

DEGRADATION OF HUMANITY IN THULCANDRA: A NARRATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF C. S. LEWIS' *SPACETRILLOGY*

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Abstract:

Narrative psychology deals with construction of stories by human beings. Humans have created stories to projects their experiences and dreams. C. S. Lewis, the famous author of Narnia tales, was an ardent atheist turned Christian. In his Space Trilogy has painted his beliefs he has begun to be convinced of. This paper analyses the narrative plot and its content to bring to light the author's personal convictions tainted in the pages of his fictional work, The Space Trilogy, which includes Out of the Silent Planet, Perelandra and That Hideous Strength.

C. S. Lewis, a professor of medieval and Renaissance literature at Oxford and Cambridge universities, had written more than thirty books in his lifetime. He had the gift to “combine story, imagination, metaphor and reason; the rhetorical skill to order his ideas clearly and persuasively; precision with words; and the empathy to understand people's deepest struggles, questions and doubts” (Linsley 16). His fictional works are by nature myriad. He is a great story teller who never tired his readers with the same form.

His fictional works are *The Pilgrim's Regress* (1933), *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Space Trilogy*, *The Great Divorce* (1944, 45), *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) and *Till We have Faces* (1956). *The Pilgrim's Regress* is allegorical and is recollected as a dream. *The Great Divorce* is a sort of a vision. *The Chronicles of Narnia* which includes seven series of novels *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), *Prince Caspian* (1951), *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), *The Silver Chair* (1953), and *The Last Battle* (1956) is pure fantasy. *The Screwtape Letters*, just as the title suggests, is epistolary. *Till We have Faces* is mythical as it is a retelling of Cupid and Psyche myth.

The Space Trilogy is a work of science fiction. It is a series of three novels namely, *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943) and *That Hideous Strength* (1945). Lewis' *Space Trilogy* is also called the Cosmic or Ransom Trilogy. It is not just a science fiction but a salad bowl of science, fantasy, myth, Christianity and philosophical presuppositions. *Out of the Silent Planet* narrates the story of Dr. Ransom who was forcibly taken to Malacandra, i.e., Mars by Scientists Devine and Weston. While trying to escape from Devine and Weston, Ransom wanders alone. He meets the inhabitants of the planet such as *Hrossa*, *Sorns* and *Pfifltrigg*. He also meets *Oyarsa*, the immortal ruler of Mars. The meetings change his perception of life and humanity upside down.

In *Perelandra*, *Oyarsa* asks for Ransom when the newly created world of Perelandra is to be in trouble. The Queen, the first Mother of Perelandra is to be tempted by the evil *eldil* who entered the body of Weston. Just like Eve, the Mother of Thulcandra (meaning Silent planet /Earth) was tempted to disobey; Perelandra also faces temptation. With the help of Ransom, she overcomes. She joins with her king to become the first humans to live in paradise without any trace of sin. The final novel, *That Hideous Strength* tells us of the battle between Logres (Good) and Britain (Bad). Dr. Ransom has formed a group at

St. Anne's. Jane Studdock who can see vision of events to happen joins them, while her husband is caught up with a wrong inner circle. The evil ones with the help of evil *eldil* plan to control the human race and eradicate nature. But Dr. Ransom and others stop their evil plan with the help of *Maleldil* (Son of God), and *Oyarsas* from different planets.

Story telling is as old as time itself. In human history stories have been told and heard. "...one deep reason why we tell stories to ourselves (or to our confessor or to our analyst or to our confidant) is precisely to make sense of what we are encountering in the course of living through narrative elaborations of the natural arguments of action" (Lucariello 79). Rightly John Leggett in his introduction to *The Elements of a Novel* quotes from Ursula K. Le Guin, "There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories" (Brinnin 634). From childhood, everyone hears and tells stories. Human beings, especially after the development of the verbal faculty, have constantly told stories, presented events and squeezed aspects of their world into narrative form. Obviously, narrative frameworks become an important part of the way one learns to approach the world. One furnishes his/her worlds through the stories that one narrates to another, not just with data but also with meaning.

A narrative account is given its structure through plot. The narrative plot brings coherence to the massive sequence of events as well as finer details of minor events. "It is the plot that connects the beginning of the story to the end. The plot weaves different episodes together to make a coherent and meaningful account. It is the plot that gives story its meaning" (Murray 98). It requires temporal succession and causality to combine events into sequences and sequences into story. The temporal succession refers to the arrangement of events in a particular order (time sequence), whether it may be natural or multi-linear chronology. Causality explains the cause of the events the whys and hows.

There is a specific purpose behind every narration. "Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative" (J. Bruner 12). The recent psychological studies have used narratives to study human stories, as it is part of our lives. Human life is filled with stories and meanings rather than logic or law. Human beings construct stories to deal with experiences. This is where narrative psychology comes into play. Therefore, in the light of narrative psychology, C. S. Lewis has carved each story to imitate life life as told in the Bible. His narratives reflect his convictions in Christian ideology. He was an ardent atheist until the age of thirty one. He calls himself, "the most dejected and reluctant convert in all of England" (Linsley 16). This paper analyses how Lewis constructs stories to deal with his experience with Christ and his newly found religion.

