Williams was a figure that joined the Inklings later due to his post at Oxford University Press moving from London to Oxford during the war. Nonetheless, he was one of the prominent members. He was “a Londoner born and bred,” as Carpenter called him⁶³ and C. S. Lewis described him in his letter to Arthur as “of humble origin (there are still traces of Cockney in his voice), ugly as a chimpanzee but so radiant that as soon as he begins talking he is transfigured and looks like an angel. He sweeps some people quite off their feet and has many disciples.”⁶⁴ Obviously, he carried a special charisma about himself that was possibly not so apparent from his looks, although, such a judgement must be taken relatively. Apart from working at the Oxford Press in London, he gave evening classes on English Literature at the City Literary Institute. Carpenter proceeds to describe him as a lecturer who was “sitting on a table and often moving his arms and hands in dramatic gestures, he spoke passionately and without ceasing . . . he did not really discuss the poetry at all. What he did was to communicate his feelings for it, or even his ability to participate in it.”⁶⁵ His own books are marked by a particular taste in a kind of occult nature and rituals. He was even invited into a society called the Order of the Golden Dawn that participated in various rites.⁶⁶ It seems seems curious that at the same time he considered himself a committed Christian, “He was a devout member of the Church of England, but he was interested in magic.”⁶⁷ He came across Lewis’ *Allegory of Love* when the London branch of the Oxford University Press was in charge of writing a descriptive paragraph about it.⁶⁸ He found Lewis’ essay wonderful and containing some of his own oppinions. By the time Williams had written a paragraph admiring the work, Lewis read Charles’ book *The Place of The Lion* and wrote a complimentary letter to him. Consequently, Williams invited Lewis to have a lunch with him. They became friends and as the war began and Williams was forced to move to Oxford, Lewis brought him immediately to one of the Inklings sessions. He became one of the key members, probably also because of his passionate personality. As much as Lewis admired him and his work, he did not hesitate to pronounce his cticism about Williams’ eccentricity. It was partly for this obscurity

⁶³ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 76.

⁶⁴ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 101.

⁶⁵ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 74.

⁶⁶ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 81.

⁶⁷ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 80.

⁶⁸ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 99.

as well as possibly for jealousy, since Lewis admired his new friend so much and spent a great deal of time with him that Tolkien remained quite alien to Charles. Carpenter shared some of the statements Tolkien wrote about Williams twenty-five years after he joined the club:

I was and remain wholly unsympathetic to Williams' mind. I knew Charles only as a friend of C. S. L. whom I met in his company during the period when, owing to the War, he spent much of his time in Oxford. We liked one another and enjoyed talking (mostly in jest) but we had nothing to say to one another at deeper (or higher) levels. I doubt if he had read anything of mine then available; I had read or heard a good deal of his work, but found it wholly alien, and sometimes very distasteful, occasionally ridiculous.⁶⁹

Carpenter assumed that what Tolkien found distasteful in Williams' novels was the element of black magic and as he himself had believed in the devil and his works, he did not like these things to be lightly used in popular novels.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, Charles Williams found the male company at Magdalen delightful and as equal debaters to his own intellect.

The Inklings would typically meet on Thursday evenings at Jack's rooms at Magdalen College. Carpenter provides an imaginary description and narrative of one of such evenings. At around nine o'clock, the men, all about fifty years old, would start gathering after their busy day. Warnie Lewis would put coal on the fire and make tea, although normally, he was very fond of beer, but their favourite pub was often short of beer during the war. They would spontaneously proceed from usual greetings, news and jests into serious comments about the current state of politics, the university or any possible topic. The seemingly most important part of the meetings was the reading of their literary works in process. The only ones who would habitually share their works were Lewis, Tolkien and Williams. It was in Lewis' rooms in Magdalen that Tolkien first read *The Lord of the Rings* to a public audience, chapter by chapter, while he himself still did not know how the story was going to evolve.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 121.

⁷⁰ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 121.

⁷¹ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 129-152.

Humphrey Carpenter visited Tolkien in order to gain material for his book and he noticed that Tolkien talked about the plot of *The Lord of the Rings* not as a fictional story but rather as actual historical events.⁷² It seems that he treated the writing of the story itself in this manner, not so much as making up a story, but revealing the truth and the story itself. It is demonstrated in the imaginary dialogues created by Carpenter in order to demonstrate what could have been the course of a session of the Inklings. In the following example, Tolkien is imagined to talk about his method of inventing the story of *The Lord of the Rings*:

Of course I met a lot of things on the way that astonished me. The Black Riders were completely unpremeditated – I remember the first one, the one that Frodo and the hobbits hide from on the road, just turned up without any forethought. . . . And then in the inn at Bree, Trotter sitting in the corner of the bar parlour was a real shock – totally unexpected – and I had no more idea who he was than had Frodo.⁷³

Obviously, the conversation was recreated hypothetically by Carpenter based on the letters and works of the authors, but his perception reveals some of the ideas Tolkien seemed to have held on to in his work.

After the reading, there would be time to comment and share opinions about the piece they had heard and they would not restrain themselves with criticism. Many of the poems that Tolkien wrote for *The Lord of the Rings* were revised by C. S. Lewis with various changes recommended, which Tolkien often did not make use of.⁷⁴

Naturally, the conversation was bound to deal with religion, as the members were all Christians, being from different denominations only added to the diversity and enjoyment of their conversations.

Apart from Thursday evening at Magdalen College, they had a habit of meeting every Tuesday at around lunch time at a local pub “The Eagle and Child,” familiarly known as the “Bird and Baby.”⁷⁵ It was a pleasant environment which allowed them to chat privately and with a beer or two provided. C. S. Lewis is said to have remarked in

⁷² Carpenter, *Tolkien*, 12.

⁷³ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 139.

⁷⁴ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 208.

⁷⁵ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 122.

a letter to his friend Arthur that: “The fun is often so fast and furious that the company probably thinks we’re talking bawdy when in fact we’re talking theology.”⁷⁶ Since they were all considerably known among the students in Oxford, the meetings of Inklings became common knowledge to the extent that when one of the graduates of St John’s College published a detective story set in the Bird and Baby, he made one of the characters remark: “There goes C. S. Lewis – it must be Tuesday.”⁷⁷

In the meantime, Lewis was becoming famous as a writer of Christian literature. After his conversion, he wrote a variation on Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* and called it *Pilgrim’s Regress*. He used a fictional world and a little boy as the protagonist to denote the different phases and ideologies he himself had passed through and that led to his return to Christianity. Consequently, he was asked to write a book on the subject of pain and suffering, which he later called *The Problem of Pain*. He read it and afterwards also dedicated it to the Inklings and the book brought him much success.⁷⁸ Another Christian novel that followed was *The Screwtape Letters*, where he studied the psychology of temptation presented in a way of a demon master writing letters to his demon pupil. He dedicated it to Tolkien as “in token of a great debt.”⁷⁹ While it was taking Tolkien eleven years to struggle through *The Lord of the Rings*, because of his high standards and expectations as to the geographical and chronological details of the mythological story, Jack had an idea to write a story for children. As he read the first lines of what was going to be *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to Tolkien, the latter is reported to have said that he “disliked it intensely.”⁸⁰ Carpenter assumes that it was because of the hastiness it was written in and so not attaining Tolkien’s own standard.⁸¹ Sayer adds, commenting on this incident that Tolkien was disturbed by the way Lewis combined elements of completely different mythological traditions such as talking animals, fauns and Father Christmas, which went against his strict convictions about story-telling.⁸² Perhaps it was affected by the struggle he himself had with his work while C. S. Lewis had been publishing books and becoming famous.

⁷⁶ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 185.

⁷⁷ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 208.

⁷⁸ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 173.

⁷⁹ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 174.

⁸⁰ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 223.

⁸¹ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 224.

⁸² Sayer, *Jack*, 312.

Accordingly, it would appear that the Inklings were not just a club that met once a week, but a dynamic group of friends that shared their entire lives, not just their literary careers. Equally, it seems that they did not aim at any particular intention that would be their manifesto and would concern all of the members. Rather than being a society with norms and agenda, they were male companions and friends in Lewis' way of understanding: "Long before history began we men have got together and done things. . . . We enjoyed one another's society greatly; we Braves, we hunters, all bound together by a shared skill, shared dangers and hardships, esoteric jokes – away from the women and children."⁸³ Obviously, they did not hunt together, but this example of the character of a male friendship and company shows that the Inklings were most of all, friends, who shared common interests as well as their personal ordinary hardships. Charles Williams wrote a passage in *The Place of the Lion* that seems to show the exceptional quality that the Inklings were, perhaps unconsciously, providing: "Much was possible to a man in solitude, but some things were possible only to a man in companionship, and of these the most important was balance. No mind was ever so good that it did not need another mind to counter and equal it, and to save it from conceit and bigotry and folly."⁸⁴ It also shows, that when the members met together with the diversity and combination of their views, opinions and preferences, they could have been a healthy confrontation and of benefit to one another.

