

The Great Divorce: A Dream by C.S. Lewis: A Comeback of the Medieval Genre

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*It is universally acknowledged that the Renaissance has exerted a great influence on modern literature and art. This view has been so overwhelming that it has ousted other possibilities, as a result, the influence of medieval literature has been grossly underestimated. In the current article I want to show the role of the “dream vision” genre in shaping the modern genre of spiritual philosophical fiction elaborated in the works by C.S. Lewis, specifically in his exceptionally original novel *The Great Divorce*. The aim is to examine systematically and expose the intrinsic affinity of Lewis’ work with the ground breaking works of the father of the genre, a French Cistercian monk Guillaume de Deguileville (1295-1358). Separated by time and culture, the works display a remarkable congruity of both form and content including the narrative structure, themes and motifs, allegorical representations and symbolism. The discovered similarities are not accidental because they draw upon the same epistemological position concerning understanding and interpretation of essential properties of the Christian doctrine.*

Keywords: *dream vision, pilgrimage, cardinal sins, comparative analysis*

Introduction

Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to walk upon,
My scrip of joy, immortal diet,
My bottle of salvation,
My gown of glory, hope’s true gage,

And thus I’ll take my pilgrimage.
Whilst my soul like a white palmer
Travels to the land of heaven,
Over the silver mountains.
(Raleigh¹ 1941, p. 142)

In 1945, a most intriguing work of fiction *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis was published. The genre of the book was indeterminate and hence open to multiple interpretations. Was it a theological fantasy or a piece of spiritual philosophy, a morality story, an allegory, an apologia of Christian doctrine, or a sample of didactic fiction? One thing was clear – it was not a canonical novel. Lewis characterized his writing as “imaginative supposal” of the afterlife world (Lewis 1946, p. viii). That the novel was published right after the war is highly emblematic. After the horrors of war (Hell), Lewis was inviting people to join the world of “love and joy,” which, according to him, could be achieved only through the true faith whose paragon was Heaven. For this, he chose a specific literary form – a fusion of fiction and theology. The purpose was to familiarize people

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¹One of the most notable figures of the Elizabethan era, an English adventurer, explorer, statesman, and writer.

with the essentials of the Christian doctrine wrapping them up in literary images, which are informed with biblical meanings and significance. In his religious and philosophical explorations, Lewis draws on a medieval genre that had the same aim of propagating Christian virtues and spirituality about six hundred years ago.

The genre of dream vision, an allegory presented as a dream, was especially popular in the Middle Ages and endured well into the 17th century. The best-known examples are the *Roman de la Rose* (13th century), Langland's *Piers Plowman* (1366-1399), John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), and some other literary pieces of later dates such as Oyston's *The Pilgrimage of a Soul* (1909). Undoubtedly, the works of Guillaume de Deguileville², the founding father of the genre, of whose works Lewis had profound knowledge being a medievalist and teaching Medieval literature in Oxford and Cambridge, had the greatest effect on the writer. Unfortunately, the *Divorce's* affinity with *Le Pèlerinage de Vie Humaine* and *Le Pèlerinage de l'Âme*, in which allegorical and theological conceptualizations of Sin, Salvation, Hell, Heaven, etc. were ideated, has not so far received scholarly attention it deserves. The current article is meant to make up for this gap. Even in the French critical tradition despite their remarkable popularity in the fourteenth century, Deguileville's narratives had suffered critical neglect until a rise in interest in the middle of the 20th century. And still, large-scale projects appeared much later and the first volume of essays dedicated to *Les Pèlerinages* was published only in 2008 (Nievergelt and Kamath 2013). The objective of the research is comparative analysis of Lewis' *Divorce* with its two French precursors. We hope to find structural congruity and illuminating parallelisms fostered by the common theological and philosophical orientation. Applying comparative analysis, we plan to explore structural peculiarities, common theological themes and moral dilemmas, imagery and the leading symbols both secular and religious.

Scholarship on *The Great Divorce*

In the article written in 2017, Michael Jeffress and William Brown express concern at the disturbing scarcity of critical works devoted to Lewis's *The Great Divorce* (Jeffress and Brown 2017, p. 3). We consider it feasible to give a brief survey of literary criticism choosing critics that illuminate some important aspects about Lewis's work. First of all, researchers are concerned with the influence of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, on Lewis's novel in terms of structure, basic imagery, thematic composition, organization of events and characters. Thus, Joe Christopher exposes most obvious similarities showing how Dantean imagery frames Lewis's presentation of theological subjects focusing on the pattern of Dantean allusions. He sees clear analogy between Dante and Lewis as fictional narrators; MacDonald and Beatrice as God-bearing images exerting influence on the literary egos. He emphasizes strong similarities between the coming of Sarah Smith and Beatrice including the light coming from them, the accompanying procession of Angels,

²The author of a pilgrimage trilogy: *Le Pèlerinage de vie humaine* (1330); *Le Pèlerinage de l'âme* (1358); *Le Pèlerinage de Jhesus Crist* (1337).

and the sounds of heavenly music (Christopher 2011, p. 83). Christopher comes to a conclusion:

“Both the macrocosm and the microcosm show the same organizational pattern. Lewis wants the Dantean imagery to frame and support his material. ... Lewis pays homage to Dante’s great work, without requiring readers to know it” (Christopher 2011, p. 94).

A number of researchers study non-Dantean sources of the novel and place *The Divorce* within a broader context of world literature or look for links with dream visions produced on the English soil. I can cite a short but insightful article by Robert Boenig (1983), who gives a sweeping picture of the roots of *The Divorce* from ancient precursors of this medieval genre like Cicero³ and Boethius,⁴ whose works were very influential in England in the Middle Ages and early Modern Period (suffice it to mention that Queen Elizabeth I personally translated Boethius) to Chaucer and Lydgate. He looks for similarities and analogues in *The Romance of the Rose*, but never mentions Guillaume de Deguileville; such critical overlook is regrettable. Boenig emphasizes that “similarities are not just on a general level but descend to the most specific, concrete details” (Boenig 1983, p. 32), among which he mentions descriptions of nature and heavenly inhabitants, the moral point of choice, discusses the concepts of time and size in respect to Hell and Heaven. Amber Dunai finds close links with and highlights a striking resemblance of events and theological conversations featured in *the Divorce* to those in the medieval poem *Pearl*. The plot of *Pearl* is amazingly congruent with several episodes in *The Divorce* which expose and condemn possessiveness in familial relations, obstinate adherence to the earthly system of justice and reward, and above all the rejection of divine love as the all-embracing Love of God opposed to all kinds of earthly “counterfeits” (Dunai 2018, p. 12).

