

Abstract

Children's literature has been considered to be one of the finest tools to influence children, therefore it is not strange that institutions such as the church or its devotees decide to spread their thoughts through this kind of literature. The following paper will analyse and compare the portrayal of Christianity and the figure of God in both the first novels of *His Dark Materials* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Since the authors of these texts, Philip Pullman and C.S. Lewis, differ in terms of the understanding of religion, I intend to investigate and establish the techniques utilized by both authors to capture their perspectives regarding religion and faith. The analysis is expected to corroborate that C.S. Lewis' novel is highly influenced by Christianity and predicates its values while Pullman's novel transmits an antireligious image supported by science and that his novels are written as a response to Lewis' ones.

Keywords: Children's literature, religion, fantasy fiction, *His Dark Materials*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Philip Pullman, C.S. Lewis.

Resum

La literatura infantil està considerada com una de les millors eines per influenciar als joves. Per aquesta raó, no és estrany que institucions com l'església o els seus devots utilitzin aquest tipus de literatura per a difondre els seus pensaments. El següent article analitzarà i compararà la representació del Cristianisme i la figura de Déu en les primeres novel·les de les sagues *His Dark Materials* i *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Ja que els autors d'aquests texts, Philip Pullman i C.S. Lewis difereixen en termes de comprensió de la religió, pretenc investigar i establir les tècniques emprades pels dos autors per copsar les seves perspectives de religió i fe. S'espera que l'anàlisi corrobore que la novel·la de C.S. Lewis està molt influenciada pel cristianisme i és utilitzada per predicar els seus valors, mentre que la novel·la de Pullman transmet una imatge antireligiosa recolzada per la ciència i que les seves novel·les s'escriuen com a resposta a les de Lewis.

Paraules clau: Literatura infantil, religió, literatura fantàstica, *His Dark Materials*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Philip Pullman, C.S. Lewis.

Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1. Data Collection	1
1.2. Methodology	2
2. A Brief insight into the History of Children’s Literature	3
2.1. The Origins of Children’s Literature	4
2.2. The First Golden Age of Children’s Literature	5
2.3. The Second Golden Age of Children’s Literature	6
3. Defining Fantasy	6
3.1. The First Stage of Fantasy	8
3.2. The Second Stage of Fantasy	9
4. Religion & Literature	10
4.1. Religion & Fantasy	12
5. A Brief Insight into the Authors’ Life and Ideologies	14
6. <i>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</i> as an Allegory to the Bible	17
6.1. Aslan as the God of Narnia	19
7. The Portrayal of Religion in Philip Pullman’s <i>Northern Lights</i>	22
7.1. Lord Asriel as the Satan of <i>Paradise Lost</i>	26
8. C.S. Lewis’ Influence on <i>His Dark Materials</i>	28
9. Conclusion	32
References	34

1. Introduction

The influence of religion, and more concretely Christianity, within people's affairs and manner of experiencing life has been declining throughout the years. However, there was a time in which everything was directly or indirectly influenced by it. Some people might consider that literature and religion are opposites and that they belong to two different realms. However, the reality is that these areas were born together and have been intertwined since their creation (Latif, 2013, p.1).

Long before the first sample of the bible was written, religion and other kinds of moral lessons were spread through oral tradition in the shape of stories which later would be regarded as fairy tales. These stories would serve as an influence to literature as we know it nowadays. In this sense, children's literature, which also grew from orally transmitted stories from generation to generation, was contemplated and utilized as the perfect tool to influence its young readers. Hence, this paper will focus on analysing two samples of contemporary children's literature, C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) and Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights* (1995), with the aim of determining the manner in which Christianity and the figure of God are portrayed in the aforementioned novels.

Although there is an expanding belief by some investigators that both novels act as a response to the other, considering that one positions itself in favour of Christianity and the other is regarded as extremely atheist, there is still a lack of research regarding the techniques that these two novels employ in order to convey their own message and the manner in which they influence and complement each other. Therefore, throughout this paper, I will also attempt to identify the tools that the writers use in order to continue spreading, or contradicting, god's will, with the purpose of understanding the manner in which these novels influence children.

1.1. Data Collection

The primary resources for analysis will include the first novel of *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) by C.S. Lewis and the first book within *His Dark Materials'* saga: *Northern Lights* (1995) by Philip

Pullman. Although the main focus of this analysis has been the first novels of both sagas, the films and tv series based on these literary works have been used as complementary sources to the investigation. However, the focus of this paper will be on specific scenes and characters such as Aslan or Lord Asriel, with the aim of understanding their behaviour and acts in relation to the authors' ideologies embodied in the texts. Furthermore, secondary sources utilized in this paper will consist on texts such as Peter Hunt's (1999) *Understanding Children's Literature* or Dayton Haskin's (2016) *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion*, among others, which will be used as tools to carry out a comparative analysis.

1.2. Methodology

In order to conduct a proper analysis of the novels I will draw on theological studies since this method will allow me to study "the sources of Christian belief (...) and explor[e] the meaning of Christianity for today" (Badham, 1996, p.101), as well as the manner in which it is represented and transmitted by C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman. Moreover, theological studies, together with cultural studies will be particularly substantial for the examination of the different religious themes, as well as the characters' actions to support or oppose the religious ideals of the authors, depicted in their novels.

2. A Brief insight into the History of Children's Literature

Before entering into the heart of this paper, there are some concepts which need to be understood. Since both novels analysed in this paper are categorized as children's literature, in the following lines, I will shed some light into such concept and its main characteristics. To begin with, it must be ascertained that children's literature is considered to be a category whose literary pieces aim is to reach the hands of a child. However, does this mean that children are the only rightful readers of these books? If an *adult* reads a children's book, does the novel move into another category?

Certainly not. It is for this reason that most researchers agree on a common characteristic that establishes an important difference between children's literature and the other kinds of literature. As Peter Hunt (1999) states, "children's literature means in its most fundamental sense to every critic who uses the term: books which are good for children, and most particularly good in terms of emotional and moral values" (p.16). Therefore, the books which enter within this category should transmit noble values and influence the readers positively, aiding them to face the possible threats they will face throughout their growth. Whether they achieve this objective or not, will be analysed in further sections of this paper. Moreover, all the books within this category follow a common structure and share the same characteristics:

Children's books are generally shorter; they tend to favour an active rather than a passive treatment, with dialogue and incident rather than description and introspection; child protagonists are the rule; conventions are much used; the story develops within a clear-cut moral schematism which much adult fiction ignores; children's books tend to be optimistic rather than depressive; language is child-oriented; plots are of a distinctive order, probability is often disregarded; and one could go on endlessly talking of magic, and fantasy, and simplicity, and adventure (McDowell, 1973, p.51).

Should this be the first time that you are in front of this category, you could consider that children's literature is simple and straightforward since it is written to be read by children and, therefore, its message must be understandable and feasible for them. However, we ought to accept that children's books are complex and its interpretations are almost infinite. Most *adult* readers who read

children's literature end up stating that there are certain issues within the book that are impossible for a child to notice nor decipher (Hunt, 1999). Hence, multiple researchers consider this as the main reason why children's literature is so attractive to adults, because there are certain aspects that the innocent eye of a child cannot foresee. An instance of that could be Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), which is addressed to children but only fully understood by grownups (Townsend, 1980).

However, why do children find books within this category attractive and not others? One of the main reasons why young readers prefer children's books is because they feel a sense of identification with the characters portrayed in the book (Cohen, 1988). The child who is reading recognises him or herself in the book and enjoys the fact that the adventure is set in another world since it allows them to escape from their reality and live a fictional existence (Leeson, 1977). In fact, Tolkien himself goes beyond this thought and establishes that "there are three structural components of fantasy that can influence the reader: discovery, escape, and consolation (...) discovery can lead a child to have a better self-image, escape can build his or her self-esteem, and consolation can give the child a self-ideal to aspire to" (Weston, 2017, p.4).