It seems that in *The Four Loves*, Lewis expressed what he believed as to the special character of a specifically male friendship. Such appears to be the environment that was encouraged at the Inklings. In the same book, Lewis continues to argue that a woman, who left any kind of cultural or intellectual exploration after marrying cannot be part of such a circle of friends. She can be physically present, but either she sits bored or the others have to explain everything to her but the effort eventually ends in friendly chatter or gossip instead of a serious discussion.⁸⁵ If Lewis had any particular experience with such women other than Mrs. Moore, it is possible that Tolkien's wife contributed to that impression. Carpenter mentions that the friends on occasions visited Tolkien's house but his wife Edith showed resentment to their company and was not

⁸³ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 60.

⁸⁴ Charles Williams, *The Place of the Lion* (South Australia: eBooks@Adelaidechap, 2014), chap. 15, accessed April 10, 2015.

<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/williams/charles/place-of-the-lion/chapter15.html>

⁸⁵ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 70.

capable of keeping up with their sort of intellectual topics. It was possibly also caused by their inability to talk to women but the result was that conversation would sway into friendly chatter, which the men did not find so engaging.⁸⁶ Although Lewis affirmed ideas about the uniqueness of a male friendship, it should not be interpreted as denying the intellectual value of women in general. He himself praised many female writers and enjoyed reading such classics as Austen or the Brontës.⁸⁷ It is true that Lewis was single most of his life and the ideas in *The Four Loves* were published before he met his future wife Joy Gresham, who was a journalist and was a fan of his works. Lewis was obviously able with her to discuss religion and literature on a level of equals, although it can be assumed that the atmosphere of smoking pipes and beer could still make a difference.

Since the Inklings began meeting in around 1939 there were changes to the members and places, but they never actually ceased meeting until the death of C. S. Lewis in 1963 when after some attempt to keep gathering, they gave up, as Havard, the family doctor, expressed it: “He was the link who bound us all together.”⁸⁸ As it appears, Lewis was the key figure of the Inklings who encouraged and linked the circle of friends that gathered around him.

4. Mythopoeia

4.1 “We shall have to write some ourselves . . .”

“Tollers, there is too little of what we really like in stories. I am afraid we shall have to write some ourselves.”⁸⁹ C. S. Lewis is reported to have said so to Tolkien one day as they agreed to take on the task of story telling which was supposed to lead to the discovery of Myth.

This chapter intends to explain more profoundly the significance of Myth, as viewed and shared by Tolkien and Lewis and provide examples of their consequent realization of this concept in selected fictional literary works of their creation.

⁸⁶ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 157.

⁸⁷ Sayer, *Jack*, 101.

⁸⁸ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 252.

⁸⁹ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 172.

There has already been demonstrated the presence of this concept in the thinking of the two authors and friends in the previous chapters, pointing out their particular biographical events, approaches and beliefs that conveyed an idea of mythology in a way controversial to the general conception. Possibly, one could even consider calling this approach a philosophy.

It has been remarked that since their childhood, they have both been enraptured by old Norse myths in a unique way. Obviously, they enjoyed mythology, as the art of narrating an origin and history of a people or events. They seem to have especially found appreciation for the wild heroic stories of battles with dragons and other imaginary and fairy circumstances.

It might appear surprising, however, that the essential nature of myth for which they both not only maintained a passion, but identified themselves with the ultimate meaning thereof, was Christianity.

4.2 Lies Breathed through Silver

Back at the time when Lewis and Tolkien were only getting to know each other better, meeting regularly and enjoying discussions on all sorts of topics, Lewis was still not a Christian. He believed in God but did not understand any personal relevance and the purpose of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, which is the essential point in Christianity. They would usually meet on Monday mornings and have a beer at the local pub. On Saturday 19 September 1931, however, Lewis invited Tolkien to dine with him and Hugo Dyson at Magdalen.⁹⁰ Carpenter provides a record of this notable occasion, which he reconstructed based on the poem Tolkien later wrote inspired by the conversation. After the dinner, they went for a walk and discussed the purpose of myth. It turned out that through this discussion, Tolkien and Dyson who were both Christians actually showed Lewis the purpose that he was unable to see in the Christian sacrifice. They used a comparison of Myth and Christianity to show him that when he came across the same idea of a divine pagan sacrifice in mythology, it moved his soul and had always touched his imagination, however, he was expecting something more from the Gospel, some clear meaning behind the myth, which as they claimed, was not the way to approach it and that the Gospel actually worked the same way as the

⁹⁰ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 42.

northern myths he liked so much, with the only difference being that is was true. “But, said Lewis, myths are lies, even though lies breathed though silver. No, said Tolkien, they are not.”⁹¹

Tolkien continued to demonstrate to Lewis that when he calls a star a star and a tree a tree and does not think about the words, they were not a star and a tree until someone gave them the name. Still giving a name to a thing and stating what the thing is, is merely our own inventing of our own view about them. He explained that just as speech is invention about objects and ideas, so myth is an invention about the truth. His idea was that since, as his belief was, we were created by a creator, everything we create ourselves can only reflect our origin that comes from the same creator, who is also the source of general truth about the world. “We have come from God, and inevitably the myths woven by us, though they contain error, will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light, the eternal truth that is with God.”⁹²

Tolkien continued to use the term sub-creator, inventor of stories and myths as a way of participating in the ultimate creation and as well aspiring to the state before the fall of men, when the creation was still in its original state. Although the myths of men are never clear representations, they “steer however shakily to the harbour.”⁹³ Such were also the ideas that he implanted as the centre of his story of *Middle Earth*. Both of the authors were quite concerned in their writings about the idea of the fall of men. At last, Lewis began to understand Tolkien’s conception and its meaning related to Christianity. He observed that according to this philosophy, “the story of Christ was simply a true myth, a myth that works on us in the same way as the others, but a myth that really happened.”⁹⁴ They continued talking till the morning light and in effect, Lewis wrote in a letter to his friend Arthur that he passed to a definite belief in Christianity.⁹⁵

However complex and abstract this explanation might seem, the fact that it was specifically this conversation that caused Lewis to believe in Christianity shows the way of his thinking and the profound connection he had to myth. It seems rather striking that their ideas about myth went so deep as to relate to the ultimate

⁹¹ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 151.

⁹² Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 151.

⁹³ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 151.

⁹⁴ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 151.

⁹⁵ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 42-45.

conception and belief about the origin of the world. In any case, they went beyond literature and story telling methods. The conception of mythology as truth was crucial in their works, as it will be analyzed later.

Inspired by the forceful conversation, Tolkien wrote a poem to C. S. Lewis, in which he captured the conflict of the conversation as well as pronounced a kind of manifesto for their ideology equally as for understanding an essence of their future fictional works. It was a heroic couplet as written from a Myth-Lover (Philomythus) to a Myth-Hater (Misomythos), which he later included in his book *Tree and Leaf* under the name “Mythopoiea” (Myth-Maker). The poem also appeared in Tolkien’s biography written by Carpenter. In this poem, Tolkien developed his idea about the truth of myth as a reflection of the Creator and explained what he meant by a man sub-creator. The poem has 148 lines so only selected passages will be commented on.

As Tolkien addresses the Myth-hater’s view of the world, he actually appears to address Lewis’ statement that myths are lies breathed through silver. He defends his conviction:

He sees no stars who does not see them first
of living silver made that sudden burst
to flame like flowers beneath an ancient song,
whose very echo after-music long
has since pursued. There is no firmament,
only a void, unless a jewelled tent
myth-woven and elf-patterned; and no earth,
unless the mother’s womb whence all have birth.
The heart of Man is not compound of lies,
but draws some wisdom from the only Wise,
and still recalls him. Though now long estranged,
Man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed.
Dis-graced he may be, yet is not dethroned,
and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned,
his world-dominion by creative act:
not his to worship the great Artefact,
Man, Sub-creator, the refracted light
through whom is splintered from a single White

to many hues, and endlessly combined
in living shapes that move from mind to mind.