Lewis’s doctrine of free will and freedom of choice attracts many literary critics as do his views of Heaven and Hell. The themes are so closely interwoven that when discussing free will – and there is mutual agreement that it is central to Lewis’s work (Cox 1999), – researchers invariably arrive at the issue of Heaven and Hell. Robert H. Smith (1981) considers that people shape their personalities through innumerable choices and thus destine themselves to salvation or damnation, and even God cannot overrule their free will (Hooper 1996, p. 281). The idea is developed by Jeffress and Brown, who studied rhetorical strategies of

³Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC) was a Roman statesman, lawyer, scholar, and philosopher. In his famous work *Republic*, he describes a young statesman Scipio Africanus, who falls asleep and meets his ancestor, who takes him to the heavens. From that height, Scipio looks down upon the earth and understands many things about reality which so far have been inconceivable to him (Boenig, p. 31). For a detailed analysis see Lewis (1964, pp. 24–33).

⁴Anicius Manlius Severinus Boëthius (475–525) was a Roman senator, consul magister, and philosopher of the early 6th century. His *Consolation of Philosophy*, a treatise written in prison awaiting execution for treason, recounts Boëthius’ meeting with Lady Philosophy in a dream, who reveals to him that true wisdom lies not in the unstable world of earthly success, but the ultimate superiority of the mind. For a detailed analysis see Lewis (1964, pp. 75–88).

the *Divorce* and described Lewis's dream fantasy as a reminder to readers of their freedom to choose how to live, and Heaven and Hell as consequences of the many choices made throughout life (Jeffress and Brown 2017, p. 12). Wayne Martindale observes that "we choose Heaven or Hell, daily becoming someone more suited for Heaven or someone who wouldn't like the place even if it were offered" (Martindale 2005, p. 18). He also emphasized the idea that Heaven is "utter reality; Hell is nothing" and "Heaven is our natural home." Echoing this idea, Monika Hilder points out that Lewis's works are informed with the biblical worldview of the reality of Heaven as "humanity's true country" pulsating with cosmic joy. "In his fiction we encounter the unseen world eternally and experience it to be what it is: more real than the seen, transitory world" (Hilder 2018, pp. 99–100).

Many researchers are interested in Lewis's general ideas about fusing fiction and Christianity and his rhetoric strategies. Margaret Hannay concentrates on Lewis' theory of mythology, for whom myth is the very core of literature and theology alike: Lewis considered myths to be the "vehicle of the earliest sacred truth" conveying the very essence of historical events and is central to the Christian Faith (Hannay 1969, p. 14). Robert J. Palma analyzes Lewis's extensive use of analogies as illustrative examples, which render theological and moral truths more intelligible (Palma 2005, p.99).

A comprehensive study by Clyde Kilby of Lewis's works allows us to understand better Christian theology as presented in fiction by the former atheist and strict spiritualism that came to replace his straightforward materialism. Kilby's analysis shows that Lewis's writings starting with the first published novel *Pilgrim's Regress* were an overture to the *Great Divorce*, and one theme runs through all of them – the human soul in search of Heaven and love of God. Though his aesthetics had undergone a great transformation from depicting medieval-like allegorical figures with literally relevant charactonyms (Mr. Enlightenment, Mr. Mammon, the Clevers) to ordinary people whose conduct is judged through the lens of hell/heaven antithesis, one idea that remains unalterable is the necessity of active engagement in spiritual growth and moral choices even in the afterlife (Kilby 1964, p. 43).

To sum up, very few works have studied the complexity of relations of Deguileville's *Pèlerinages* with modern works, in our case *The Great Divorce*.

Material

The material for close reading is Lewis's *The Great Divorce* referred to in text quotations as *Divorce* and two of Deguileville's pilgrimages: *Le Pèlerinage de Vie Humaine* (The pilgrimage of human life) and *Le Pèlerinage de l'Âme* (The pilgrimage of the soul), the former being designated in the article as *La Vie*, the latter as *l'Âme*. Written in 1330 in France, *la Vie* was first printed in England by William Caxton in 1483. It is considered to have become the founding work of the dream vision genre in the literary history of England: it generated a wide array of prosaic and poetic works devoted to pilgrimages to holy places, knightly crusades,

or fantasy travels. The sequel to *La Vie* is *Le Pèlerinage de l'Âme* written in 1355; in medieval England it circulated in manuscripts, in 1413, it was translated into English but was published by William Caxton only in 1483 enhancing the influence of the genre on the medieval literature.

Methodology

The method of comparative analysis is employed in this research as we think it can expose to the best advantage the plenitude of links between the Old French texts and their ingenious revival by the 20th century author. With the help of this method we can grasp the interpretative nuances in the presentation of religious and moral conceptions in Lewis's literary piece and detect the influence of medieval thought. Put in an interpretative position, a researcher is to choose *tertium comparationis*, grounds for comparison, that concern both form and content, which participate in the construction of meaning. The chosen analogs must be interpretable in terms of the expression of a meaning that underlies the congruent excerpts.

As far as the form is concerned, we single out at least three levels for comparison: general framing of all the three texts, textual structure and structure of separate episodes. In the "lens" of content, the fundamental characteristic of the texts under analysis is the plexus of transcendent things with man's worldly experience. In this respect, we can delineate general "constitutive" elements of the Christian doctrine and see how they are represented in the medieval and modern works. Second, specific reifications of the abstract, general idea of Sin, governed by imaginative factors implicating linguistic and visual fantasy. And third, as Cassirer pointed out, "the process of abstraction can be carried out only with respect to such contents as have already been in some way defined and designated in language and thought" (Cassirer 1980, p. 280). This brings us to the analysis of a common system of symbolic forms as "material vehicles of signification," modes of objectification of a particular ideational content. Symbolic elements in a literary text have an implied value that may be inferred from intercultural and/or intertextual connections between a given symbol and the broad realm of intellectual thought, in which it is imbedded (religion, myth, philosophy, folklore, and literature) and which informs the symbol with multifarious overtones and connotations. The challenge for the researcher is to illuminate the venues of image creation and figurative representations common for both authors.

Summaries

Since the work by Lewis and those by Deguileville may not be well known to the reading public, I find it feasible at this point to present succinct summaries of the three pilgrimages.