2.1. The Origins of Children's Literature

Although written children's literature did not emerge with the beginning of printed literature, "children's literature has always existed. From the fourteenth century adventure stories recited in verse of European romantic descent to folklore kept alive through the oral tradition" (Cuthew, 2006, p.4). However, it was "in the eighteenth century, with British publishers such as Mary Cooper and John Newbery, (...) [when] the English-language children's books emerged" (Hunt, 1999, p.5).

In fact, Cooper and Newbery's books, which marked the beginning of this trend, were highly influenced by popular fairy tales transmitted through oral tradition and religion, which had a crucial role at the beginning of printed children's literature. For this reason, originally, adults who had censored children's books considered that this literature could be utilized in order to guide and/or indoctrinate their young readers since it had "such a major influence in the

formation of children's values and attitudes that adults need[ed] to monitor nearly every word that children read" (West,1996, p.506).

Hence, not only some children's novels were censored or banned in some countries but also, since they were written by adults, they conveyed a strong message which aimed at influencing the reader's attitude and manner of experiencing life. As Hunt (1999) states:

Children's books are used for different purposes at different times—for more things than most books are. Some are 'good' time-passers; (...) others 'good' for expanding the imagination or 'good' for inculcating general (or specific) social attitudes, (...) or 'good' for reading in that 'literary' way which is a small part of adult culture, (...) stories for girls to teach them the domestic virtues, stories for boys to teach them the virtues of military Christianity [or] stories for the newly literate poor, to teach them religion and morality (Hunt, 1999, p. 11, 47).

2.2. The First Golden Age of Children's Literature

If we continue travelling through the history of children's literature, the 1860s were considered the beginning of the First Golden Age, which was triggered by social and economic changes, principally elicited by the abolition of slavery in the United States (Acharya, Blackwell & Sen, 2014). Due to the fact that industries suffered a massive evolution, printing costs dropped and literature reached the hands of other social classes apart from the privileged upper-class. Therefore, children's books (and others) started to be designed and produced in mass as the publishing houses suffered an important increase on demand.

Simultaneously, in England, a new current in children's literature had been emerging as well. It would emerge in the late nineteenth century and it would be known as fantasy fiction. This genre, which will become the main focus of this paper, opened new doors to the authors of the era since they found in fantasy a new manner of telling their stories, which were set in a world where imagination marked the limits of their creations (Mathews, 2002). Hence, due to the readers' acceptance of this genre and its stories, authors acquired permanent recognition and earned a prestigious place within the history of children's literature (Cuthew, 2006). Therefore, it is not strange to find contemporary

readers interested in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863), Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) or Macdonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872).

2.3. The Second Golden Age of Children's Literature

Unfortunately, the two World Wars ceased with the evolution of children's literature and it was not until 1958 with the release of Phillipa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958) and the recently gained popularity of the *Lord of the Rings* (1937) that readers reverted to demand new adventures (Cuthew, 2006). Actually, the necessity of writers to reinvent themselves and provide new creations unleashed the beginning of what critics understand as the Second Golden Age of Children's Literature. One of the major influents of this era was J.R.R Tolkien since he introduced a new trend, which is still active nowadays, and which consisted of mixing fantasy with theology (Cuthew, 2006). One of the numerous authors who decided to join this movement was C.S. Lewis, who paired Christian theology with fantasy in his *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956).

Afterwards, in the twentieth century, with the emergence of Roald Dahl and other contemporary authors, the trend was to produce realistic literary pieces in which the real world and social issues affecting children were described through the eyes of a child (Carpenter, 1985). One century after, authors are still creating literary texts which are highly influenced by fairy tales. Moreover, the most popular trend could be considered to be related to a brand of magic realism in which unrealistic characters face unreal situations in real settings (Cuthew, 2006).

3. Defining Fantasy

Fantasy literature and children's literature have always been considered to be different sides of the same coin (Weston, 2017). Hence, this situation has created a false belief that fantasy literature is only addressed to children while the reality is that most fantasy readers are young-adults or adults. Nonetheless, regardless of their age, most readers would be able to identify and define some characteristics of the fantasy genre, probably relating it to magic, unreal characters or even dragons. However, this term is much more difficult to define

since this category is in constant evolution and with every social change there comes a new fantasy trend (Manlove, 1975).

Although there is not a clear definition of the term *fantasy*, Manlove (1975) provides a definition which I consider to be rather accurate. He states that fantasy is “a fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms” (p.1). For this reason, this genre aims at finding the perfect equilibrium between reality and fantasy. In order to do so, fantasy novels expose real issues afflicting our society but hides them within fantastical elements.

Nonetheless, Swinfen (1984) states that fantasy is made of “structures, motifs and marvellous elements derived from its predecessors in myth, legend, fable, folk-tale and romance” (p.2). She considers that such genre finds its major influence in the orally transmitted fairy tales and integrates their dreamlike themes in order to build narratives. Thus, it is not strange to find that the literary texts belonging to this genre, “involve the supernatural or some other unreal element” (Carpenter and Pritchard, 1984, p.181) and exaggerate it.

However, the definition which I consider to be most concrete and closest to perfection is the one provided by Tolkien (1983). He provides an intelligent and penetrating description of what he considers to be fairy tales and fantasy itself:

Fairy-stories are not in normal English usage stories *about* fairies or elves, but stories about Fairy, that is *Faërie*, the realm or state in which fairies have their being. *Faërie* contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, or dragons: it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted. (Tolkien, 1983, p.113)

Therefore, a manner of understanding fantasy is by considering that within the literary pieces belonging to such genre, there must be a complete equilibrium between what is unreal, just limited by the reader’s imagination, and reality, which is indispensable due to the reader’s necessity to find something real to which they can feel identified with. For this reason, Egoff (1981) states that

fantasy is “the discovery of the real within the unreal, the credible within the incredible, the believable within the unbelievable” (p.80). Hence, it can be stated that “fantasy literature assumes the existence of its supernatural elements within the framework of the text to the same degree that realistic fiction assumes its own facts founded in the material world” (Cuthew, 2006, p.8).

The first and most representative novel to implement the aforementioned characteristics, breaking with the standards of children’s literature and providing an innovative vision of children’s literature was Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), which set a starting point for other authors of the era willing to exploit the readers’ imagination. Nonetheless, although Carroll is considered to be the first to initiate the genre known as children’s fantasy, the genre of fantasy literature has his own founder. Many fantasy detractors consider William Morris to be the creator of fantasy literature since “Morris was the first to consciously break from the realistic tradition and create the world in which the action of *The Wood Beyond the World* (1895) is set” (Sullivan, 1996, p.307).

Moreover, in this genre, the reader and the writer are connected through the text, since fantasy loses its meaning without the readers’ imagination. Even though the writer provides essential concepts such as the characters, plot, setting and others, the readers go beyond these items and write their own story based on their beliefs and willingness to fantasise (Cuthew, 2006). For this reason, not only readers often differ in the manner in which they imagine the depiction of the characters or the settings but also, the filmmakers need to find the perfect equilibrium between portraying the most faithful representation of a novel’s character and pleasing the audience with such portrayal.

3.1. The First Stage of Fantasy

What could be considered as the first stage of fantasy (1860-1920) started in 1863 with Kingsley’s *The Water Babies* (1863). In this novel, the author portrayed a completely innovative adventure under-water which marked the beginning of the stage and became a major source of inspiration for the authors of the era. Moreover, the fantasy novels of that time shared a common concern, their intention was “to confront contemporary issues and deal with moral and

political issues, rather than escaping them” (Cuthew, 2006, p.35). As one of the main representatives of this genre, *The Water Babies* (1863) not only denounces social issues of that time such as the contrast between the higher and lower classes but also, it depicts a clear duality between good and evil through the author’s portrayal of the characters and the protagonist, who seems to be poor but with a heart of gold.