.....
We make still by the law in which we're made.⁹⁶

By the only Wise, he appears to designate the Christian God, whom Tolkien believed to be the creator of the world and where the objective Truth, as Tolkien called it lay. Thus in consequence of this belief, every creation under the sun and every product of individual human beings contains a fragment of that original Truth. As he states in the last line, "We make still by the law in which we're made," in effect he invented the name Sub-creator, as a participant and creator within God's original creation by reflecting the pattern implanted in us. Through this poem, Tolkien provides a glimpse at the way he perceived not only the world, but stories and myths as well, including those of his own invention. These seemingly abstract and highly intellectual ideas resulted also in the various opinions he claimed about his writing and works, which denote his original insight about myth and its spiritual essence.

He was already writing *The Lord of the Rings* when he delivered a lecture at the University of St. Andrews in 1939 on the topic of fairy stories. A revised version of this lecture was published in a collection of essays called *The Monsters and the Critics*. He devoted part of the lecture to his ideology of successful sub-creating, which makes a good fantasy story and quoted a few lines from the poem he wrote to Lewis. He considered sub-creation to be the highest function for man and went on to say: "Every writer making a secondary world wishes in some measure to be a real maker, or hopes that he is drawing on reality: hopes that the peculiar quality of this secondary world (if not all the details) are derived from Reality, or are flowing into it."⁹⁷ It may be assumed that what he meant as Reality in his lecture was the same conception that he called Truth in his poem, the Christian God and his original creation before the fall. It may be considered that apart from embedding the spiritual conception into his story, this belief of making the secondary world as real as possible also influenced his peculiar manner of overcalculating, elaborating and perfecting the background geographical,

⁹⁶ J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 83-84.

⁹⁷ J. R. R. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," in *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 155.

chronological as well as linguistic conditions of the fictional world he was creating. He spent over twenty years refining the grammar and etymology of the Elvish languages and penmanship he invented.⁹⁸ It might have possibly been part of his aim to make the world and its laws believable once the reader enters it. Nonetheless, at the end of the lecture, he concluded that, as paraphrased by Carpenter, “it was a specifically Christian venture to write such a story as he was now engaged upon.”⁹⁹ What he meant by this attribute can be understood to a greater measure by the term he himself invented for an essential element of his stories, eucatastrophe. Before the analysis of this term and its purpose in Tolkien’s and Lewis’ work, this chapter means to demonstrate in a more general way its practical application in mythology.

4.3 The Myth-makers

In the first place, what appears to be the result of their taking on the task to write stories that would denote their idea of mythology, is that they intentionally developed fictional worlds of their own. Tolkien had originally written *The Hobbit* just for amusement,¹⁰⁰ but naturally he could not let the setting of the story be without all possible details. He wrote his personal notes and random genealogies about Middle Earth and its people, including the poetry and legends of the different nations of elves, dwarfs or men, which were edited by his son and published four years after Tolkien’s death as *The Silmarillion*, the background and in fact the mythology of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.¹⁰¹ What can be assumed as Lewis’ reaction to the myth-making challenge was a trilogy called *Space Trilogy*, the first part of which was *Out of the Silent Planet*. It is rather science fiction concerning space travel and explores the idea of the human fall in an imaginative and adventurous way. Lewis wrote in a letter to Roger Lancelyn Green in 1938 about his inspiration for writing the story: “I like the whole interplanetary idea as a mythology and simply wished to conquer for my own

⁹⁸ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 199.

⁹⁹ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 195.

¹⁰⁰ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 180.

¹⁰¹ Christopher Tolkien, foreword to *The Silmarillion*, by J. R. R. Tolkien, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), v.

(Christian) point of view what has always hitherto been used by the opposite side.”¹⁰² Even if it does not appear obvious from a space travel science fiction, he intentionally used even this story to reflect the conception of myth as a fragment of Truth, which for him was represented by God. This thesis will not go deeper into *Space Trilogy*, but rather focus on *The Chronicles of Narnia* as Lewis’ key literary application of the particular spiritual theory.

A significant part of mythology is the concept of origin and traditional heritage. Tolkien and Lewis both successfully included this feature in the fictional worlds they created. The origin and creation of Narnia is captured in the first of the seven chronicles, *The Magicians Nephew*:

In the darkness something was happening at last. A voice had begun to sing. . . . The second wonder was that the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars...If you had seen and heard it , as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves who were singing, and that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing. . . . They made you feel excited; until you saw the Singer himself, and then you forgot everything else. It was a Lion . . . Then there came a swift flash like fire (but it burnt nobody) either from the sky or from the Lion itself, and every drop of blood tingled in the children’s bodies, and the deepest, wildest voice they had ever heard was saying: "Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters."¹⁰³

Lewis described Aslan literally walking around a void land and singing Narnia into being. Lewis narrates this event as an epic ceremony perceived by the present characters. While Lewis’ representation of the element of origin is rather abstract and without too many explanations, Tolkien devoted a whole book to the origin of the world central for the stories in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

He described the creation of Middle Earth at the beginning of *The Silmarillion*. He painted a scene of Eru Illúvatar, called also “the One” and the Ainur, “the offspring of

¹⁰² Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Complete Guide to His Life & Works* (San Francisco: Harper One, 1998), 208.

¹⁰³ C. S. Lewis, “The Magician’s Nephew,” in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 70.

his thought”¹⁰⁴ that he had made in a fair land created for them, surrounded by Void, as he passed knowledge of a deeper understanding to them and let them sing it into music in harmony. One of the Ainur, though, desired to put his own thought into Eru’s melody and caused disharmony of the two melodies that were in struggle. The result was that Eru gave life to the music:

But when they were come into the Void, Ilúvatar said to them: “Behold your music!” And he showed to them a vision, giving to them sight where before there was only hearing; and they saw a new World made visible before them, and it was globed amid the Void, and it was sustained therein, but it was not of it. And as they looked and wondered this World began to unfold its history, and it seemed to them that it lived and grew.¹⁰⁵

The selected passages revealing the mode in which Tolkien and Lewis chose their worlds to be created seem to share some aspects in common. It appears of interest that both of the stories incorporate the role of a creative maker who was there since the beginning, either a lion or some kind of One intelligent being. Furthermore, Tolkien already incorporates the idea of sub-creating, when Eru decides to put life into the disharmony to show his power above the Ainur: “And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined.”¹⁰⁶ It appears to be the exact reflection of the conception Tolkien and Lewis had about the world, as well as about themselves as sub-creators, inventing stories while still “making by the law in which they were made.”¹⁰⁷ It can be seen that although this concept was quite spiritual and resulted in a life-influencing philosophy, they used it at the same time as a literary method. It could be argued that they tried to represent the Christian story of creation and thus write an allegory of Eden. However, they are both reported to have

¹⁰⁴ J. R. R. Tolkien, ed. Christopher Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), 3.

¹⁰⁵ Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, 6.

¹⁰⁶ Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, 5.

¹⁰⁷ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 194.

disliked formal allegory and allegorical readings of their works.¹⁰⁸ Although, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which Lewis wrote soon after his conversion belongs to the label allegory, inspired by John Bunyan, in his following fictional works, Lewis embraced a different attitude. This fact can be seen in a letter he later wrote to children reading Narnia:

You are mistaken when you think that everything in the books 'represents' something in this world. Things do that in *The Pilgrim's Progress* but I'm not writing in that way. I did not say to myself, 'Let us represent Jesus as He really is in our world by a Lion in Narnia.' I said 'Let us suppose that there were a land like Narnia and that the Son of God as he became a Man in our world, became a Lion there, and then imagine what would happen.' If you think about it, you will see that it is quite a different thing.¹⁰⁹

He himself put the new approach to allegory used in Narnia in contrast to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which he previously used as the basis for his own autobiographical story.

4. 4 No Allegory

It was a part of their philosophy of Myth as Truth that the mythological story was supposed to evoke an impression and become an experience by itself, without any further searching for a secondary meaning. On the contrary, they saw the unique ability of myth, "to convey truth in a way that sometimes no abstract argument can achieve."¹¹⁰ In one of his letters, Lewis expressed the difference and his preference of myth over allegory: "Into an allegory a man can put only what he already knows: in a myth he puts what he does not yet know and could not come to know in any other way."¹¹¹ The idea he seemed to express was formulated in other words as the value of myth, which is that "it takes all the things you know and restores to them the rich significance which has

¹⁰⁸ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 193.