C.S. Lewis's The Great Divorce

An unnamed Narrator is queuing up with a small group of people for a bus that must take them away from the Grey Town. From conversations on the bus, we understand that it is the world of the dead, and judging by the gruesome surroundings, it is either purgatory or hell. Their destination is the “outskirts” of Heaven. The bus lands on a cliff above the abyss on the edge of dawn. Travelers get off and find themselves in a paradisiacal landscape, which looks like the garden of Eden with groves of cedars (a biblical tree), a glistening river and mountains far off, with lions and panthers playing, unicorns coming to the sound of a horn and larks singing. The queerness of the landscape is its vastness, so that Hell looks like a pebble of the earthly world; and nature around is made of the unbendable and unbreakable matter. Light, too, is heavy “like solid blocks, intolerable of edge and weight” (*Divorce*, p. 128). On arriving, the travelers lose their physical form and become “phantoms,” or Ghosts, fully transparent in the light, “and imperfectly opaque when they stood in the shadow of some tree” (*Divorce*, p. 27).

Some travelers are so frightened that they rush back to the bus. Those who stay, see strange people coming to meet them. They are bright and heavy, and of no particular age. “The earth shook under their tread as their strong feet sank into the wet turf. Some were naked, some robed, and the robes did not disguise the massive grandeur of muscle and the radiant smoothness of flesh” (*Divorce*, p. 30). The narrator describes them as Spirits, or “Solid people,” or “Bright people.” The flesh they are made of is also different from the human flesh. They seem to be made of solid light and emanate it in every movement. They are coming from the mountains to meet their relatives or acquaintances and try to convince them to stay here in the land of everlasting joy, but the final choice is up to the newcomers.

In the following chapters the narrator becomes witness to several meaningful encounters between Ghosts, who incarnate diverse sins, vices or misinterpreted virtues and Spirits, the bearers of God’s truth. He sees a high-handed wife, whose social ambitions drove her husband to a nervous breakdown and early death and who is willing to regain control over him again; a desperate mother who has come to claim her son; people who have got so bogged down in earthly customs and values that could no longer tell good from evil; he also sees conversion of a sinner into the Bright Spirit when he triumphs over his sensual pleasures.

In the middle of the story, the Narrator meets George MacDonald⁵, a writer who was the first to have introduced a sixteen-year-old boy to Christianity and Holiness. MacDonald agrees to act as the Narrator’s guide, and the journey becomes easier with “the strong arm of the Teacher.” For the rest of the novel, each encounter is framed by MacDonald’s explanations, which illuminate profound theological principles and reveal Divine Providence informing each encounter.

The focal question is whether the visitors from Hell will open their hearts to God and stay in Heaven. For this, they must denounce the misconceptions of their

⁵George MacDonald was a real character, a 19th century fantasy writer, and a passionate defender of Christianity.

earthly experience, stop clinging to familiar patterns, and accept the eternal reality of God's truth: they will get spiritual bodies, solid and bright, but most important they will recast their souls. For this, they must take a long and hard uphill journey to the mountain top where the Sun is rising and God dwells, walking in the environment in which "the grass did not bend under their feet: even the dew drops were not disturbed ... a little flower was hard, not like wood or even like iron, but like diamond ... a leaf was heavier than a sack of coal" (*Divorce*, p. 28). Several ghosts reject the idea outright, in some cases the question remains unanswered, only one sinner has wholeheartedly accepted a new reality.

Just at the moment when he narrator thinks that at last he sees the blinding light coming from God, the teacher pronounces an enigmatic phrase, "Do not ask of a vision in a dream more than a vision in a dream can give." The narrator hears angels singing "Sleepers awake!" and wakes up into the here-and-now horrors of the Second World War in a cold room, "hunched on the floor beside a black and empty grate, the clock striking three, and the siren howling overhead" (*Divorce*, p. 128).

Guillaume de Deguileville's The Pilgrimage of Human Life

The tale starts with the narrator falling asleep and dreaming of the Heavenly city of Jerusalem, which he sees in the mirror and resolves to visit. "Me thowhte as I slepte that I was a pilgrime" (*La Vie*, p. 1). It is a tale about a peccant journey of a man from birth to death. The plot is traditional but intricately woven, with a great number of fateful encounters and characters (all allegorical figures), godly helpers, denizens of hell, and personal choices at each turn of fate. When he arrives there, he sees the streets of the city paved with gold, but the city is an impregnable citadel with Cherubyn, a porter, guarding the gate, a sword with two sharp edges in hand. At this moment the narrator sees a lady of great "fairnesse," dressed in a robe adorned with gold and enveloped with shining stars. She explains that she is Grace Dieu (Grace of God), "the daughter of Him, who is Lord over all," who helps everybody who seeks her help except those "that sinnen dedly," and that he cannot accomplish his mission without her assistance.

Grace Dieu furnishes the narrator with a pilgrim's equipment: "the scrippe (a satchel) and the burdoun (a staff)." The satchel called Faith is made of green silk sprinkled with the blood of martyrs who defended the true faith, and hung with twelve bells of silver, on which parts of scripture are inscribed about God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The staff (Hope) was made of the "tre of Sechim" (shittim wood) that does not rot or perish in the fire, on the end of which there is a shining mirror showing all countries in the world. She also provides him with a protective suit of armor: the girdle of "Righteoufnefs" (righteousness) that should protect the pilgrim from all carnal sins; a helmet called Temperance to defend the eyes and the heart from evil imaginings; a breastplate named Force; a gorget called Sobriety that restrains a person from overeating or speaking abusively; gauntlets to cover wounded hands; but the best weapon of all is the sword called "Justice" that fights evil in others and one's own evil inclinations, which should be kept in the scabbard named Humility; and finally, the shield

whose name is Wisdom or Understanding, which effectually protects all the rest of the armor. The pilgrim complains bitterly that he is too weak to bear the heavy armor. Though Grace Dieu is irritated she brings a “wenche,” Memory, with the eyes in the back of her head, to carry the armor and they set out on their way.

Figure 1. *The Pilgrim at a Crossroads*



Source: Cust 1859, p. 33.

The second part concerns the journey and fateful encounters. At a crossroads, the pilgrim sees two characters and two roads divided by a hedge of thick, prickly bushes. To the right, sits a man, called “Labor or ocupacioun”, weaving and reweaving a mat. He explains that only labor “yiueth the bred to the folk with oute which the kinrede of Adam had er this ben dede for hunger” [gives bread to the folk without which Adam’s kindred would have been long dead of hunger] (*La Vie*, p. 101). On the other side sits a woman, Idleness, playing with a glove in one hand and with the other hand tucked under her arm. She promises the pilgrim green woods with violets, much sweet music, bodily pleasures and a thousand other amusements (Figure 1). The pilgrim is lured to this path where he meets all Deadly Sins and their companions: Sloth, Pride, Envy, etc., They all attack the

pilgrim, try to strangle and smite him, take away his staff and leave him “half ded and litel lyfe in the bodi.”