In 1865, with the publishing of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), what seemed to be a simple story about a young girl falling down the rabbit hole, ended up being a novel exploring the unconscious and a critique against contemporary social and political issues such as modern education, which is represented through the character of the caterpillar (Cuthew, 2006). Almost a decade later, Macdonald’s would publish *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872). In his novel, the author aims at criticising the superiority of the Victorian upper class through Curdie, the main character of the novel who regardless of being lionhearted is only the son of a miner.

In 1911, Francis Hodson Burnett would publish *The Secret Garden* (1911), a novel which, as the other representatives of this era, would portray a positive image of poor characters by making them gentle and generous, in comparison to the rich people in the novel, who are represented as being unhappy and greedy, in order to criticise the upper class and the rich people.

In general, authors of that era depicted lower-class characters as brave, kind and benevolent whereas the upper-class characters were portrayed as being selfish and shallow. Moreover, the fact that novels of that time dealt with social and contemporary issues acted as the key to their durability and the reason why they are still being published nowadays (Cuthew, 2006).

3.2. The Second Stage of Fantasy

The second stage of fantasy finds its origins in the early decades of the twentieth century, when the massive socioeconomic changes, alongside the First World War did not allow quality literature to proliferate (Cuthew, 2006). Most critics consider this period “a great expansion of quantity, but a sad lack of quality” (Leeson, 1985, p.110). Nonetheless, it was in this period that J.R.R Tolkien would publish *The Hobbit* (1937). With the releasing of this novel, readers would

start to consider fantasy and children's literature as "a significant and serious literary mode" (Mathews, 2002, pp.31). In fact, most readers consider *The Hobbit* (1937) a turning point in fantasy's history and establish that "Tolkien made fantasy 'respectable'" (Swinfen, 1984, p.1).

However, due to the outbreak of the Second World War and its consequences, post-war literature took a serious tone. Nonetheless, the genre of fantasy would not "begin to confront serious issues such as the conflict of good against evil until later in the C20th" (Cuthew, 2006, p.40). In fact, during this period fantasy novels would return to its roots and rekindle myths, legends and fairy tales as their major influence (Hunt, 1999). Hence, it is not strange to find a common pattern shared by most of the literary pieces written during this period. As Cuthew (2006) states, "in the works of these authors, as well as their contemporaries, there is often a presence of evil and a necessary fight against these evil forces for the sake of all good" (p.40). This current would unleash a new trend known as epic fantasy.

Two of the main representatives of such current are C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman, whose works perfectly represent this dichotomy between good and evil. Although this issue will be analysed in-depth in further sections of this paper, one of the main focuses of *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956) is to portray moral and Christian codes of behaviour in order to make the reader understand what is regarded as good or bad. In fact, every book within the saga becomes a quest in which good must defeat evil. The same happens in *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000), in which the main character of the narrative has the necessity to reach the Land of the Dead so that good can triumph over the evil.

4. Religion & Literature

Although religion and literature may seem to belong to two completely different domains, they can be regarded as being on the same page. In fact, most critics consider that "their salient features [are] the same; they have the same origin, the same appeal and the same method of approach" (Latif, 2013, p.70). Furthermore, it can be stated that literature is a tool used by religion in order to spread its message and moral standards. Hence, in this section of the paper I will attempt to define and analyse the common features of religion and literature

not only to understand how they function separately but also to know what their relationship is and the manner in which they complement each other.

The term *religion*, is extremely difficult to define due to its very varied interpretations. Moreover, there are just a few definitions which are recognised as accurate by the religious community. Nonetheless, Latif (2013) provides a simple but absolute answer to the question of what the main features of religion are. He states that:

Religion stands upon the relation of man with ultimate being. It is concerned with the substance that lies behind phenomena, and also with the duty which man owes to this universal and eternal being. It is concerned, too, with the questions what, whence, whither” (Latif, 2013, p.70).

With this statement, the author considers religion to be a relationship between human beings and God, sometimes similar to the relation between a servant and the master. She considers that believers use the figure of God and religion as an answer to the unknown events that they are not able to justify scientifically. Hence, they consider God to be the soul and cause of everything that afflicts our society.

On the other hand, literature, as much as religion, looks for the readers’ reasoning, interpretation and imagination with the objective of influencing the readers’ feelings and attitudes towards theological and social issues (Latif, 2013). In fact, both fields appeal to the readers’ emotions in order to successfully transmit their message. More specifically, they appeal to love, curiosity, fear and freedom since these emotions are the most purely and strongly felt by human beings. Moreover, both fields not only use the same techniques to spread their messages but they also share the themes represented in their works, such as sin or other penalties, righteousness, human’s relations and the battle between good and bad (Latif, 2013).

A memorable literary piece in which the aforementioned themes and the endless fight between good and evil is vividly reflected is in Dante’s remarkable poem titled “Divine Comedy” (1320). This poem can be considered to be the perfect representation of both worlds, some even consider it to be “at once

great literature and a certain type of religion” (Latif, 2013, p.71). The reason why it has been labelled as a representative of religion and literature is because, in this literary piece, the protagonist is doomed to travel through hell, where he finds the people who challenged God and its will in their earthly lives and are destined to suffer and though heaven, where he finds the human beings who believe and follow God’s words and are destined to live a life beyond death full of love and happiness.

Another characteristic which corroborates the fact that literature and religion are different sides of the same coin relies on the manner in which they convey their ideals and beliefs. Some experts consider religion to be opposite to science since none of its claims are supported by any irrefutable fact nor evidence. Therefore, it can be stated that, like literature, religion is the “product of imagination and to the imagination” (Latif, 2013, p.71).

Nonetheless, since their origins, religion and literature have been enriching and complementing each other, some even would consider that religion has always provided literature with incredible themes and topics for its works. For instance, the world’s most famous literary work, the Bible and its translations, which gave birth to literature as we know it nowadays and helped in its perpetuation, can be considered to be the most influential work of all time. Most writers have commented on the fact that, even though their intention is not to utilize the Bible as inspiration for their literary pieces, human beings have its narrative so ingrained in our behaviour that no one “can go uninfluenced by some kind of religion or religious dogmas, whether positively or negatively. Intentionally or unintentionally, every writer expresses such thoughts in his work which reflect religious background” (Latif,2013, p.76).

4.1. Religion & Fantasy

Every adult with a joyful childhood remembers having read or heard fairy tales such as “Cinderella” (1697), “Snow White” (1812) or “The Little Red Riding Hood” (1697). The fact that these stories are still being read and sold in the libraries, not only shows that fantasy is still a trend among the young and grown-up readers but also “that fairy tales and fantastical stories are present

and thriving in the current culture, even if their literary background and value are not consciously considered” (Weston, 2017, p.20).

However, I do not consider it to be strange since fantasy is always up to date with new trends and social issues afflicting nowadays society (Cutheo, 2006). Furthermore, many experts, Belden C. Lane among them, consider that the human mind has always been seduced by the discovery of new places, new worlds and new people, regardless of their reality. Moreover, Lane (1993) affirms that through our imagination, human beings have found a new manner of understanding reality and religion.

Therefore, it can be stated that imagination and religion complement each other to the point that “faith is impossible without having an active and open imagination; thus, fantasy can help us better understand our faith and the world we live in” (Weston, 2017, p.4). Hence, it is not difficult to understand why fantasy books are still incredibly popular nowadays.

Nonetheless, although fantasy and religion are intertwined and complete each other, their respective communities may not act equally. It is known that the Christian community discourages the genre of fantasy and its content since they consider that its narratives do not portray a realistic representation of reality and their aim is to trick the reader into believing and dreaming about unrealistic scenarios and situations (Weston, 2017).