¹⁰⁹ Shanna Caughey, *Revisiting Narnia* (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2005), 15.

¹¹⁰ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 157.

¹¹¹ 22 September 1956, in *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis: Volume III: Narnia, Cambridge, and Joy, 1950-1963*, ed. Walter Hooper (San Francisco: Harper, 2007), 780-790.

been hidden by the veil of familiarity. We do not retreat from reality, we rediscover it. As long as the story lingers in our mind, the real things are more themselves . . . By dipping them in myth we see them more clearly.”¹¹² Myth is not a mere allegorical representation of concrete ideas, but it contains an ability to awaken the reader’s mind to see concepts of his own choice in real life, without directly pointing to them as allegory does.

Tolkien and Lewis seemed to believe that myth could convey information, or Truth as they ultimately called it, in a way that freed the reader from his secondary assumptions and prejudices due to familiarity. In this way, the reader could encounter and experience the same reality in a completely new way without the need to look for symbols and hidden meanings. Tolkien himself felt it easier to express himself through myth, as he wrote in a letter to his son concerning his biography: “For if as seems probable I shall never write any ordered biography - it is against my nature, which expresses itself about things deepest felt in tales and myths.”¹¹³ Rather, he preferred to contain the insights he cherished most in disguise in his mythological world. Indeed, it seems that he did not separate mythology from reality when it is considered that he identified his wife with the romantic character of Lúthien that was inspired by her to the measure that he included this name on her tombstone.¹¹⁴

Despite Tolkien’s opinions about intentional allegory, there were critics interpreting his works, namely *The Lord of the Rings*, trying to assign him motives that he might have found ridiculous. Since the Second World War was on the rise as he was working on his story, some people are said to have interpreted Tolkien’s placement of Mordor in the east as an allegorical reference to Russia.¹¹⁵ Lewis reacted to this assumption as follows: „These things were not devised to reflect any particular situation in the real world. It was the other way around, real events began, horribly, to conform to the pattern he had freely invented.”¹¹⁶ Obviously, a political kind of interpretation was not what Tolkien seemed to be aiming at. Nevertheless, they did not aim at a Christian allegorical reading either, which might appear strange, since as has already been

¹¹² C. S. Lewis, *On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature*, ed. Walter Hooper (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002), 90.

¹¹³ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 105.

¹¹⁴ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 105.

¹¹⁵ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 193.

¹¹⁶ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 193.

discussed, they intentionally put some fragment of their Christian faith in their creation and often this resulted in what appeared as obvious connections with the Bible, this being the reason why there have been many critics attempting to provide a Christian reading of their works. Tolkien said he disliked the conscious and intentional allegory, but nonetheless, “any attempt to explain the purpose of a fairy tale must use allegoric language.”¹¹⁷ What can be assumed from this is that his writing strategy was not to use elements in the fantasy story, which had any direct link to particular elements in reality, but rather to create a story that would as a whole convey an idea of reality, disguised in an imaginary character. Walter Hooper talks about this method in a review of *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*:

“But why,” (some ask), “why, if you have a serious comment to make on the real life of men, must you do it by talking about a phantasmagoric never-never land of your own?” Because, I take it, one of the main things the author wants to say is that the real life of men is of that mythical and heroic quality. One can see the principle at work in his characterization. Much that in a realistic work would be done by “character delineation” is here done simply by making the character an elf, a dwarf, or a hobbit. The imagined beings have their insides on the outside; they are visible souls. And man as a whole, Man pitted against the universe, have we seen him at all till we see that he is like a hero in a fairy tale?¹¹⁸

As Hooper tries to explain Tolkien’s way of incorporating his conception of Truth in a fantasy, it can be seen that it was included in every part of the story, which made it a whole and the fictional fairy characters were part of the aim to free oneself of familiarity to be able to see the same real ideas in a new relevant way.

As a whole, however, the stories of both of the authors seem to carry the presence of some hint – acting as a literary principle but at the same time being the centre of what they believed to be the Truth as well as the centre of their faith, a principle Tolkien called Eucatastrophe.

¹¹⁷ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 169.

¹¹⁸ C. S. Lewis, *On Stories: And Other Essays on Literature*, ed. Walter Hooper (San Diego: Harvest Book-Harcourt, 1982), 89.

6. Eucatastrophe

Tolkien invented this term for a particular element in the story plot, combining the Greek prefix *eu* and *katastrophe*, to mean a good catastrophe. He explained the purpose and meaning of this term in one of his letters:

I coined the word “eucatastrophe”: the sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears (which I argued it is the highest function of fairy-stories to produce). And I was there led to the view that it produces its peculiar effect because it is a sudden glimpse of Truth, your whole nature chained in material cause and effect, the chain of death, feels a sudden relief as if a major limb out of joint had suddenly snapped back. It perceives – if the story has literary 'truth' on the second plane . . . that this is indeed how things really do work in the Great World for which our nature is made. And I concluded by saying that the Resurrection was the greatest “eucatastrophe” possible in the greatest Fairy Story – and produces that essential emotion: Christian joy which produces tears because it is qualitatively so like sorrow, because it comes from those places where Joy and Sorrow are at one, reconciled, as selfishness and altruism are lost in Love.¹¹⁹

His explanation appears to include all of his ideas already discussed about myth. Eucatastrophy, because of its “joy through tears” nature, is the actual moment in the story, when the reader is enabled to experience and perceive the value of real Truth, as considered by Tolkien, embedded in the plot in the secondary plan. He chose this particular kind of story element, because he identified it with the resurrection of Christ, viewed as the moment in the history of humanity when all seems lost because of the fall of men and the final sentence is death when suddenly there comes a redemption, bringing life in a way that no one expected. It can be assumed that he did not try to use this term as an allegory for Christianity but perhaps just wanted to provide the same principle and evoke the same emotion that Christianity provided him. He once again

¹¹⁹ To Christopher Tolkien 7-8 November 1944, in *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, eds. Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), 100.

defined a literary method and an essential element in the plot of a fairy story and at the same time as he thought of the same term on spiritual and personal level, as it could be previously seen with the term mythopoeia.

Although Tolkien coined this term, he was not the only one to use it and its influence can be found in Lewis' works as well, possibly to an even greater extent. The sacrifice of Aslan in place of Edmund and his consequent rising from the dead in *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* is the key example. "[The witch] would have known that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards."¹²⁰ Tolkien described eucatastrophe as a joy through tears moment and so it is terribly sad to face the fact that Edmund was a traitor, causing dreadful pain to Aslan, who was without flaw yet it is a moment of great joy, because despite his fault, Edmund lives and so does the lion. When they all thought there was no way to escape death, Edmund was released by an old truth he did not count on, the sacrifice of an innocent one in his place, which defeated death itself.

The story of Aslan often directly reminds people of Christ, however, as it was already mentioned, Lewis did not write the story with the aim of hiding Christian symbols behind the fantasy. He defended these assumptions in *Of Other Worlds*:

Some people seem to think that I began by asking myself how I could say something about Christianity to children; then fixed on the fairy tale as an instrument, then collected information about child psychology and decided what age group I'd write for; then drew up a list of basic Christian truths and hammered out 'allegories' to embody them. This is all pure moonshine. I couldn't write in that way. It all began with images; a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion. At first there wasn't anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord.¹²¹

Nonetheless, the element of eucatastrophe in Lewis' story seems quite obvious.

Likewise, it achieves the effect and purpose that Tolkien had assigned to it. In contrast

¹²⁰ C. S. Lewis, "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 185.

¹²¹ C. S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds* (London: First Harvest, 1975), 36.

to Lewis, Tolkien seemed to use this element in a more disguised way. There can be found two major moments that could be described as eucatastrophe in Tolkien's books about Middle-Earth. The first of them is in the story of *The Hobbit*, the scene when all hope seems to be lost as the company is just about to get caught by the enemy when all of a sudden, the eagles arrive to save them. Tolkien wrote in a letter concerning *The Hobbit* that when he had read it after it was old enough to be detached from him, he "had suddenly in a fairly strong measure the 'eucatastrophic' emotion at Biblo's exclamation: 'The Eagles! The Eagles are coming!'"¹²² It was the moment of unexpected relief and joy.

The major eucatastrophic moment in Tolkien's work occurs in the climax of *The Lord of The Rings* when Frodo is just about to complete the task assigned to him, conquer the evil and save everyone fighting on his side, when he turns out to be too weak and is not able to attain it and throw the ring into the abyss. He fails his task, disappoints himself as well as all the people, it seems that the enemy will win, enslave everyone and all hope for the future of the good will be lost, when suddenly the story turns around by Gollum stealing the ring and falling into the abyss himself.