The world we live in has been corrupted in every possible way. Sin has polluted the earth. The word "Thulcandra" (Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* 68), as the Martians call the earth, means 'silent planet', where 'Thulc' refers to silence and 'hndra' to planet or earth. It was a planet shut out of the deep heavens. No good *Oyarsa* (*eldil* - immortal beings like smaller gods who rule each planet but doesn't belong to a planet) can get in contact with this planet. The *eldil* of this planet has turned evil and thus this planet Thulcandra has become silent to others.

Why did evil enter into Thulcandra? The reason is explained in *Perelandra*. In Thulcandra, the first mother Eve was tempted to disobey God. Obeying was what God expected from the first parents. Ransom explains about obedience to the first Mother of Perelandra: "I think He made one law of that kind in order that there might be obedience. In all these other matters what you call obeying Him is but doing what seems good in your own eyes also. Is love content with that? You do them, indeed, because they are His will. Where can you taste the joy of obeying unless He bids you do something for which His bidding is the only reason?" (Lewis, *Perelandra* 101)

Eve failed to prove her obedience of love to God. The disobedience of the Mother brought in sin and evil. Love went void in Thulcandra. The *eldil* of Thulcandra turned evil. In *Out of the Silent Planet*, the *Oyarsa* of Malacandra couldn't imagine a *hnau* (a mortal being of higher intelligence like humans or *hross*) killing another *hnau*, when Weston and Devine tried to sacrifice Ransom's life and killed a *hross*.

"I see now how the lord of the silent world has bent you. There are laws that all *hnau* know, of pity

and straight dealing and shame and the like, and one of these is the love of the kindred. He has taught you to break all of them..." (Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* 137). This is how what we call humanity has been lost in Thulcandra.

In Malacandra (Mars), three kinds of species *hross*, *sorns* and *Pfifltrigg* live. *Hrossa* are intelligent creatures who "know nothing except about poems and fish and making things grow out of the ground" (Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* 93). The *sorns* are strong and intelligent. The *pfifltriggs* build house, invent scientific equipments and create sculptures. They are totally different from each other. They co-exist. There is no hierarchy among them, though they are stronger than the others in some aspect. They don't fight for food, but share when someone lacks. Ransom wanted to know who rules among them. He was astonished to know that no species among them is higher than the other. "All three species were represented. They seemed to have no uneasy feelings towards each other, though there were some differences of the kind that occur in a railway carriage on Earth the sorns finding the house too hot and the pfifltriggi finding it too cool" (Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* 116).

The society in Malacandra is how the Earth was created to be but never is. Malacandra is an opposite of Thulcandra. Perelandra is a reflection how Earth would be if God's bidding were heeded and obeyed. When the first Mother of Perelandra overcame the evil one's temptation to disobey and chose to obey *Maleldil's* law just for the sake of Him, she joins with the King. The king and the Queen came in like "paradise itself in its two persons, Paradise walking hand in hand, its two bodies shinning in the light like emeralds..." (Lewis, *Perelandra* 175). When there is no sin, there are no evil and absolute joy remains the joy of obeying, the joy of being in the presence of the infinite God. The innocence of being uncorrupted is incomparable.

In contrary Thulcandra is under the power of the dark eldil and is in chaos. The darkness of the circumstances is presented in *That Hideous Strength*. An institute called NICE National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments is established. Its hidden agenda is to control human society. The 'bent' ones or Britain plan to clean the earth from other species except human species, especially of higher intelligence. They brought in decapitated head which survives with artificial supply of blood to experiment on increasing intelligence. Edgestone and its surroundings are dominated by NICE and their institutional police. The newspapers are also tainted by them. They are instructed by the fallen *eldil* whom they call as 'Macrobes'. They communicate through the decapitated head. Their aim is to populate the earth with 'Macrobes' while destroying the 'microbes' on earth.

The people of NICE capture animals and decapitate them for their experiments. They would hurt or murder anyone to achieve their goal. They have lost their humanity or become 'bent' under the obedience of the dark *eldil*. Obviously their evil plans are broken down by Dr. Ransom and other with the help of *Oyarsas*. This battle is not the end of evil. There will be many battles.

Perelandra shows the final vision of Earth/Thulcandra's end days, when the final battle will be fought. The Earth then will be restored. "It is but the wiping out of the false start in order that the world may then begin" (Lewis, *Perelandra* 182).

These are not just story lines but this narrative plot holds key to the whole picture of Earth Thlcandra-from the beginning to the end. The worst side of Thulcandra is brought out to lime light through parallel contrasting narrative structures. The narrative content is connected to the landscape of consciousness which involves the perspective of the narrator. Here in all three series of *The Space Trilogy*, the author gets involved in the narration. The author becomes the narrator. The author in the print is not the actual flesh and blood author C. S. Lewis but, as narratologists call it, the implied author. The intervention of Lewis in the narration is inclined with the implied narrator since "the author's expressed intensions, outside the text, could be in total contrast [or in partial contrast] to the intensions finally realized in the finished text" (Booth 75).

Regardless of these assumptions, the author becoming the narrator adds vital importance to the

narrated content. The implied author, Lewis is the narratee of the stories told by Ransom (metanarrative) and in turn becomes the narrator of the stories narrating them for the implied readers (narratee). The graveness of the matter is reflected in the choice of the narrator, since narrator is "the voice of the story" (Laszlo, *The Science of Stories*). His perspective of the theology is pictured through these stories and it calls for conversion, turning away from the wicked ways.

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