In fact, in most fantasy books there is often the figure of a god or an omnipresent being ruling over the literary piece’s characters. This figure, although it may sometimes appear to be separated from the main narrative of the novel, helps to convey the idea of the existence of the uncanny and, regardless of the Christian community’s rejection towards this genre, affirm the presence of God (Filmer-Davies, 1997). For this reason, it is not very complicated to find similarities between religious texts, such as the Bible, and fantasy novels, since “even when God is apparently absent from fantastic texts, His presence seems, paradoxically, to inhabit the absence” (Filmer-Davies, 1997, p.59).

Since literature itself and, therefore, fantasy has the power to influence the reader whether they are conscious of it or not, Christians do not desire to be

influenced by any other spiritual standard apart from their own (Weston, 2017). In fact, some critics consider that “fantasy literature can pose several problems for a Christian trying to read literature in line with their spiritual standards” (Weston, 2017, p.22) as it deals with topics such as witchcraft or magic, which according to their beliefs, are regarded as being devilish and impure. Interestingly enough, this is considered regardless of the fact that there are many passages in the Bible which portray situations which do not have apparent explanations apart from magic.

Moreover, if we take into consideration that the main readers of fantasy literature are commonly children, the extreme willingness of their Christian parents to prevent them from being influenced by anything else apart from their faith and moral standards can be understood. This is because children have a better ability to imagine than adults, and therefore, it is easier for them to picture the scenes and different situations portrayed in the books and be influenced by them. Thus, for the parents whose aim is to motivate their children to follow the tradition and God’s word, letting them read stories which will promote their conscious and critical thinking may not be the best option (Weston, 2017).

However, this position seems to change when a Christian reads or encourages their children to read the Bible. Because, regardless of the fact that they cannot see God nor the scenes in the book are proved to be real, Christians invest their time and imagination in believing the messages portrayed in the book. This happens as much as a fantasy reader invests their imagination into understanding and being part of the world that the author has created in the fantasy novel (Weston, 2017).

Hence, as I have mentioned throughout this section, imagination is key for both religion and fantasy since it becomes the reader’s most important tool to understand the “themes and moral ideals that help the readers grow mentally, ethically, and spiritually” (Weston, 2017, p.3); regardless of their choice of reading or their manner of experiencing life.

5. A Brief Insight into the Authors’ Life and Ideologies

In this section of the paper, I will briefly comment on the lives of the authors and their beliefs in order to better understand the reasons why they have written and

endowed their books with powerful messages in support or against religion and its morals.

Clive Staples Lewis, most known as C.S. Lewis, was born in Belfast on 29 November 1898 and passed away on 22 November 1963. His parents were Protestant Ulster, who are Protestant believers original from the region of Ulster in Ireland. This branch of Christianity defends that every Christian is free to interpret the Bible and God's actions as a justification of their faith. Thus, as most Christian parents, they passed on all their beliefs to their son, who embraced them and utilized his literature to spread them (Pettinger, 2009).

During his childhood, he had a mixed education between public schools and private tuition. Nonetheless, in 1916 he would enrol in Oxford University before joining the British Army in the First World War one year later. During the last year of the war, he was sent home in order to recover from his wounds and finish his degrees in Oxford where he would become friends with renowned authors such as Charles Williams or J.R.R. Tolkien (ibid).

Regarding his relationship with Christianity, some may consider that he has been a believer since his birth. However, as a teenager, he argued that he had lost his faith regarding Christianity and the church (Pettinger, 2009). Nonetheless, after the First World War and his return to Oxford "he became increasingly perplexed by the existence of God and Christianity" (Pettinger, 2009, p.1) and finally considered himself a Christian in 1931.

A few years later, in 1942 he published *The Screwtape Letters* through which the readers could see his beginnings as an Anglican apologist for Christianity and his focus on finding a universal form of Christianity while avoiding sectarianism, which was highly common at that time (Pettinger, 2009). In 1952 he would publish *Mere Christianity*, a novel which "is considered a classic in Christian apologetics and aimed to reassert the main arguments of Christianity for both uneducated people and his contemporary intellectuals" (Cuthew, 2006). Nonetheless, this would only be the starting point since his faith in Christianity also determined his most famous works such as *The Space Trilogy* (1938-1945) or *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956).

On the other hand, Philip Pullman was born in Norwich on 19 October 1946. Due to the fact that his father was a Royal Air Force officer, his family was forced to move many times and even live some years in Zimbabwe. However, when his father passed away due to a plane crash, he was sent back to live with his grandparents in England, before moving to Australia and, afterwards, to Wales with his mother and her new husband.

Once he settled down, he studied English in the same university than C.S. Lewis, Oxford University. In fact, he has remained resident at the university since when he finished his degree, he decided to remain as a professor. It would be in this stage of his life when he would start writing novels (Dowd, 2020).

However, he did not begin as the children's literature writer that we know nowadays, his first novels were addressed to a grown-up audience. Some of these works are *The Haunted Storm* (1972) and *Galatea* (1976). It would not be until the 1980s when Pullman began to write novels addressed to children or young adults. Some of these novels are *Count Karlstein* (1982) or *Ride of the Demon Huntsman* (1982).

Not many years after, he would begin to focus on the saga *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000), which has given him the recognition that he possesses nowadays, and has been rewarded with many literary prizes such as the Carnegie Medal in Literature (1996) or the Whitbread Book Award (2001) and their many adaptations into films, tv-series or radio plays.

Due to such recognition, most critics consider him to be the perfect successor to J.R.R Tolkien and C.S. Lewis (Dowd, 2020). Regardless of the fact that he considers himself an atheist and, in his novels, he writes about "the abuses of organized religion" (Dowd, 2020, p.1) and considers *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956) as being mere religious propaganda.

In fact, in many interviews he has mentioned that he is an agnostic, "a Church of England atheist, and a 1662 Book of Common Prayer atheist, because that's the tradition that I was brought up in" (Miller, 2005, p.1). Moreover, in 2010 he joined Terry Pratchett and other authors into the writing of a letter against the Pope Benedict XVI making a state visit to the UK, arguing that he failed to fight

for the human rights and only looked for his own interests and the interests of his country (Dowd, 2020).

His atheism can be so extreme that sometimes he is being regarded as the devil's advocate due to his statements about Christianity and its followers. For instance, in an interview, he mentioned that "if there is a God, and he is as the Christians describe him, then he deserves to be put down and rebelled against" (Holz, 2007, p.1).

Although the majority of Christians despise him and his novels for attacking the church and their faith, he has had a great influence on atheistic beliefs due to the fact that he shows his attitude towards God with pride and without fearing the repercussions that his comments may have. He has almost made atheism a new religion through his statements about Christianity and his satisfaction of being a vocal atheist (Dowd, 2020).

However, not only Pullman's novels have divided audiences. C.S. Lewis' novels have also provoked drastic reactions, mainly because of their influence on Christian values (Cuthew, 2006). Most of the times, people's reactions and criticism consider C.S. Lewis' literary pieces worth reading, due to their moral statements and Christian values whereas Pullman's novels are considered to be not worth reading since they are thought to be deprived of any moral value, apart from being the work of an atheist (Dowd, 2020).

6. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* as an Allegory to the Bible

Although C.S. Lewis has stated multiple times that understanding his novels as a complete allegory to the passages in the Bible is a wrong interpretation of the facts, many scholars have argued that the resemblances between these literary pieces are so evident that such interpretation is undeniable. In fact, authors such as Lucy Marie Cuthew (2006) consider that "taken chronologically the seven books follow the biblical story of the world of creation, through the Fall of humankind, to the final judgement with a social structure based loosely on Arthurian Legend throughout in its use of ancient monarchical structures" (p.45). Nonetheless, in this paper, the main focus will be on the first unit of *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956) entitled: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950).