Then Frodo stirred and spoke with a clear voice . . . "I have come," he said. "But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine! And suddenly, as he set it on his finger, he vanished from Sam's sight . . . Gollum on the edge of the abyss was fighting like a mad thing with an unseen foe . . . Suddenly Sam saw Gollum's long hands draw upwards to his mouth; his white fngs gleamed, and then snapped as they bit. Frodo gave a cry and there he was, fallen upon his knees at the chasm's edge. But Gollum, dancing like a mad thing, held aloft the ring, a finger still thrust within its circle . . . And at that, even as his eyes were lifted up to gloat on his prize, he stepped too far, toppled, wavered for a moment on the brink, and then with a shriek he fell . . . "Well, this is the end, Sam Gamgee," said a voice by his side. And there was Frodo, pale and worn, yet himself again. . . . "Master!" cried Sam, and fell upon his knees. In all the ruin of the world for the moment he felt only joy, great joy. The burden was gone. His master had been saved . . . "But do you remember Gandalf's words: Even Gollum may have something yet to do? But for him,

¹²² To Christopher Tolkien, 7-8 November 1944, 101.

Sam, I could not have destroyed the Ring. The quest would have been in vain, even at the bitter end.¹²³

The eucatastrophic moment thus seems to be an unexpected deliverance in a situation when the protagonist is not capable of succeeding by himself. Although, in the story, there is not given credit to any kind of deity that intervenes in the plot, there appears to be embedded a hint of a god throughout the whole tale. The creator Eru was mentioned only in *The Silmarillion* in contrast to Aslan who is the centre of all *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Tolkien, however, seems to reject the presence of mere chance in the story. He seems to indicate such a notion by various suggestions throughout the plot as for example when Gandalf comments on the circumstances of the ring coming to Frodo, “I can put it no plainer than by saying that Bilbo was meant to find the Ring, and not by its maker. In which case you also were meant to have it.”¹²⁴ It is emphasised that it was not chance and coincidence that Frodo was called upon with the task to destroy the ring. It may be assumed that in the same way Tolkien did not view the final disentanglement as the result of chance. Tolkien affirmed this supposition, stating in a letter, “Frodo ‘failed’ . . . But one must face the fact: the power of Evil in the world is not finally resistible by incarnate creatures, however ‘good’; and the Writer of the Story is not one of us.”¹²⁵ He seemed to suggest that the eucatastrophic moment, the final victory of the story, was achieved despite the inability and failure of the main character, could only be caused by an intervention of someone beyond the story, the creator, by which Tolkien probably makes an allusion to God, supposed, considered as the writer of the human story in general.

However, it should be again considered that although Tolkien had his own Christian connections and ideas about his story, such as Christ’s resurrection reflected in the concept of eucatastrophe, he did not attempt to project them directly to the reader in an allegorical way. In the foreword to the second edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien reacted to the motives and meanings people began to assign to his work,

¹²³ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, 2nd ed. (1968; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004), 945-947.

¹²⁴ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, 56.

¹²⁵ Tolkien to Miss J. Burn, July 26, 1956, in *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, eds. Humphrey Carpenter and Christopher Tolkien, (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), 252.

explaining that his desire as a tale-teller was to write “a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them. As a guide I had only my feelings for what is appealing or moving . . . It is neither allegorical nor topical.”¹²⁶ While it was already discussed that eucatastrophe and mythopoeia were both part of the authors’ spiritual philosophy and understanding of the world they were also used as a literary means to evoke a particular effect in the stories. It appears that the element of eucatastrophe in Tolkien’s stories was also used in the same way as mythopoeia, with the intention of evoking an experience of real emotion, freed from familiarity by an imaginary setting and characters. Peter Kreeft, analyzing the philosophy behind Tolkien’s work, provides an instance of the connection between our reality and Tolkien’s conception of the liberation from familiarity:

We all, like Frodo, carry a Quest, a Task: our daily duties. They come to us, not from us. We are free only to accept or refuse our task- and, implicitly, our Taskmaster. None of us is a free creator or designer of his own life . . . Either God, or fate, or meaningless chance has laid upon each of us a Task, a Quest, which we would not have chosen for ourselves. We are all Hobbits who love our Shire, or security, our creature comforts, whether these are pipeweed, mushrooms, five meals a day, and local gossip, or Starbucks coffees, recreational sex, and politics. But something, some authority not named in *The Lord of the Rings* (but named in the *Silmarillion*), has decreed that a Quest should interrupt this delightful Epicurean garden and send us on an odyssey. We are plucked out of our Hobbit holes and plunked down onto a Road.¹²⁷

Kreeft affirmed that the events in the plot in *The Lord of the Rings* were not just of random circumstance as well as he provided an example of the reality embedded in the tale apart from any concrete allegorical Christian elements.

It cannot be denied, however, that although he did not aim at any allegorical reading of his story, Tolkien himself was intentionally under the role of a sub-creator, trying to

¹²⁶ J. R. R. Tolkien, foreword to *The Lord of the Rings*, 2nd ed. (1968; London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004), xxiii.

¹²⁷ Peter Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Tolkien: The Worldview Behind the Lord of the Rings* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 204-205.

reflect the Truth about the world, which to him personally had a clear Christian meaning. He indicated this fact in another of his definitions of eucatastrophe:

[It is] the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous “turn” . . . a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief.¹²⁸

It is interesting to see that he talked about Joy, the word Lewis used for the unique experiences of beauty, which left a profound impression on him. In reality, the concept he meant by Joy and the one which Tolkien seemed to address in his definition of eucatastrophe, can be identified with the German term *sehnsucht*.

6. *Sehnsucht*

There is not an equivalent form in English that would adequately grasp the full meaning of *sehnsucht*, therefore it is best to describe it through various images and examples. Lewis himself provided a sufficient interpretation of this concept in the afterword to *The Pilgrim's Regress*. He describes the essence of his joy as “that unnameable something, desire for which pierces us like a rapier at the smell of bonfire, the sound of wild ducks flying overhead, the title of *The Well at the World's End*, the opening lines of ‘*Kubla Khan*’, the morning cobwebs in late summer, or the noise of falling waves.”¹²⁹ It seems that the foundation for such a kind of feeling, if it can be called that way, is a certain impression of beauty, working differently on each individual. It seems to involve a kind of desire, which C. S. Lewis also expressed in *The*

¹²⁸ To Christopher Tolkien, 7-8 November 1944, 100.

¹²⁹ C. S. Lewis, afterword to *The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism*, by C. S. Lewis, 3rd ed. (1933; London: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 204.

Problem of Pain, where he developed his perception of the character of this desire even deeper:

All the things that have deeply possessed your soul have been but hints of it—tantalising glimpses, promises never quite fulfilled, echoes that died away just as they caught your ear. But if it should really become manifest—if there ever came an echo that did not die away but swelled into the sound itself—you would know it. Beyond all possibility of doubt you would say ‘Here at last is the thing I was made for.’ We cannot tell each other about it. It is the secret signature of each soul, the incommunicable and unappeasable want . . . which we shall still desire on our deathbeds.¹³⁰

Such was the character of the Joy Lewis had been looking for throughout his life and which he met echoes of in all kinds of every day as well as extraordinary experiences of beauty. It can be considered that one of his early encounters with this joy was back in his childhood when he had a romantic experience of beauty as his brother brought home a tin box filled with moss, flowers and sticks, which they pretended to be their own little garden.¹³¹ Colin Duriez commented on this experience recorded in Lewis’ autobiography as “becoming an image of an unobtainable paradise, a means of capturing an inconsolable longing he is to all ‘joy’ or *sehnsucht* and which becomes a distinct thread running throughout his writings.”¹³²

The authentic joy that he perceived since his childhood and which he included in the name of his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, can be identified with the German term, meaning some kind of longing of the heart for it does not know what.

While Lewis was aware of these impressions and seemed to long for them intentionally, as could have been seen in the particular events selected for the biographical chapter one, Tolkien seemed to have encountered similar feelings, namely in the form of a fascination with language. He described such an impression as follows: “I felt a curious thrill, as if something had stirred in me, half wakened from sleep.

¹³⁰ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 131.

¹³¹ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 7.

¹³² Colin Duriez, *Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, The Gift of Friendship* (New Jersey: Hidden Spring, 2003), 3.