At this moment, he hears a voice coming from the cloud, “Now up wrecheche coward now up!” Grace Dieu returns the staff and the pilgrim resumes his journey. Eventually, the pilgrim arrives at the tempestuous sea (representing life) and sees many pilgrims trying to cross it. On the bank there is a Hunter (Satan) who tries to catch people with hooks, nets, cords, traps and snares. Having the staff that cannot sink, the pilgrim steps into the sea and is carried along avoiding the traps set. Sweet Repentance comes upon him, and the pilgrim wishes he could correct all his mistakes. He wishes he had his armor with him; regrets that he has taken the wrong road, laments that he will never see the holy city of Jerusalem.

Right then he sees a ship with a white dove on the mast and Grace Dieu descending from the vessel. “The mast is the cros of jhesu Crist and the wynd is the holi gost” (*La Vie*, p. 192), which may lead the ship to heaven, but for this he must join some monastery. She baptizes the pilgrim in the water flowing from the rock and brings him on board the Ship named Religion which takes the traveler to a monastery where he is visited by Old Age and Infirmity, who are heralds of the coming death. Just before the approach of Death, he finally arrives at the gate to the heavenly city of Jerusalem, but learns he cannot enter it before he pays his debts in Purgatory. At this point the dreamer is awakened by the bell for *Matins* at his monastery in Chaalis.

Guillaume de Deguileville's The Pilgrimage of the Soul

The narration opens with the protagonist falling asleep. In his dream he sees his own death, his soul parting from his body and being taken by his Guardian Angel to the court of the archangel Michael, who is appointed by “Souerayne Kyng [Jesus] to yeue iugement & do iustyce to al maner of peple” [sovereign king to give judgment and justice to all manner of people] (*L'Âme*, p. 5r). The soul is to be judged, the sins and merits weighed on the balance. The soul is relentlessly followed by horrible Satan, who wants to drag it down to hell and acts as a prosecutor at the trial. Deguileville gives a vivid description of the trial very much like those in earthly courts with judge disqualification because he is “nought indifferent, but frend to one partye;” [not unbiased but friend to one party] a jury consisting of saints that represent all layers of society (gentry, clerks, hermits and monks, wedded folk and married women, widows and maidens), and an adversary system.

The Guardian states that the pilgrim has a good record, because he kept his faith to this last end, never parted with his “skryp and burdon” as befits a good pilgrim. He deserves to be saved and to be received in to “the Souerayne Cyte of Heuently Ierusalem”, which he has sought so long. The Satan claims that the pilgrim is a sinner, because he has continually day by day broken the Lord's Commandments by never taking the right way of virtue and always following paths of sin. In his own defense the pilgrim blames his poverty, man's natural inclination to sin and the wickedness of the world.

When the balance is produced, the pilgrim lays his scrip and burdon that weigh but little and the devil lays such a long list of accusations that it turns the scales. However, Mercy obtains a charter of pardon, which outweighs his sins and the defendant is sentenced to expiation of his sins in purgatory. On his way there he meets all kinds of sinners – horrible, deformed, and maimed figures guilty of cardinal sins. Proud and disdainful sinners have horns; the envious have eyes hanging on their cheeks. Killers and murderers have teeth like boars, and avaricious souls have hooked nails.

After purgation, the soul is taken downward into the depth of the Earth, a place full of awful stench and darkness – Hell. There he sees Lucifer now called ‘Tenebre’ (darkness), who is sitting in a burning chair bound with fiery chains and a legion of devils honoring Lucifer and torturing souls in most horrifying ways: The avaricious are eaten by wolves; corrupt judges are flayed; the enemies and pursuers of the Holy Church are thrown into a pit full of vermin and brimstone. Finally, he is taken to Eden where he sees the dry tree and the green tree, and the angel tells him the story of the apple and mankind’s salvation. Now the traveler is invisible because his soul is separated from his physical body and is immaterial. Finally, the angel explains the essence of Holy Trinity drawing an unexpected analogy with all terrestrial objects that have three dimensions (breadth, width, and depth), but are one. The Angel wishes the soul a happy reunion with his body and departs; the pilgrim, awakes in his own bed and understands that he has slept for no more than three hours.

Comparative Analysis

Creating fictional narratives which look like real life experiences in order to put people wise to the Christian doctrine and explicate the ideas underlying sometimes very complicated religious imagery is an old tradition successfully revived by C.S. Lewis in *The Great Divorce*, which manifests all attributes of the medieval genre. All the three tales are set forth as dreams. True, there is no falling asleep in *the Great Divorce*; nevertheless, the novel ends with the traditional awakening. The literary pieces present an account of pilgrimage in the first person singular; in the *Divorce* and *l’Âme*, travelers become invisible, because all materiality is left on the earth. All the pilgrims have guides – the Angel, Grace Dieu, and the Teacher – who explain the meaning of events they witness or participate in. There is an amazing congruence of scenes, images, themes and rhetoric, which is far from being accidental. The narrative structure consists of small bits of experience, a mosaic, which taken as a whole embody the meaning of a more complex idea, in this case the “mystic tenets” of Christianity.

All the three texts have a dialog structure, that is they are organized as verbal exchanges: the pilgrim speaks with personifications of sins, with Grace Dieu or her companions from whom he seeks explanations to many theological concepts; the narrator in the *Divorce* carries on a dialogue with the Teacher trying to understand the essence of what is going on; to a greater part, the fabric of the novel consists of lengthy conversations between Ghosts and Spirits. The organization of

these exchanges is complex and two-layered. They have a surface structure with a very elaborate arrangement of utterances according to the status of speakers, relationships between them and the topic of the colloquy. More important, dialogs have an additional dimension, a deeper layer representing a religious ideation system, whose conventions must be inferred by the reader and important theological conceptualizations must be arrived at. To enhance the explanatory power of dialogs, the author gives clues by using repetition of meaningful sentences or words. For example, the Big Ghost repeats the phrase “get my rights” in the talk with his vis-à-vis nine times, which implicates cognitively significant content: mutually exclusive interpretations of justice and reward in earthly and heavenly life and a difficult choice the Big Ghost must make between accepting God’s laws or rejecting them.

Common General Themes

The themes generally present in religious writings are baptizing by water, purging by fire, pain and suffering, penitence and redemption, and some other. Unfortunately, they cannot be indicative of the innermost affinity of the literary works. We should look for specific imagery that cannot be ascribed to the universality of religious rhetoric, for specific interpretations whose congruity points to a close derivational relationship. In literature, the content acquires a meaning in virtue of the literary form. *Pilgrimage* is the rhetorical and narrative framing of the three works and the name for the genre, within which fictional characters move from place to place, from one event to another, and their actions and encounters are interpreted in the light of the Christian doctrine.

Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage was common practice in the Medieval world. “The medieval man was by no means static. Kings, armies, prelates, diplomats, merchants, and wandering scholars were continually on the move. Thanks to the popularity of pilgrimages even women went far afield” (Lewis 1964, p. 143). The concept of pilgrimage is informed with several meanings. It was part of religious devotion when people of different walks of life went on penitentiary journeys either to local holy places or to the city of Jerusalem in the hope to obtain forgiveness and salvation. Pilgrimage remained one of the most important phenomena of medieval religiosity and practice and endured until the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century (Whalen 2011, p. xi). Pilgrimage was an allegorical representation of human life from birth to death. (In terms of modern cognitive science, it is a cognitive metaphor *Life is a journey*). The pilgrim in medieval literature turned from an earthly traveler into a heavenly wanderer, moving from bodily death to eternal life, a most popular and captivating image of the genre, which was picked up and developed by C.S. Lewis. So in the early years of Christianity, pilgrimage became a symbol representing both earthly life and after-life (Bayley 1912), in which souls try to gain insight into the Divine Providence.

In all the three works, pilgrimage is a unifying context for the actions of pilgrims, ghosts, souls and supernal characters.

Ascent

Another idea unifying the literary pilgrimages is that of *ascent*. The upward movement as a path to salvation permeates the three works, in which various types of ascent deliberated in Christian writings are represented. In *La Vie*, when the way to the heavenly city of Jerusalem is blocked, many folk become birds and fly skyward, others gather feathers and make wings in order to fly in to the city; still others use the ladder (*La Vie*, p. 2). “The Ladder was a favorite emblem of the roadway of the Gods, because it depicted a gradual ascent in goodness, a progress step by step and line upon line towards Perfection” (Bayley 1912, v. I, p. 32). In many religions, ascent to salvation is associated with mountains or hills, on whose tops Gods dwell. Mount Meru, the Indian holy mountain, was said to have three peaks composed of gold, silver, and iron and was venerated as the dwelling place of the Trinity: Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva (Bayley 1912, p. 36). In modern literature, too, ascent is a way to perfection and greatness. Enough is to mention Henry Longfellow’s poem *Excelsior* (ever higher) or Ernest Hemingway’s *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. Lewis chooses mountain as a road to salvation, which newcomers must surmount.

“Greenness and light ... very far away I could see what might be a range of mountains. Sometimes I could make out in it steep forests, far withdrawing valleys, and even mountain cities perched on inaccessible summits. The height was so enormous. Light brooded on the top of it” (*Divorce*, p. 29).

Walking uphill proves difficult. “The grass, hard as diamonds to my unsubstantial feet, made me feel as if I were walking on wrinkled rock, and I suffered pains like those of the mermaid in Hans Andersen” (*Divorce*, p. 29). But for saved souls the Divine summit becomes more accessible. The Bright people are constantly on the move up the mountain, but none has yet reached the top. Taken together, pilgrimage and ascent are allegorical representations of penitence and redemption.

Salvation

The three pilgrimages describe different ways of salvation. In *La Vie*, the pilgrim is rescued by the ship of Religion, a parallel with a boat the disciples of Christ boarded to cross the Sea of Galilee. In *L'Âme*, it is a *Chartre of Pardon* granted by Jesus to those who have repented and decided to amend their lives. “Of helle peyne I graunt them ful relees” [of hellish pain I grant them full release] (*L'Âme*, p.28r).

The only case of salvation in Lewis’s work is the dark oily Ghost with a red lizard, which represents the cardinal sin of carnal lust. The Ghost is bent on getting rid of his perverse inclinations, tries to silence the lizard, but in vain. The flaming Angel appears and offers to kill the evil thing saying to the hesitant Ghost

that there is no other day, no other moment, only here and now. The word 'kill' is repeated fifteen times within a short space. The Ghost finally gives his permission to kill the tempter, but suffers great pain thereat.

“Next moment the Ghost gave a scream of agony such as I never heard on Earth. The Burning One closed his crimson grip on the reptile: twisted it, while it bit and writhed, and then flung it, broken backed, on the turf” (*Divorce*, p. 101).

Salvation through pain and suffering in the cleansing fire of purgatory is described in Deguileville's *L'Âme*. The soul of the pilgrim laments:

O swete Crist, Ther is no tonge may tellen, ne wryter descryue the tormentes & the peynes that I there suffred. In euery parte and in euery side the fire was hote brennyng, within and withoute. Ne ther is no mortal creature that wolde suppose or trowen that ony fyre myght be half so hote. And else shold I nought, as me semyd, neuer haue endured the tenthe parte of the peyne. (*L'Âme*, p. 37v).

[Oh, sweet Christ, no tongue may tell, nor any writer describe the torments and pain that I suffered there. In every part, on every side the fire was burning hot within and without. Neither is there any mortal creature that would suppose and believe that any fire might be half so hot. And neither have I, as it seemed to me, ever endured the tenth part of such pain].

The moment the bearer of sin is killed, the Ghost is transformed into a bright, strong man with a golden head as big as the Angel, and the lizard turns into a great stallion, silvery white with mane and tail of gold. The young man leaps upon the horse's back and they are off.

“They were like a shooting star far off on the green plain, and soon among the foothills of the mountains. Then, still like a star, they were winding up, scaling what seemed impossible steeps, and quicker every moment, till near the dim brow of the landscape, they vanished, bright themselves, into the rose-brightness of that everlasting morning.” (*Divorce*, p. 103).

It is of interest to note that this episode is based mainly on pre-Christian pagan symbolism. Snow-white horses with a mane of gold, which figure in numerous fairy tales, legends and myths, were believed to know the will and plans of Gods or other heavenly powers (Bayley 1912, v. II, p. 38). Lewis's description of the stallion is very much like those in tales – “a most magnificent big and strong horse with eyes that flashed like lightning, which could leap up into the air as high as the clouds” (Bayley 1912, p. 41). Christianity absorbed the symbol of the white horse. St George is always represented riding a white horse; the second coming of Jesus Christ will, it is believed, be upon a white horse:

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God, And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses” (NIV 1984, Revelation 19: 11-14, p. 877).

The lizard was an object of worship among some European nations as the bearer of “Logos or Divine Wisdom”. There was a popular superstition that the Lizard conceived through the ear and brought forth through the mouth. Pope Felix⁶ believed that the Virgin Mary conceived of the Holy Ghost through her ear (Bayley 1912, v. II, p. 68). Though Lewis transformed the Lizard from a bearer of wisdom to a carrier of sin, he kept the original way of impressing on the sinner the joys of bodily pleasures – whispering in his ear.