This novel revolves around the adventures of four siblings, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy, who due to the Second World War and its air-raids on London are sent to the house of a professor in the heart of the country. In this house, they will discover a room containing only a wardrobe which will eventually become the door to a magical world named Narnia. When they go through the wardrobe, they understand that Narnia is being ruled by a tyrannical queen known as the White Witch. However, in their hands, they will have the power to save the Narnians from the queen and restore the peace to the land. With the help of Aslan, the embodiment of Jesus Christ in the shape of a lion, they will be able to defeat the White Witch and become kings and queens of Narnia.

In this novel, the author portrays a world which apparently may not differ from ours. Apart from the existence of magical creatures with the ability to communicate with people, there are not concrete aspects which make the world of Narnia be a different version of the world in which we are living nowadays. However, in this fictional world, there are no traces of technology, apart from the streetlamp, which becomes a strategic point to track Narnia's departure door (Cuthew, 2006).

It seems that by creating this world, C.S. Lewis wanted to get rid of modernity and its scientific and technological improvements with the intention of returning to the past and provide a more simplistic scenario in which modern society had not yet corrupted faith. He represents a world in which faith in religion has disappeared and the evil has taken control of it (Weston, 2017). The first time that Lucy enters Narnia and meets the faun Tumnus, she is explained that the world has plunged into an endless winter where it is always freezing, snowing and Christmas never comes due to the White Witch's magic.

However, even though at first sight it may seem that the White Witch is the ultimate responsible for Narnia's disastrous fate, the intentions of the author were others. He portrays a society which is fighting the "archetypal Christian battle between good and evil, the Holy War" (Swinfen, 1984, p.148), and feels tempted to sin and join the Witch's side since they have lost their faith in Aslan's existence and his possible return to Narnia. This is seen through the character of Tumnus, who considers that the only way to save himself from the queen's

wrath is by obeying all her commands and kidnapping Lucy for her. Hence, the Narnians can be interpreted as human beings who have lost their faith in God and have been corrupted.

For this reason, through the character of a *son of Adam* the author represents human weakness in relation to corruption and our facility to sin. Hence, Edmund is portrayed as the perfect representative of corruption due to the loss of faith since he acts like Judas and betrays his brother and sisters due to his belief that power is superior to faith (Downing, 2005). The main reason why he does this is that he falls into the temptation of the promised power he would have when becoming the Witch's prince and the Turkish Delights, which can be interpreted as the apple of Eden's tree. However, he shows repentance and recovers his faith in goodness and decides to join Aslan's side.

Nonetheless, not everyone is allowed to enter this fictional world. The main reason why Lucy, the youngest of the siblings, is the first one to enter this world is because she is naïve and innocent. Hence, since her imagination is not limited by her age and maturity, she is perfectly able to understand and believe that her adventures in Narnia with the faun were real and not a dream (Cuthew, 2006). Moreover, this is the main reason why her oldest siblings do not find the door to Narnia the first time they check inside the wardrobe. It is not until they talk to the owner of the house that they realise that Lucy's fictional world might be real and only then, they start to believe her. Hence, the second time that they enter the wardrobe, they have faith in Lucy's statements and are able to enter Narnia.

6.1. Aslan as the God of Narnia

Since the very beginning of the siblings' adventures in Narnia, they are told that there is someone more powerful than the White Witch who will come to save the citizens of Narnia and who will put an end to her tyrannical reign. In fact, when Mr Beaver introduces them to the legend of Aslan, they start to feel differently, as if they were listening to the exploits of a God. In fact, every single sibling felt in a different manner, Edmund felt fear, Peter felt brave, Susan felt pleased and Lucy felt enthusiastic. As chapter VII states:

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 (...) at the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in its inside (Lewis,1983, p.67).

These were actually the intentions of the author, he wanted to represent the figure of Jesus Christ in the body of a lion. As Downing (2005) establishes,“ in Aslan, Lewis hoped to portray a God who is both awe-ful and good, inspiring equally a wholesome fear and a wholehearted love” (p.63). It can be considered that he achieved this objective since he portrayed an ageless lion who, apart from having the gifts that any human dreams about, he is the descendant of the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. This emperor is not specifically portrayed in the novel since it is perceived as a spiritual presence. However, due to the manner in which the author describes it and his actions towards Narnia, the reader is able to understand that he is a supreme God who created the world of Narnia, its rules and beings, just like the Christian God did with our world in seven days.

Moreover, another reason why the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea is perceived as the Christian God is that he gifted Narnia with the Deep Magic and, with it, he has the ability to create and destroy the Narnians and their world whenever he feels that a law is not being followed. He is so powerful that even Aslan is afraid of challenging him or his will. When Susan asks him “can't we do something about the Deep Magic? Isn't there something you can work against it?” (Lewis, 1983, p.131), Aslan makes clear that not even him, the most powerful being on Narnia, can question his will by saying: “work against the Emperor's Magic?” Said Aslan, turning to her with something like a frown on his face. And nobody made that suggestion to him again” (Lewis, 1983, p.131).

However, the fact that his father is a faithful representation of the Christian God, is not the only resemblance that the character has with Jesus Christ. When he enters the White Witch's castle, he finds the sculptures of the witch's enemies which she has been creating and collecting since the beginning of her reign. However, with his breath, he is able to bring the sculptured creatures back to life. A possible interpretation of the facts could be that through his words, like

the parables of God, he is able to fill the spirit of those who have lost their faith and have fallen into the darkness to join his side and fight the evil.

Moreover, when the exhaustive final battle for Narnia ends and all the Narnians who fought in the war are spending the night in the field, the narrator of the story feels very surprised and wonders how Aslan has been able to provide food and shelter for everyone, out of nothing. Some critics consider this aspect to be irrelevant due to the fact that the novel is addressed to children who do not need proper explanations to believe the situations explained in the book. However, others consider that Aslan's words provided the necessary to go through the night in the same manner that "Jesus gives us food that nothing can buy. He provides food for our souls, nourishing with His Word and in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist as His Real Self in the form of bread and wine" (Russel, 2014, p. 54).

Another characteristic that makes Aslan be like the Christian God is related to the fact that he is described as a lion which cannot be tamed nor tied down. Even though at the end he disappears, he will always be present in the Narnian's faith since he is regarded as almighty and always present when in need. This scene is perfectly portrayed in the following excerpt: "He'll be coming and going" (...) "one day you'll see him and another you won't. He doesn't like being tied down – and of course he has other countries to attend to. (...) He's wild, you know. Not like a *tame* lion" (Lewis, 1983, p.168).

Following this line of thought, there is one scene in the novel which undoubtedly confirms that Aslan acts as the perfect allegory of Jesus Christ. The night before the final battle for Narnia, Aslan shows his power of forgiveness by forgiving Edmund and his betrayal –in the same manner that Jesus forgives Judas and his enemies– and makes a deal with the White Witch in order to save the life of the kid. However, little do the others know that, like Jesus, he has exchanged Edmund's life for his. As Downing (2005) states, "Aslan offers his own life for Edmund's, enduring a night of lonely sadness like Christ in the garden of Gethsemane and then a day of humiliation and death like the Passion" (p.77).

That night, he is carried to the top of a hill where there is a stone table in which the traitors must be executed, as the law established by the Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea states. It is in this table where he is executed in a kind of pagan ritual. However, since he was not a traitor at all, the next morning he resurrects and breaks the stone table. This scene is reminiscent of the one starring Jesus Christ in the New Testament, where after his cruel death on the cross, he resurrects. Actually, other critics such as Elisabeth McKagen (2009) have stated that "Aslan in the first book is a very thinly disguised version of the Passion of Christ and has been seen as such by the vast majority of his readers" (p.8).