There was something very remote and strange and beautiful behind those words, if I could grasp it, far beyond ancient English.”¹³³ It does not seem surprising that Tolkien experienced such a kind of moment through an encounter with ancient English.

Apart from a mere desire, the term includes also a character of unfulfilled longing, “echoes that died away just as they caught your ear.”¹³⁴ Possibly, this concept could be recognized in the picture of Beren meeting Lúthien, one of Tolkien’s mythological tales in *The Silmarillion*. As Beren is wandering through the woods under the moonlight, he comes upon Lúthien, a beautiful elf maiden with starlike eyes, dancing upon the grass. As he saw her, he forgot all of his troubles and fell into enchantment. In this moment of profound beauty, she “vanished from his sight; and he became dumb, as one that is bound under a spell, and he strayed long in the woods, wild and wary as a beast, seeking for her . . . And he saw her afar as leaves in the winds of autumn, and in winter as a star upon a hill, but a chain was upon his limbs.”¹³⁵ The image of Beren seems similar as the sweet longing that can never grasp its object once it captures a glimpse of it described by Lewis.

It is the longing itself that is the most important part of the experience. Throughout most of his life, Lewis kept encountering impulses that reawakened in him this longing, without him quite knowing what it was that he was desiring. He seemed to have conveyed this conception in his works. The characters of Narnia, without stating so, sometimes appear to be going through an identical experience. A crucial moment for the Pevensie siblings would be when they heard Aslan’s name for the first time, even though they had no idea who he was, their reaction was one of undescrivable emotion:

None of the children knew who Aslan was any more than you do; but the moment the Beaver had spoken these words everyone felt quite different. Perhaps it has sometimes happened to you in a dream that someone says something which you don't understand but in the dream it feels as if it had some enormous meaning—either a terrifying one which turns the whole dream into a nightmare or else a lovely meaning too lovely to put into words, which makes the dream so beautiful that you remember it all your life and are always wishing

¹³³ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 72.

¹³⁴ Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, 131.

¹³⁵ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, 193.

you could get into that dream again. It was like that now. At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in it's inside. Edmund felt a sensation of mysterious horror. Peter felt suddenly brave and adventurous. Susan felt as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music had just floated by her. And Lucy got the feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realize that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of Summer.¹³⁶

Each one felt something different, but Aslan's name had an effect on each of them. The only one who did not experience beauty in some way was Edmund, which serves as a prevision of his traitorous intentions.

In another of Lewis's fictional works, *Till We Have Faces*, he used the concept of *sehnsucht* and its nature of unfulfilled longing as a delightful experience.

"No, no no," she said. "You don't understand. Not that kind of longing. It was when I was happiest that I longed most. It was on happy days when we were up there on the hills, the three of us, with the wind and the sunshine . . . where you couldn't see Glome or the palace. Do you remember? The colour and the smell, and looking at the Grey Mountain in the distance? And because it was so beautiful, it set me longing, always longing. Somewhere else there must be more of it. Everything seemed to be saying, Psyche come!

The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing — to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from — my country, the place where I ought to have been."¹³⁷

In the passage, Psyche is experiencing a sweet longing for a distant place, a palace, where she feels she belongs, without actually seeing the place itself, but being reminded of it by a beautiful view. Doc. Pavel Hošek¹³⁸ studied the topographical metaphors of

¹³⁶ C. S. Lewis, "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," 141.

¹³⁷ C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1980), 74-76.

¹³⁸ Doc. Pavel Hošek is a chairman of the department of religious studies at the faculty of systematic theology of Charles University in Prague and a scholar of C. S. Lewis.

Lewis' works in his book *Journey to the Centre of Reality*.¹³⁹ Hošek argues that in most of Lewis' fictional stories, he embodied an idea of looking for the centre of reality as looking for and travelling to an actual place. As the centre of reality, he means the embodiment of the reality for which we are longing and of which we experience glimpses and hints. Lewis worked with the literary space not only to create fictional worlds of imaginary circumstances but also to denote a notion of longing. Hošek pointed out examples of such topographic metaphors in Lewis' works. The main character of *Till We Have Faces*, Psyche has been longing her whole life for a castle on a hill. The life goal and desire of the brave mouse knight Reepicheep, a character in *The Voyage of Dawn Treader*, is to arrive to the end of the world in the far east. In *The Space Trilogy*, the main character longs bittersweetly to reach a planet called Perelandra. It is not surprising that the same notion can be found as the essential background for the autobiographical story Lewis wrote, *The Pilgrim's Regress*.¹⁴⁰ The allegorical journey of the main character is initiated by a nostalgic yearning for a mystical island. While Lewis made use of this conception as a literary means for creating his fictional worlds and stories, it can be observed that it was the theme for the allegory he wrote about his own life. He decided to call it *Pilgrim's Regress*, as a variation to the famous Bunyan's work, but as well to express his personal belief of longing for the joy of sehnsucht. The main character, a little boy, leaves home and sets out on a journey through different places, confusing opinions and ideas, getting lost while looking for the place of his desire, an island that he had a glimpse of as a boy, only to discover that the vision of the island was actually a reflection of God's heaven of which he heard from his parents. So he regresses home. The longing brought him back home. If it is considered that Lewis used literary places as an embodiment of an idea of a centre of reality, it is then as if the hints of the reality were actually recollections of our original perfect state from which we have swayed away so that every such reflection sets us longing to return to the completeness. The notion of some reality, which it is possible to approach in order to become more real, original in the sense of as we were made to be, seems to be a variation of Tolkien's concept of Truth within mythopoeia.

¹³⁹ Pavel Hošek, *Cesta do středu skutečnosti*, (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2014).

¹⁴⁰ Pavel Hošek, *Cesta do středu skutečnosti*, 2.

It has already been demonstrated that both Lewis and Tolkien incorporated a reflection of the creation in their works, namely *The Silmarillion* and *The Magician's Nephew*. At the capturing of creation of their worlds, they also captured the original state of things at the beginning, what could be compared to the concept of the Christian Eden myth, a concept of a paradise and a place for and into which we were created. In *The Silmarillion*, it was the land of the creator Eru and the Ainur for whom he created it. In the following passage, which came later in the plot of the story, there can be observed the kind of recollecting and longing of a *sehnsucht* nature: "It is said by the Eldar that in water there lives yet the echo of the Music of the Ainur more than in any substance that is in this Earth; and many of the Children of Ilúvatar hearken still unsated to the voices of the Sea, and yet know not for what they listen."¹⁴¹ The Music of the Ainur was the original melody at the beginning when there were only them and Eru. The music contained the deeper understanding given from Eru, what can be considered as the Truth. The many generations and years after the original state of the world was changed, their ancestors could hear an echo of the music even though they did not recognize what it was.

From the way Lewis and Tolkien both incorporated the concept of *sehnsucht* in their works as a recollection and yearning for the original creation and the place the main characters were created for, it appears that both of the authors understood the meaning of their own personal longing in this way as well. Equally as mythopoeia and eucatastrophe, the concept of *sehnsucht* was applied as a literary theme and a story-telling element, while to the authors, it had a spiritual significance beyond literature. In *The Problem of Pain*, Lewis developed his explanation of Joy and *Sehnsucht* up to his personal comprehension of this concept:

But if it should really become manifest—if there ever came an echo that did not die away but swelled into the sound itself—you would know it. Beyond all possibility of doubt you would say 'Here at last is the thing I was made for.' We cannot tell each other about it. It is the secret signature of each soul, the incommunicable and unappeasable want . . . which we shall still desire on our deathbeds. . . . Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you

¹⁴¹ Tolkien, *The Silmarillion*, 8.

alone, because you were made for it—made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand.¹⁴²

Obviously, C. S. Lewis' belief about the longing for joy he experienced through all kind of hints from childhood memories to northernness was that these hints were mere reflections of heaven, as the place for which we were made to be. He experienced these glimpses into beauty through things and moments that carried a fragment of the Truth which he and Tolkien also intended to put into their stories as sub-creators. For Lewis, finding this joy in heaven, was a pilgrim's regress to the place where he came from, as he passed through phases of different worldviews and philosophies. Equally, it was a regress in the sense that he believed that since the fall of the first man the creation was not in its original form as it was made and meant to be by its creator and every reminder of Eden, although we have never seen it, sets us longing because we carry a fragment of it as ourselves created by the same creator. The Christian premise contains a belief that we will be reconciled into a place without the fall and made new and real. Hošek comments that Lewis' conception of a journey to the centre of reality, also the name of Hošek's book, is actually approaching the reality of God, who himself is the centre of reality, which Lewis expressed in his works as approaching some destination of desire. Psyche in *Till We Have Faces* is longing for a distant place that she calls home based on the feelings it evokes in her:

Everything seemed to be saying, Psyche come! But I couldn't (not yet) come and I didn't know where I was to come to. It almost hurt me. I felt like a bird in a cage when the other birds of its kind are flying home . . . The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing — to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all the beauty came from — my country, the place where I ought to have been born. Do you think it all meant nothing, all the longing? The longing for home? For indeed it now feels not like going, but like going back.¹⁴³

She does not even know where she should go, yet she feels as if she was returning home. Lewis' idea of the centre of reality can be apprehended at the end of the last

¹⁴² C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 131.