Representations of Sins

Apostasy – Will you Come with me to the Mountains?

The question is addressed to the Episcopal Ghost by his former classmate from seminary (Dick), who is now a White Spirit. The bishop gave up his faith for the sake of some newfangled ideas that earned him popularity, brought a bishopric, increased sales of his books, in which he rejected the doctrine of the Resurrection and denied the existence of Hell and Heaven.

The issue of heresy is as old as Christianity itself and is a usual practice during ecclesiastical divisions such as the separation of Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches of 1054 or a break of Protestantism from Catholicism in 16th century England. However, Lewis describes a more dangerous enemy – apostasy, which eats away at the very foundations of faith from within. It was first indicated by Jan Komensky in his *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart*. Komensky’s pilgrim enters a church that is named ‘Christianity’ and sees a veiled chancel, “the truth of Christianity” from which light is coming. To the pilgrim’s astonishment, many men pass by the sanctuary and do not enter it:

“I saw also that many who were learned in scripture—priests, bishops, and others who thought highly of their holiness — went around the sanctuary; some, indeed, looked in, but did not enter; and this also appeared mournful unto me” (Komensky 1901, p. 297).

In *La Vie*, Heresy is described as an old woman with fagot on her neck and large scissors in her hand, who wants to fashion the faith to her liking. She always holds contradictory opinions and upsets Scripture by viewing it wrongly with half blind eyes (Figure 2). She is after pilgrims’ satchels with holy texts, which she wants to cut and burn.

The representations like those in Figure 2 were considered by Lewis ‘monstrous’ and did not conform with the 20th century aesthetics. His heretical bishop is a seemly, well-disposed, smooth-spoken rhetorician. He is a representative of “liberal theology,” who plunges into certain current ideas because they seem modern and successful, looks for new angles to Scripture and finally reaches a point where he “no longer believes the Faith” (*Divorce*, p. 41). The bishop accuses his old friend and disputant of narrow mindedness, timidity,

⁶The bishop of Rome from 5 January 269 to his death on 30 December 274.

and stagnation, but Dick is not taken in by the bishop's demagogical rhetoric of "freedom of opinion," "a free wind of inquiry," and "indefinite progress" because he knows only too well what Clyde Kilby describes as "diabolical cleverness" that our generation has seen only too much of and which turned to the destruction of old values" (Kilby 1995, p. 11), and then to annihilating all values entirely. The White Spirit invites the ghost "to come with him to the mountains" – the words that acquire spiritually significant meaning of "repent and believe." The invitation does not promise an idle and leisurely stroll: "It will hurt at first, until your feet are hardened. Reality is harsh to the feet of shadows. But will you come?" (*Divorce*, p. 42). However, the ghost bishop is not willing to see the "face of God" and come face to face with the truth. He finds a pretext to leave (he is to present a paper to the Theological Society) and hurries to the bus.

Figure 2. *Heresy is Cutting Pilgrims' Satchels with Scripture*



Source: Cust 1859, p. 48.

Avarice

Covetousness is represented by Ikey, a shrewd businessman who would like to start a little business in Hell for a "nice little profit" and be a public benefactor as well. He goes on this trip not for "health reasons," but in search of some real commodity that he will be able to sell and create a demand for it in the Grey town. He finds this commodity – golden apples growing on a tree. The very process of collecting apples might prove fatal to Ikey, but that does not stop him.

"Half a dozen apples had fallen round the Ghost and on it, for a few minutes, he was unable to rise. He lay whimpering, nursing his wounds. He tried to fill his pockets with the apples. Of course it was useless. He gave up the idea of a pocketful: two would have to do. He gave up the idea of two, he would take one, the largest. He gave up that hope. He was not looking for the smallest one. He was trying to find if there was one small enough to carry" (*Divorce*, p. 51).

Deguileville describes this kind of greediness when he introduces a six-arm figure of personified vice – Avarice – whose “ydole and mawmet” is the penny of gold and of silver. Avarice knows how to convert paises (French money) in order “five coins make become six,” how to sell grain at double the price and how to sell Time weighing it on a balance. In addition to the allegorical vice, Deguileville depicts greedy people trying to cross a tempestuous sea (Figure 3). They had their feet above water: “being so heavily laden that they are hump-backed with carrying the bag of Avarice which is not convenient at sea, as the great weight plunges the head of him, who holds it below, so that he cannot swim” (*La Vie*, p. 177).

A similar visual picture of greediness, the same crouching position with arms stretched down is employed by Lewis when he speaks of Ikey, who tries to carry his burdensome treasure. “Actually holding the smallest of the apples in his hands, lame from his hurts, and the weight bending him double, he set out on his *via dolorosa* to the bus, carrying his torture” (*Divorce*, p. 51).

Figure 3. *Righteous and Sinful People are Crossing the Sea of Life*



Source: Cust 1859, p.49.

Pride

Another cardinal sin presented in several episodes and in several manifestations is Pride. According to MacDonald, “in a spoiled child ... Ye call it the Sulks. But among adults, such a feeling has a hundred fine names — Achilles’ wrath⁷ and Coriolanus’ grandeur⁸, Revenge and Injured Merit, and Self-Respect,

⁷In Greek mythology, Achilles is a hero of the Trojan War. His wrath becomes the central theme of the Iliad. The Trojans’ leader Hector kills Achilles’ companion and friend Patroclus. Enraged, Achilles joins the fight killing many men always seeking out Hector. Finally, Achilles finds his enemy, kills him and drags his corpse by its heels behind his chariot.

and Tragic Greatness, and Proper Pride” (*Divorce*, p. 70). There are sins that on the face of it look like virtues, but actually are transgressions of God’s laws; one such sin that Lewis calls “Injured Merit” is personified by the Big Ghost: a person, who considers himself and his actions flawless, is guilty of vainglory.

Righteousness – “Put up Thy Sword into the Sheath”

The words belong to Jesus Christ addressed to Simon Peter, who tried to save him from arrest (NIV 1984, John 18:11, p. 766), but are interpreted somewhat differently from the Bible in *La Vie*. In the former, they refer to the cup of woe given to Jesus by his heavenly Father that he has to drain to the bottom; in the latter they refer to God’s armor – the sword of justice and the scabbard of Humility. In his novel, Lewis draws not on the biblical, but on Deguileville’s interpretation.