Finally, the last reason that shows that Aslan is the reincarnation of God in Narnia that I will consider revolves around the fact that, when his arrival is announced, the siblings and the Beavers have an encounter with Father Christmas, who gives them presents which will be of great use throughout the story. Hence, if we take into consideration that, according to Western Christian Culture, Santa Claus is known for bringing presents to children the night before Jesus Christ's arrival to our world, Father Christmas' appearance in Narnia could be understood as an announcement of Aslan's advent to such fictional world. Actually, when C.S. Lewis was asked about Aslan's resemblance with the character of the Bible he answered:

Has there ever been anyone in *this* world who (1) Arrived at the same time as Father Christmas. (2) Said he was the son of the Great Emperor. (3) Gave himself up for someone else's fault to be jeered at and killed by wicked people. (4) Came to life again. (5) Is sometimes spoken of as a Lamb (...) Don't you really know His name in this world? (Downing, 2005, p. 80)

7. The Portrayal of Religion in Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*

Philip Pullman's first novel of *His Dark Materials'* saga, tells the arduous adventures of a young girl named Lyra Belacqua. After growing up in Jordan College in Oxford, surrounded by old scholars and Roger-her only friend- she sees the opportunity to fulfil her dream of travelling to the North with Mrs Coulter, who will take her out of the college and introduce her to a world of exploration and discovery. During her time with Mrs Coulter, the protagonist will not only discover more about Dust but also, she will find out that behind the

kidnapping of her friend and other children relies on an organization called the Magisterium. However, after discovering the true nature of Mrs Coulter and her participation in the children's disappearance, Lyra escapes from her and joins a clan of Gyptians, who will support her mission and take her to the North.

During this journey, she will decipher the intricate mechanisms of the alethiometer she was given before her departure from Jordan College and make friends from other lands. Apart from that, she will be able to save the captured children and reunite with her father. However, she will also discover his experiments with Dust and intentions to open bridges to other worlds.

In this literary piece, which was written almost fifty years after C.S. Lewis' novel, the author portrays a world in which human beings are naturally attached to daemons, animals usually from the opposite sex. Nonetheless, the daemon of children who have not yet reached adolescence has the ability to change its shape and become the animal they desire. However, when children reach adolescence, their daemon settles and chooses its permanent shape. Actually, a daemon could be understood as the person's soul since they cannot be separated and they share their thoughts and feelings, so if the daemon is hurt, the person also feels the pain. Moreover, the only individuals who have the ability to have them are humans. Throughout the story, the reader knows about Iofur Raknison, the king of the armoured bears and his willingness to change the whole kingdom for having a daemon, even though he cannot have it since he is a polar bear and not a human being.

In *Northern Lights* (1995), Pullman portrays a world which represents the aspects he likes and dislikes of our society. However, he changes the features that he does not like, such as the church, through the portrayal of the Magisterium and its members, and their malevolent intentions towards knowledge and scientific discoveries, mainly conducted by Lord Asriel. Moreover, the author decides to portray the eternal dichotomy of good vs evil in an especial manner. Pullman's characters are not completely good or completely bad, they are able to perform good and evil actions, as well as showing repentance and redeeming themselves. He portrays them in that way in an attempt to convey a more realistic representation of our society. In this manner, by recognizing that complete goodness or evilness does not exist, the

author challenges and “undoes the foundations of Christian thinking and morality” (Cuthew, 2006, p.71).

The reader witnesses this through many characters of the novel. However, the ones in which this process is easily seen are the headmaster of Jordan College, Mrs Coulter and Lord Asriel. The headmaster is a lovely individual who has always taken care of Lyra but he also attempts to murder her father. Another character who is able to make good and bad actions is Mrs Coulter, who becomes a lovely mother to Lyra while she kidnaps other children under the orders of the Magisterium. Finally, Lord Asriel has always somehow taken care of Lyra since he was the one who brought her to Jordan College. However, he is willing to murder a friend of his daughter in order to fulfil his dreams of travelling to other worlds.

In contrast to the world of Narnia, Lyra’s world is full of technological inventions, such as the zeppelins or Bolvangar’s machinery, and knowledge and wisdom are promoted. In fact, Pullman gives an alethiometer to Lyra, which is supposed to be the most advanced mechanism and, in the right hands, it grants knowledge from the past, present and future.

Moreover, Pullman introduces the Dust in the book as a positive representation of the Christian original sin (Weston, 2017, Cuthew, 2006, McKagen, 2009). In the novel, Dust is regarded as knowledge and loss of innocence. For this reason, only when the characters’ daemon is settled and they enter adulthood, Dust establishes on them. Hence, children before puberty who are innocent and naïve do not possess any experience nor knowledge and, therefore, they do not have Dust. However, the fact that Lyra remains innocent is what grants her the ability to read the alethiometer, unlike adults.

Furthermore, Pullman is not afraid to represent sexuality in his novels. He does that through the characters of Lord Asriel and Mrs Coulter, the latter of which has multiple relationships with other men and uses her “sexuality manipulatively and for her own benefit” (Cuthew, 2006, p.88). Besides, she also shows love and affection towards her former lover Lord Asriel and to Lyra.

Nonetheless, the institution called the Magisterium places itself against technological inventions and other scientific discoveries. Moreover, this

institution is the one in charge of decoding the Word of God and providing an interpretation which must be acknowledged as the only acceptable and authentic. The creation of this institution and their objectives are very well exemplified in the following excerpt:

Ever since Pope John Calvin had moved the seat of the papacy to Geneva and set up the Consistorial Court of Discipline, the Church's power over every aspect of life had been absolute. The Papacy itself had been abolished after Calvin's death, and a tangle of courts, colleges, and councils, collectively known as the Magisterium, had grown up in this place (Pullman, 2011, pp. 31-32).

One of these institutions controlled by the Magisterium is the General Oblation Board, which is run by Mrs Coulter and acts as the enemy of the story. This branch of the Church is the one behind the kidnappings of the children and their posterior transfer to Bolvangar, which is a centre where they experiment with children with the objective of understanding the Dust and avoiding their contract with it. In fact, the Magisterium accurately chose the name of this institution since it "means a sacrifice, an offering, something of that sort. (...) In the Middle Ages, parents would give their children to the church to be monks or nuns. And the unfortunate brats were known as oblates" (Pullman, 2011, p.81).

In this centre named Bolvangar, an experiment called intercision is being conducted. This practice consists in cutting the natural connection between the child and the daemon with the objective of depriving children of feeling emotions such as passion, love or fear, among others, and avoid their exposure to "Dust – to original sin" (Pullman, 2011, p.317). This procedure is reminiscent of castration or circumcision, which has its origins in Christian religion and consisted in the removal of the children's testicles or clitoris so that they could not feel complete pleasure and they remain immature. Actually, Lord Asriel describes this procedure to Lyra when he is explaining her the experiments being conducted in Bolvangar:

Do you know what the word *castration* means? It means removing the sexual organs of a boy so that he never develops the characteristics of a man. A *castrato* keeps his high treble voice all his life, which is why the Church allowed it: so useful in Church music. Some *castrati* became great

singers, wonderful artists. Many just became fat spoiled half-men. Some died from the effects of the operation. But the Church wouldn't flinch at the idea of a little *cut*, you see. There was a precedent. And this would be so much more *hygienic* (...) It would be gentle by comparison (Pullman, 2011, p.317)

However, Mrs Coulter, as a member of the Magisterium, tries to convince Lyra of the benefits of this procedure since it prevents children from sin and makes them remain innocent and controllable. She tells Lyra that Dust is harmful for children since it is "something evil and wicked. Grown-ups and their daemons are infected with dust so deeply that it's too late for them. (...) But a quick operation on children means they're safe from it. (...) They are safe and happy. (...) All that happens is a little cut, and then everything's peaceful. For ever!" (Pullman, 2011, pp.240-241). Through Mrs Coulter explanation of the experiments that are being conducted with children, the reader is able to see the perverse ideas of the Magisterium, whose only desire is to control people through their faith by depriving them from their knowledge and their ability to reason. They want people like the nurses of Bolvangar who, as Lyra observes, are pale and seem to be sleepwalking (Pullman, 2011).