¹⁴³ C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 74-76.

chronicle of Narnia, *The Last Battle*, when the world of Narnia disappears and the children enter a new Narnia, which seems real compared to the old one and as they approach closer to the center, it becomes still greater. As they realize that they liked the old Narnia only because it was a reflection of the new one, they exclaim: “I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now . . . Come further up, come further in!”¹⁴⁴ Lewis’ characters finally grasp the joy they had been longing for even without knowing it.

As a story-teller and as a Christian, Lewis inserts throughout his created world a thread of ideas that mattered to him most without the necessity of trying to be didactic. It is possible that he just could not avoid expressing the longing and the Joy, which accompanied him all his life. Charlie W. Starr wrote in his dissertation about Lewis’ thinking that he “makes the readers naturally long to be good without preaching or exhorting. This is because his conviction that the reality is ultimately good and the good is pleasant and stronger than evil is transmitted to them through imagination. They are given some foretaste of the world of Reality, or of heaven, so as to share Lewis’s hope and longing for it.”¹⁴⁵ It seems to be partly thanks to his and Tolkien’s view of mythology, freeing the reader of familiarity and thus having the ability to let him experience real things in a new and authentic way that the reader does not feel as if he were being preached to. Tolkien seemed to touch the concept of longing in his essay on Fairy stories saying about fantasy stories that “if they awakened desire, satisfying it while often whetting it unbearably, they succeeded.”¹⁴⁶ It appears that stories had a unique function and ability to awaken the recollections of Joy to the reader. Story-inventing or sub-creating within the conception of mythopeia, seems to contain the concept of *sehnsucht* as awakening a longing for some joy outside of the story itself, in Lewis’ and Tolkien’s philosophy it was the longing for the Truth.

Tolkien also described fantasy, as paraphrased by David Sadner, as “a wind

¹⁴⁴ C. S. Lewis, “The Last Battle,” in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), 760.

¹⁴⁵ Charlie W. Starr, “The Triple Enigma: Fact, Truth, and Myth as the Key to C. S. Lewis’s Epistemological Thinking” (Doctoral Diss., Middle Tennessee State University, 2002).

¹⁴⁶ David Sandner, “Joy Beyond the Walls of the Worlds,” in *Tolkien and His Literary Resonances: Views of Middle Earth*, ed. George Clark and Daniel Timmons (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 132.

blowing from beyond the world, something felt but unseen, which may move the reader to look for something that cannot be found in the text at all.”¹⁴⁷ This statement seems to contain and formulate the idea behind all of these three spiritual concepts embraced by the authors and applied as literary elements in their fantasy works without intentionally pointing the reader’s attention to them. Although they are each a separate concept expressed in different ways by each author, they appear to be interconnected to each other and contained in the supposition of the authors’ Christian faith and experience. Peter Kreeft expressed this connection in his commentary statement on *The Lord of the Rings*, in which he contained an indication to each of the concepts: “From the premise that Christianity is true it follows that the far-off glimpse of joy produced by fantasy is a glimpse of truth; that a great eucatastrophic tale like *The Lord of the Rings* is a gift of divine grace, an opening of the curtain that veils Heaven to earthly eyes, a tiny telepathic contact with the Mind of God.”¹⁴⁸ The story is a mythopoeic fragment of truth, providing an experience of eucatastrophy as a way of reflecting the reality of God and a hint of joy that is the object of *sehnsucht*, all having its source and meaning in Christianity. In *The Four Loves*, Lewis seems to include this idea in the context of friendship, possibly the company of friends meeting under the name Inklings. He talks about a friendship as “an instrument by which God reveals to each the beauties of all the others. They are no greater than the beauties of a thousand other men; by Friendship God opens our eyes to them. They are like all beauties, derived from Him, and then . . . it is His instrument for creating as well as for revealing.”¹⁴⁹ Apparently, the concepts studied were not only theories applied to literature or passive ponderings, but they were active elements in the midst of the authors’ lives and consequently in the group of the Inklings.

¹⁴⁷ Sandner, “Joy Beyond the Walls of the Worlds,” 135.

¹⁴⁸ Peter Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Tolkien: The Worldview Behind the Lord of the Rings* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 143.

¹⁴⁹ Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 83.

6. The Friendship and Its Influence

As argued in this thesis, the concepts of mythopoeia, eucatastrophe and sehnsucht are not only interrelated but in a way seem to create a special bond between Lewis and Tolkien. It could have been observed that they shared the topic on the level of writers equally as it connected them as Christians, in essence, however, it was one of the stimulus that seems to have nurtured the unique friendship they had. Even though they read most of their works to each other and provided critical judgment in order to improve each other's ability, in later years, Tolkien said of Lewis: "The unpayable debt that I owe to him was not 'influence' as it is ordinarily understood, but sheer encouragement. He was for long my only audience. Only from him did I ever get the idea that my 'stuff' could be more than a private hobby."¹⁵⁰ With this in mind, what Sayer called their "literary friendship"¹⁵¹ should be considered beyond a relationship of two companions in writing, perhaps rather in the sense of Lewis' *The Four Loves*: "He is lucky beyond desert to be in such company. Especially when the group is together, each bringing out all that is best, wisest, or funniest in all the others. Those are the golden sessions . . . when the whole world and something beyond the world, opens itself to our minds as we talk. . . . Life-natural life-has no better gift to give."¹⁵² As Lewis said, it was the encouragement and the presence of each other, especially through the ambiance of the Inklings that influenced them first of all as men.

J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis are famous all over the world because of their fantasy fiction, but it is possible that many of their readers are not conscious of the unique conception behind the creation of their works. By some, they were celebrated for their literary imagination, by others, they were called the "Oxford Christians" for openly confessing their beliefs,¹⁵³ but what appears remarkable is the way they both managed to merge these parts of their identity into a single complex expression, as it was studied in the previous three chapters. Their thoughts did not stay unobserved and among many scholars following their unconventional approach to story-telling as well as the philosophy they developed, some of whose studies were used as the source material for this thesis. The topics developed by Lewis and Tolkien are of

¹⁵⁰ Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 152.

¹⁵¹ Sayer, *Jack*, 250.

¹⁵² Lewis, *The Four Loves*, 68.

¹⁵³ Carpenter, *The Inklings*, 153.

interest equally to Christian studies as to literary research. As an illustration, the Mythopoetic Society was founded in 1967 for the purpose of studies and enjoyment of fantastic and mythical literature, notably the works of J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis and C. Williams. Apart from publishing thematic periodicals, the society also organises the Mythopoetic Scholarship Award in Inklings Studies for books written on topics concerning the writers.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Michael D. C. Drout, ed., *J. R. R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment* (New York: Taylor&Francis Group, 2007), 658.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to provide background information on the beginnings and building of the friendship of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, mainly on the grounds of the literary group the Inklings. The particular reason for studying the circumstances of this friendship was to demonstrate the existence of the concepts of mythopoeia, eucatastrophe and *sehnsucht* which the authors developed and shared as their common philosophy encouraged by the environment of the Inklings. It was observed that this mutual conception began in the encounter of a particular shared enthusiasm for northern myths, which was eventually the means that lead to the ultimate notion behind these concepts and conversion of Lewis, the Christian belief of both of the authors and its reflection through Myth. It has been demonstrated with passages from the authors' selected fictional works that they used these concepts as fantasy writers in a literary manner as well as there has been shown the spiritual sense both of the authors personally observed behind these concepts, which proved that these concepts conveyed the double nature on the literary and spiritual level as well as it demonstrated the connection between them, rooting their source of inspiration ultimately in the Christian belief of the authors.