The illuminating case of Pride is the Big Ghost, a quarrelsome, pugnacious man from the Grey City, who is met by a jocund, youthful spirit (Len), who in his earthly life had worked under the Big man and killed his co-worker Jack just because he was half mad. The Big man cannot understand why “a bloody murderer” should live in Heaven only because he “made a poor mouth” at the last moment⁹; and he, a decent man, should be walking the streets in the grey town and live in a place like a pigsty.

“I gone straight all my life. I don’t say I was a religious man and I don’t say I had no faults, far from it. But I done my best all my life, see? I done my best by everyone, that’s the sort of chap I was. I never asked for anything that wasn’t mine by rights. If I wanted a drink I paid for it and if I took my wages I done my job, see?... I’m asking for nothing but my rights. ...That’s just what I say. I haven’t got my rights. And what I don’t see is why I should be put below a bloody murderer like you” (*Divorce*, p. 33).

This is an ingenious, transferred to the 20th-century reality illustration-interpretation of the medieval doctrine of self-righteousness. In *La Vie*, the pilgrim is equipped by Grace Dieu with a “sword of justice/righteousness”. In addition, the pilgrim is given the scabbard named “Humility” and instructed to keep the sword in a sheath. An explanation follows: when a person thinks that he has acted uprightly, he must remember that he is just a sinful mortal and is directed by God’s will, so he should keep his good doings hidden, his righteousness restrained, only then will he be “commended and exalted.” But if he brandishes his sword “unsheathed and displayed before all,” then he commits a sin, “for the proud folk full of boasting seek nothing but vain glory” (*La Vie*, p. 66).

Besides, Humility is one of the ways of ascent. “And what doth the Lord require of thee?/ To act justly, and to love mercy, /and to walk humbly with thy God” (NIV 1984, Micah 6:8, p.659). Len explains that he hated the Big man in his

⁸Coriolanus is one of Shakespeare’s characters. A patrician general, who has fought and won many battles, whose extreme pride and self-confidence became the cause of his fall from power and banishment from Rome.

⁹According to religious doctrine, sinners are forgiven even if they repent “at their lyues ende” [at the end of their lives].

earthly life, “had been murdering him in his heart, deliberately, for years,” but now he is ready to be his humble servant because without him the Big Man will never make it to the mountains. The Big man should ask God not for justice but for Charity (mercy), which is unacceptable for the Big ghost, who repeats, “I only want my rights. I’m not asking for anybody’s bleeding charity.” Len retorts, “Then do. At once. Ask for the Bleeding Charity” (*Divorce*, p. 34). This can only make sense if the underpinning Christian doctrine is comprehended. A lengthy and unexpected explication is given by Deguileville in *L’Âme*. Christ’s Mystic Body is divided into three parts: one part is in glorious Heaven, another on Earth, the third is in Purgatory. Yet these three parts are truly one body held together by the treble bond – Faith, Hope and Charity. Faith binds people on earth. Those who are in Purgatory exist in Hope. But there is no need in Heaven either for Faith or Hope, only Love and Charity, whose bond never changes. This explanation is in full conformity with the Bible: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (NIV 1984, Titus 3:5, p. 845).

The Big Ghost is taken aback: he seeks justice, has been trying to act righteously all his life, but absolutely does not accept humility and all-embracing mercy. He proclaims, “I’d rather be damned than go along with you. I came here to get my rights, see? If they’re too fine to have me without you, I’ll go home... Damn and blast the whole pack of you” (*Divorce*, p. 36). In the end, The Big Ghost rejects a Heaven where murderers are forgiven and righteous people are not rewarded, and whimpering and grumbling makes off for the bus.

Sic Transit Gloria Mundi (Thus Passes World Glory)

Another variety of pride is a case of a once famous artist meeting his old colleague, who is now a Bright person. The Ghost seeing beautiful landscapes wants to paint them, but the Spirit explains that paintings are of no use here:

“When you painted on earth - at least in your earlier days - it was because you caught glimpses of Heaven in the earthly landscape. The success of your painting was that it enabled others to see the glimpses too. But here you are having the thing itself. It is from here that the messages came. There is no good telling us about this country, for we see it already.” (*Divorce*, p. 80).

The Spirit reminds his friend that he sank low when he became interested in nothing but his own reputation. To his great disappointment, the artist learns that distinguished artists of the past are not of high repute any more in this country. “But they aren’t distinguished – no more than anyone else. Don’t you understand? The Glory flows into everyone, and back from everyone: like light and mirrors. But the light’s the thing” (*Divorce*, p. 83). The artist is horrified that he is already completely forgotten on the earth. “You couldn’t get five pounds for any picture of mine or even of yours in Europe or America to-day. We’re dead out of fashion” (*Divorce*, p. 83). In Heaven, souls should stop seeking earthly vain honors. That was the last straw, vainglory gets the upper hand of the ghost: he must go back to his friends, he must write an article and a manifesto, he must start a periodical,

they must have publicity, after all it was his duty to the future of Art. And without listening to the Spirit's reply, the specter vanishes.

Another story is told by the Teacher about a certain Sir Archibald, who in his earthly life had been interested in nothing but Survival. He had written a whole shelf-full of books about it. It grew to be his only occupation –experimenting, lecturing, running a magazine, and travelling looking for proofs. In good time, he died and came here, but Heaven was of no use to him at all. Everyone here had “survived” already. “Nobody took the least interest in the question. There was nothing more to prove. His occupation was clean gone. In the end he went away” (*Divorce*, p. 71).

Counterfeits of Love

“And to Him must we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.” These are the words from the Apostle Paul’s letter to Romans in which he explains God’s plan of salvation for all humankind. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (NIV 1984, Romans 12:2, p. 803). The idea is explained by Patrick Simon “Men must take their hearts out of the hands of the world, nothing and nobody should claim their affections. Loosed of all earthly bonds, they can devote their lives to God” (Simon 1668, p. 51). Lewis’s central concern is with the choice between love of God and other kinds of love, which he calls “counterfeits”. Love of God means to forsake one’s earthly possessions, family, and occupations for the sake of divine love. Those who are steeped in earthly concerns and systems of value cannot “enter into the kingdom of God”.

Ita Fit Gloria Caelo (Thus Comes Celestial Glory)

In Heaven, glory and honors can be bestowed on ordinary people who led a virtuous life and now know only love of God. The Dreamer sees a woman, a certain Sarah Smith, the only character in the novel mentioned by her last name, who was a mode of goodness in her past life, “in whose love every person, every beast, and bird that came near her had its place” (*Divorce*, p. 108) and who is treated now like a queen or a saint.