With the creation of the Magisterium, its followers and their atrocious acts in the name of God, such as the intercision or the relentless fight to kill Lord Asriel and his investigations against the faith. Pullman aims at uncovering the darkest side of religion and contrast the morals and behaviours represented in C.S. Lewis' novels. Moreover, he uses knowledge and scientific discoveries in order to challenge the Christian idea that innocence is better than wisdom.

7.1. Lord Asriel as the Satan of *Paradise Lost*

Throughout the story, the reader is a witness of the many discoveries and investigations that Lord Asriel is conducting. However, his findings on Dust and his theory confirming the existence of multiple worlds are the reason why the Magisterium is going after him to eliminate him and destroy his investigation. They want to put an end to his discoveries since they consider that he is a heretic for challenging the Magisterium's interpretation of dust and their denial of the existence of a multiverse. After all, "the Holy Church teaches that there

are two worlds: the world of everything we can see and hear and touch, and another world, the spiritual world of heaven and hell" (Pullman, 2011, p.32).

Hence, since the Magisterium "can't allow any other interpretation than the authorised one" (Pullman, 2011, p.233), he is imprisoned in a dungeon guarded by the armoured bears of the North. However, when they discover that he is continuing with his investigations, they consider that "he's pushed his heretical instigations to the point where it's positively dangerous to let him live" (Pullman, 2011, p.233) and they sentence him to death. Nonetheless, it is too late since their discovery is made moments before his entrance into another world.

Nevertheless, before entering another world through the door he opened by performing the intercision to George and his daemon, Lord Asriel explains to Lyra the meaning of Dust and its relation with Adam and Eve. He shows her that when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and were expelled from the Garden of Eden, in what Christians name the Fall and perceive as the act which doomed humanity, they gained knowledge, wisdom and Dust started to attach to them. Actually, in order to explain this, Lord Asriel reads a passage of the Bible containing the following: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be open, and your daemons shall assume their true forms, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Pullman, 2011, p.315).

Lord Asriel, as well as Pullman, defend that the Fall is what made us humans and what grants us with knowledge and the ability to reason for ourselves, as well as our capacity to sin. This can be interpreted in contraposition to the Christian interpretation of the Myth of the Fall which is that due to Adam and Eve's fall into temptation, human beings are doomed to be ignorant and die (Baker, 1981). For this reason, he defends that knowledge is better than faith and provides a positive interpretation of the myth of the Fall, apart from being against the Magisterium and their objective of eliminating Dust and forcing children to grow up still being innocent and unable to sin.

For this reason, many critics such as Lucy Marie Cuthew (2006) and Jamie Weston (2017) have associated the character of Lord Asriel with the character of Satan in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1663). In this poem, Milton portrays the

story of Satan, an angel who leads a rebellion against God in heaven. However, they did not succeed and were expelled from heaven and sent to hell. In the poem, Milton narrates Satan's intentions of destroying the Garden of Eden and forcing Adam and Eve to eat from the forbidden tree. When he achieves his objective, they are expelled from Eden and free to sin.

Nonetheless, since Milton was a religious man, he condemned Satan for his disgraceful act and portrayed him as a subject of destruction and the one responsible for human's miserable fate. On the contrary, in *Northern Lights* (1995) Lord Asriel is perceived as a good man who defends freedom of thinking and the human being's capacity of reasoning and experiencing life at its fullest.

8. C.S. Lewis' Influence on *His Dark Materials*

Although there is a separation of almost fifty years between the publishing of the first novels of both C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman's sagas, there is a common knowledge which considers the novels of the latter to be written as a response to the religious motifs and message in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956). Hence, after having portrayed the analysis of both *Northern Lights* (1995) and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), in this section I will provide reasons to support this statement as well as C.S. Lewis' influence on Pullman's novel.

Even though the reality of Narnia and Lyra's world may seem similar at first sight, there are reasons to consider them opposites. As I mentioned before, C.S. Lewis portrays a world in which there is no technology nor scientific discoveries, even though there are certain objects portrayed in the novel which require of technological developments in order to be created. For instance, when Lucy enters into Tumnus' cave, he sees books, portraits and other elements which, without the adequate machinery could not be created. Moreover, when Father Christmas arrives to Narnia, he gives the siblings swords and shields, regardless of the fact that in such word the reader does not see any kind of technological breakthrough that is able to create them.

On the other hand, in Pullman's world, the reader witnesses a completely different reality. The world in which Lyra is portrayed is full of technological inventions and science and knowledge can be considered to rule over faith.

Hence, in such world there are inventions such as zeppelins or aerostatic balloons, which are used to travel. In contraposition to the mode of transport of the Narnians, which is by foot, magically or riding an animal or magic creature. Moreover, in *His Dark Materials* (1995), the reader is able to follow Lord Asriel's investigations regarding Dust and the existence of other worlds, in which he utilizes very sophisticated machinery.

The main reason why both authors have decided to portray these worlds is linked to their religious beliefs. Thus, C.S. Lewis provides a reality which is completely inspired in past eras because he aimed at portraying a reality where religion and faith would have not yet been corrupted by technology or science. On the other hand, while the epicentre of Narnia is faith, Pullman decides to portray a reality full of scientific discoveries and technological improvements in order to make the reader understand that knowledge and wisdom are over ignorance and blind faith.

Furthermore, both authors differ in the manner of representing goodness and evilness. In the case of C.S. Lewis, the characters of his novels are either pure good or completely evil. For instance, Aslan is the representative of purity and goodness since he is the one who saves the Narnians from the tyrannical reign of the White Witch and sacrifices himself to save Edmund's life. Moreover, evilness is uniquely represented by a witch who, apart from having an army of mythological and fantastical beasts, is capable of committing any atrocious act with the aim of destroying Aslan and any goodness in Narnia.

On the contrary, Pullman decides to break with these perfect opposites and provides a blurred image of goodness and evilness, in order to provide a more realistic interpretation of our society. He depicts characters who are capable of committing the most lovely and caring acts, as well as the most atrocious and malevolent actions. These is seen through the characters of Mrs Coulter or Lord Asriel, among others. What these two characters have in common is that they both provide love and attention to Lyra, but they murder and kidnap children in order to fulfil their objectives.

The main reason why Pullman may have decided to depict his characters with such behaviour is because he wanted to transmit the reader the message that

human beings are capable of carrying out good and bad actions, and contrast C.S. Lewis' Biblical representation of his characters which are completely good or completely bad.

Nonetheless, these aspects are not the only ones which differentiate the novels, both authors represent a completely different image of religion, faith and religious institutions. C.S. Lewis's novel depicts a reality in which a society without religion is being controlled by an evil queen, who represents the consequences of corruption and the loss of faith. Nonetheless, with the arrival of the representative of faith in Narnia, Aslan and his godly characteristics and actions, the Narnians recover their faith and together they defeat the White Witch.

Conversely, Pullman provides a completely opposite depiction of religion and faith in his novel. In Lyra's world, religion is represented by the institution called the Magisterium, which has the objective of depriving children of their contact with Dust. They desire to separate the children's daemons from them so they do not grow up mentally and lose their capacity to reason and their knowledge, so they remain innocent, obedient and can be controlled through faith. However, through the character of Lord Asriel, Pullman utilises his scientific discoveries related to dust and the existence of other worlds in order to challenge this religious institution and its faith.