Consequently, this thesis has aimed to put an emphasis on the untraditional character of the friendship of Lewis and Tolkien and their shared approach to storytelling based on the concepts that influenced them as writers and as men and brought a new way to regard their works as well as to approaching fantasy literature on the whole.

Resumé

C. S. Lewis a J. R. R. Tolkien jsou známí zejména jako tvůrci slavných fantastických příběhů. Kromě toho, že byli oba spisovateli, profesory angličtiny, hlavními členy oxfordské literární skupiny Inklings a především přáteli, byli Lewis a Tolkien také křesťany. Jejich přátelství vzniklo zejména díky sdílenému nadšení k severské mytologii a následně se právě tento zájem stal prostředkem konverze Lewisa ke křesťanství za Tolkienova vlivu. Kruh přátel říkající si Inklings, jehož byli Lewis a Tolkien vůdčími členy, byl lokální veřejností taktéž nazván jako klub oxfordských křesťanů, jelikož všichni jeho aktivní členové byli věřící a teologie často představovala hlavní téma jejich pravidelných diskusí v univerzitním bytě Lewise.

Tato bakalářská práce studuje vztah mezi třemi konkrétními koncepcemi probíranými v prostředí klubu Inklings, které tvořili významnou úlohu jak v přátelství, v životě, tak i v tvorbě Lewise a Tolkiena. Těmito koncepcemi jsou mythopoeia, eukatastrofa a sehnuscht. Mythopoeia, v překladu milovník mýtů, je koncepce zahrnutá v Tolkienově básni se stejným titulem, inspirovaná jeho rozhovorem s Lewisem, na základě kterého Lewis definitivně přešel ke křesťanské víře. Báseň vyjadřuje Tolkienovo pochopení tvorby mýtů a sebe jako jejich autora jako spolutvůrce původního stvoření, odrážejícího pravdy vsazené do světa původním stvořitelem.

Koncepce eukatastrofy je součástí této myšlenky v konkrétní podobě definované Tolkienem samým. Tímto pojmem nazval situaci v příběhu, kdy všechny okolnosti vedou ke špatnému konci a nečekaně, bez zásahu hlavní postavy, se zápletka obrátí a následuje úleva a šťastný konec. Součástí Tolkienovy definice tohoto konceptu bylo jeho osobní přesvědčení, že z jeho pohledu, prvotní a největší obraz eukatastrofie byla událost křesťanského zmrtvýchvstání. Tolkienovo použití této koncepce v jeho příběhu teda rovněž jako mythopoeia, odráží to, co podle něho byla původní pravda. Tato koncepce může být nalezena i ve fantastické tvorbě Lewise. Oba spisovatelé bránili interpretaci příběhů Pána prstenů a Narnie před formálním alegorickým přístupem. Nesnažili se vytvořit paralelní obrazy konkrétních myšlenek v realitě, ale jak tvrdili, v podobě fantastického příběhu se snažili zbavit čtenáře poznání a předsudků, aby tak mohl prostřednictvím příběhu zažít tuto realitu z nového pohledu. Výsledný

efekt tak neměla být formální paralelní interpretace prvků v příběhu, ale zážitek a dojem, který si čtenář může spojit s realitou, protože je pravdivý.

Poslední koncepce, *sehnsucht* je německý termín, který vyjadřuje ponětí blízké Lewisovu celoživotnímu hledání radosti. Vyjadřuje příjemnou nostalgickou touhu po něčem, co se ale nedá zachytit. Tento pocit byl u Lewise vzbuzen při různých okolnostech jeho zkušeností s krásou, v podobě přírody nebo chvíle v dětství. Lewis ho často používal i ve své fikční tvorbě, zejména v podobě konkrétního místa, do kterého se jeho postavy toužili dostat a vzpomínka na něj v nich vyvolávala pocit domova i když to místo v skutečnosti nikdy neviděli. Lewis ve svých odborných knihách napsaných po jeho konverzi ke křesťanství, připisuje koncepci *sehnsucht* touze po původním stvoření, z kterého se lidstvo vymanilo a tedy každá jeho připomínka v něm vzbudí touhu po něčem víc.

Tato práce se snaží poukázat na spojitost mezi těmito koncepcemi a jejich dvojitou podstatou v porozumění a kreativní tvorbě Lewise a Tolkiena na literární a duchovní úrovni. Práce studuje ideologickou podstatu těchto koncepcí v porozumění Lewisa a Tolkiena na základě jejich vlastní odborné tvorby a tematických materiálů poskytujících jejich kritické komentáře a korespondenci. Následně se práce snaží dokázat literární charakter těchto koncepcí ve fikční tvorbě Lewise a Tolkiena, především v *Pánovi prstenů*, *Silmarillionu* a *Kronikách Narnie*. Cílem této analýzy je poukázat na spojitost mezi danými koncepcemi jako důsledku křesťanské víry, kterou tito spisovatelé sdíleli a která ovlivnila jejich přístup k tvorbě příběhů a především mýtů. Přátelství autorů a rozvinutí daných koncepcí se práce snaží zasadit do prostředí oxfordského klubu *Inklings*, ve kterém autoři i s dalšími přáteli sdíleli a rozebírali svoji tvorbu, a který pro ně mohl být povzbuzením, stejně jako inspirací a impulsem k realizaci těchto netradičních koncepcí vůči tvorbě příběhů.

Za účelem poskytnutí potřebných informací k porozumění okolností týkajících se těchto koncepcí v přemýšlení Lewisa a Tolkiena, věnuje práce určitou část biografickým událostem ze života autorů a pozadí za vzniknutím klubu *Inklings*. Součástí práce je i stručná ukázka vlivu zkoumání těchto koncepcí Tolkienem a Lewisem na následující přístup k jejich dílům a literatuře celkově.

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Annotation

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Title of the Bachelor Thesis: The Oxford Christians: Literary Concepts Becoming Spiritual in the Relationship, Life and Works of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, the Heart of the Inklings

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The aim of this thesis is to study the connection between three concepts, namely mythopoeia, eucatastrophe and sehnsucht, which played an important role in the life, friendship and works of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, the main members of the literary group the Inklings. The first part of this thesis aims to present biographical background concerning the authors, in order to provide deeper comprehension of the further study. Furthermore, the thesis intends to frame the realization and inspiration of these concepts into the environment of the Inklings, where the authors actively analyzed their works. The aim of this thesis is to indicate a relation between these concepts and demonstrate their double nature in the understanding and creative realization of the authors on both the literary and the spiritual level. The thesis also intends to study the ideological significance of these concepts and consequently prove their literary character in selected fictional works of the writers, especially in *The Silmarillion*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. This thesis intends to argue that the studied concepts are all related to each other and spring from a Christian belief, which Tolkien and Lewis shared and which influenced and connected them as friends and as writers of fantasy literature and of myths.

Anotace

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Název bakalářské práce: Oxfordští křesťané: literární koncepce stávající se duchovními v životě a díle C. S. Lewise a J. R. R. Tolkiena, hlavních představitelů Inklings

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Cílem této bakalářské práce je studovat vztah mezi třemi konkrétními koncepcemi probíranými v prostředí Oxfordského klubu Inklings, které tvořili významnou úlohu jak v přátelství, v životě, tak i v tvorbě C. S. Lewise a J. R. R. Tolkiena jako hlavních představitelů tohoto klubu. Těmito koncepcemi jsou mythopoeia, eucatastrophe a sehnsucht. V první části se práce snaží poskytnout pozadí ze života autorů potřebné k lepšímu porozumění následného zkoumání daných koncepcí. Práce se dále snaží zasadit inspiraci a realizaci těchto koncepcí do prostředí klubu Inklings, v kterém tito autoři aktivně rozebírali svojí tvorbu. Práce se snaží poukázat na spojitost mezi těmito koncepcemi a jejich dvojitou podstatou v porozumění a kreativní tvorbě Lewise a Tolkiena na literární a duchovní úrovni. Záměrem práce je studovat ideologickou podstatu těchto koncepcí v porozumění Lewise a Tolkiena a následně se práce snaží dokázat literární charakter těchto koncepcí ve fikční tvorbě Lewise a Tolkiena, především v Pánovi prstenů, Silmarillione a Kronikách Narnie. Cílem této analýzy je poukázat na spojitost mezi danými koncepcemi jako důsledku křesťanské víry, kterou tito spisovatelé sdíleli a která ovlivnila jejich přístup k tvorbě příběhů a především mýtů.