Hence, the image of faith and religion depicted in the two novels can be considered to be contradictory since, while C.S. Lewis illustrates a society which finds its salvation through faith, Pullman represents a society in which faith and the religious institutions are evil, and only knowledge and scientific discoveries will save the children from being controlled by the church and grant freedom of thinking to its citizens.

Another contrast found in the novels of these two authors is regarding their portrayal of sexuality. In Pullman's novels, there is a completely free representation of sexuality, since the author is not afraid to depict sexual relationships nor love expressions between characters. In fact, the character of Mrs Coulter is the one which is more sexually open. She is not afraid to show how she feels attracted by her former lover Lord Asriel and they talk about their

relationship openly and honestly. However, Pullman also utilises her to depict the dark use of sexuality since Mrs Coulter is aware of her beauty and uses it in order to seduce and manipulate men to help her reach her objective.

On the other hand, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) not only there are no representations of sexuality, due to the author's religious roots, but also, he uses the character of the White Witch to represent that sexuality is hazardous and deadly. The reader is able to perceive this through Edmund's first impression and posterior cajolery of the White Witch.

Nonetheless, their differences are not only transmitted through motifs or themes, there are characters which have opposite representations in both novels, such as witches. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), the reader witnesses a depiction of a witch who is completely evil and who makes use of her powers to afflict the Narnians, as well as to manipulate and control people, sometimes turning them into sculptures. C.S. Lewis' portrayal of the White Witch perfectly represents the Christian idea of a witch, who in the Middle Ages was persecuted and burned in the pile for using magic and their heresies against God.

On the other hand, Pullman depicts one of the kindest characters in the novel as a witch named Serafina Pekkala. She helps Lyra and the Gyptians, a non-religious clan which live at the verge of the Magisterium, reach their objective of freeing the captured children who is being held in Bolvangar. Hence, Pullman endows a witch with this behaviour to contrast the Christian beliefs regarding witches or sorcerers represented in the Bible and in C.S. Lewis' novels.

Nevertheless, in Pullman's literary piece there are more aspects related to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950). When Lord Asriel, Lyra's uncle, arrives in Jordan College, he tells Lyra to hide in a wardrobe and spy the scholar's reactions to his discoveries regarding Dust and the existence of other worlds. Hence, as the siblings in C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles*, it is inside a wardrobe that she has her first encounter with Dust and her real adventure begins.

9. Conclusion

The last sections of the paper have analysed C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman's ideals, as well as his portrayals, of religion and faith in the first novels of their most famous sagas. As both authors have proved, the genre of fantasy deals with real and present issues, and they can be represented as a critique or as praise. In their novels, both authors have depicted different interpretations of the flaws that they consider this reality to have and they have created a world in which such flaws are conquered.

C.S. Lewis' novels depict an outdated world in which the loss of faith has led to an everlasting winter controlled by the White Witch, the main representative of evilness in the novel. Hence, the only manner to save Narnia from its terrible destiny is by starting to believe in the return of Aslan, who can be considered to be the main representative of purity and goodness, as well as the allegory of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, Pullman decides to depict a modern reality in which technology and scientific discoveries are in a clash with religion and faith. He utilises the institution of the Magisterium in order to represent the darkest side of religion and their intentions to control people through their faith, depriving them of knowledge and the capacity to reason. However, through the triumph of science over religion and the discoveries of the scientist Lord Asriel, Pullman aims at transmitting the message to the readers that blind faith is never fully correct.

Hence, as big representatives of children's literature, both authors deal with and influence the readers with issues of morality and values, although these might differ. As it has been analysed through the paper, C.S. Lewis' novel, due to the author's religious roots, provides a supportive image of religion, in which innocence, faith and God are considered to be the solution to all problems. Nonetheless, Pullman's novel portrays a completely opposite image of religion and faith. In *Northern Lights* (1995), religion's morality is questioned and fought; Pullman shares a message that religion seeks control over people, depriving

them of the ability to reason for themselves, and argues that knowledge and reason are better than mindless faith.

Hence, as it was expected, this analysis has proved that C.S. Lewis' novel represents an image completely in favour of religion and faith, due to his vivid contact with religion, while Pullman's novels oppose the image of the Christianity presented in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956) and preach that reason is superior to all faith.

Nonetheless, the novels written by C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman are considered to be two of the major representatives in modern children's literature. Both novels, as well as the rest of their sagas, provide a great deal of entertainment, as well as two very diverse manners of perceiving the world. Hence, regardless of the readers' religion or faith, these sagas are more than worth reading. Readers of fantasy, including readers of these novels, ought to set aside their beliefs and be open to all the creativity, magic and illusions portrayed in both books. Only in this manner, they will be able to reach a full understanding of the novels and, thus, get to understand the message that their authors desired to transmit when writing them, and comprehend that the novels are worth reading regardless of one's religious background.

References

Primary Sources:

Pullman, P. (2011). *His Dark Materials: Northern Lights, The Subtle Knife and The Amber Spyglass*. London: Everyman.

Lewis, C.S. (1983 [1950]). *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. New York: HarperCollins.

Secondary sources:

Acharya, A., Blackwell, M. & Sen, M. (2014). *The Political Legacy of American Slavery*. Stanford: University of Stanford.

Badham, P. (1996). "What Is Theology?" *Theology*, 99(788), 101–106.

Baker, J. (1981). *The Myth of Man's "Fall" – A Reappraisal*. London: The Expository Times.

Carpenter, H. (1985). *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature*, London: George Allen and Unwin.

Cohen, A. (1988). "The changing face of Israeli children's literature: forty years of creativity", *Modern Hebrew Literature new series* 1: 25-31.

Cuthew, L. M. (2006). *Fantasy, morality and ideology: a comparative study of C.S. Lewis' The Chronicles of Narnia and Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

Dowd, S. (2020). *Philip Pullman*. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Philip-Pullman>

Downing, D. C. (2005). *Into the Wardrobe: C. S. Lewis and the Narnia Chronicles*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Egoff, S. (1981). *Thursday's Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children's Literature*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Filmer-Davies, C. (1997). "Presence and Absence: God in Fantasy Literature". *Christianity and Literature*. 1: 59-74.

Holz, A.R. (2007). "Sympathy for the Devil". *Plugged in*. Retrieved from: <https://web.archive.org/web/20140221064101/http://www.pluggedin.com/upfront/2007/sympathyforthedevil.aspx>

Hunt, P. (1999). *Understanding Children's Literature*. London: Routledge.

Lane, Belden C. (1993). "Fantasy and the Geography of Faith". *Theology Today*, 50(3), 397-408.

Latif, S. (2013). "Glimpses of Religion in English Literature". *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*. 3: 70-76.

Leeson, R. (1977). *Children's Books and Class Society: Past and Present, Children's Rights Workshop*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative.

Leeson, R. (1985). *Reading and Righting*. London: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd.

Manlove, C.N. (1975). *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Mathews, R. (2002). *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*. London: Routledge.

McDowell, M. (1973). "Fiction for children and adults: some essential differences", *Children's Literature in Education* 10: 551–563.

Miller, L. (2005). "Far from Narnia: Philip Pullman's Secular Fantasy for Children". *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/12/26/far-from-narnia>

Pettinger, T. (2009). "Biography of C.S. Lewis". *Biography Online*. UK: Oxford.

Russell, J.A. (2014). *The Power of The Word: The "I am" Statements of Jesus*. Bloomington: AuthorHouse.

Sullivan, C.W. (1996). "High Fantasy", in Hunt, P. ed. (1996) *International Companion Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature*. London: Routledge.

Swinfen, A. (1984). *In Defence of Fantasy: A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature since 1945*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Tolkien, J.R.R. (1983). *On Fairy-Stories*. London: HarperCollins.

Townsend, J.R. (1980). "Standards of criticism for children's literature". *The Signal Approach to Children's Books*, London: Kestrel Books.

West, M. (1996). *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. London: Routledge.