First came bright Spirits, who danced and scattered flowers – soundlessly falling, lightly drifting flowers. ... They are like emeralds¹⁰....Then, on the left and right, at each side of the forest avenue, came youthful shapes, boys upon one hand, and girls upon the other. Between them went musicians: and after these a lady in whose honor all this was being done. There was the illusion of a great and shining train that followed her across the happy grass (*Divorce*, pp. 107–108).

¹⁰The comparison of the Bright people in her escort to emeralds reflects the medieval idea of the eight worlds of heaven. The fifth world “ful thick sette of grene emarawdes” [thickly set with green emeralds] is for the prophets and Patriarchs, of which Saint John Baptist is the Principal (*L’Âme*).

The narrator remembers light and the unbearable beauty of Sarah's face whom he mistakes for the Virgin, but it is a modest housewife whose virtue elevated her in the afterlife to the position co-equal with that of saints. The Teacher explains that fame in this country and fame on Earth are two quite different things. Verbal descriptions forming visual fantasies are important for both authors. We find a non-accidental similarity in the description of Sarah Smith and Grace Dieu in *La Vie*.

She [Grace Dieu – N. D.] seemed to the pilgrim the daughter of some emperor, some mighty king or governor, or of that Lord, whose power is above all. This gracious Lady, most gentle and virtuous, was clad in a robe of pure gold, having a girdle of green tissue, profusely adorned with carbuncles of great brilliancy. On her breast she wore a brooch, such as none had ever seen before; for in the enamel shone a bright star, which cast its beams on every side, such was the abundance of light. From her bosom there came a dove white as snow, with its wings spread out, and playing round about her. On her head was a golden diadem, encircled with radiant stars all about. Full mighty was He, who had set it upon her head, and made it of great riches and great price (*La Vie*, pp. 4–5).

The two ladies are incommensurable in their status: one is the daughter of the “Lord above all others”; the other is an unassuming housewife. Sarah gives up herself to God and becomes equal to Grace Dieu in spiritual grandeur: both are carrying light of the Faith and God's love to anybody who craves for it. “Love shone not from her [Sarah's] face only, but from all her limbs, as if it were some liquid in which she had just been bathing” (*Divorce*, p. 110).

Sarah tries to explain to her former husband the difference between earthly and heavenly love. People love each other “in a poor sort of way, what they call love down there was mostly the craving to be loved. When people have no need for one another they can begin to love truly” (*Divorce*, p. 113). However, now that Sarah is in love with God, she is not lonely at all: all her thoughts and affections are placed in God. But her husband cannot appreciate this kind of love, he is immersed in self-pity and pampers his wounded pride.

Possessive Love

All other kinds of love are considered ungodly surrogates of everlasting love of God. The next episode is the most painful and controversial. It is a meeting between Pam, who has come to see her beloved son, Michael, who died early, and she never got over this tragedy, and her brother Reginald, who tries to explain that she is not yet ready to meet Michael, and Michael is not yet ready to meet his mother because she will be totally invisible to him. She needs to build up herself and her new body. When she becomes solid enough for Michael to perceive her, they will meet. This may happen if she learns to want someone else besides Michael. “It's only the little germ of a desire for God that we need to start the process” (*Divorce*, p. 91). Pam is shocked: for her being a Mother is the highest and holiest calling:

“I don’t believe in a God who keeps mother and son apart. I believe in a God of Love. No one has a right to come between me and my son. Not even God. Tell Him that to His face. I want my boy, and I mean to have him. He is mine, do you understand? Mine, mine, mine, for ever and ever” (*Divorce*, p. 95).

Though storge love is considered pervert and corrupt, Pam says no one could love her son more than she did; she had lived only for his memory all these years, kept his room exactly as he’d left it; kept anniversaries, would not leave the house where they had lived. For Pam, it was the way to preserve and cherish the memory of her son. Reginald calls it “the tyranny of the past.” In the end, Pam says that she would rather go back to Hell with her son, than stay in Heaven without him.

Coincident Verbal Visualizations

Dual-Figure Personages

Visual imagery created by the word plays an important role in all the three literary pieces. We find interesting parallelisms, one of which is “dual figures.” In *La Vie*, it is the depiction of allegorical figures of Pride and her daughter Flattery, and in *The Divorce* of Sarah’s husband and his inflated self-esteem. These personages look like one person with two bodies, but upon closer examination they happen to be two persons symbolically linked with each other.

In *La Vie*, the pilgrim meets two figures one bearing the other on her neck “the one that was borne was so great and so swollen that her greatness passed measure. It was not work of nature as argued her shape” (*La Vie*, p. 111). The two figures are Pride and Flattery (Figure 4).

“The one, who was carried, held a thick stick and looked fierce as a lion; on her forehead there was a horn, and a trumpet in her hand. She had spurs on her feet, showing she was mistress of the one who carried her: she made her go where she liked, and held a mirror, so that she might see her face reflected in it” (*La Vie*, p. 111).

In *The Divorce*, it is the Dwarf and his inflated ego full of hypocritical self-respect and self-pity tied to each other by a chain. The narrator sees

“a great tall Ghost, horribly thin and shaky, who seemed to be leading on a chain another Ghost no bigger than an organ-grinder’s monkey. The taller Ghost reminded me of a seedy actor of the old school. I realized then that they were one person, or rather that both were the remains of what had once been a person” (*Divorce*, p. 111).

Figure 4. *The Pilgrim Meets Pride, who is Riding Flattery*

Source: Maddocks1993, p. 62.

The narrator understands that the dwarf is a real person and the theatrical figure is his overblown egotism.

Common Symbolism

Non-Religious Symbols

Now we will consider the allegorical use of chess by both writers and its symbolic significance. Metaphorical aspects of chess were formulated in the 13th century homiletic writings: the world is likened to a chessboard and parallels are found between human activities and names and powers of chess figures:

The world resembles a chessboard which is chequered white and black, the colors showing the two conditions of life and death, or praise and blame. The chessmen are men of this world who have a common birth, occupy different stations and hold different titles in this life, who contend together, and finally have a common fate which levels all ranks (Murray 1913, p. 580).

In *La Vie*, the chess metaphor is used to describe the loss of one's own free will by the example of greedy people. The pilgrim sees a beautiful church in a plain located besides a checker (chessboard), where there are chessmen both big and small. He sees rooks and knights and the king. Each of them has a sword which

seems to the pilgrim a monstrous thing. Their countenances are fierce. They are heading for the church willing to beat it down. The king is at the head and aims at the foundation. Of bishops' crosses he has made pick-axes, sharp and crooked. Avarice explains that all of them had land which belonged to them by right. But Avarice cannot bear it that they have not grasped it from other people. "So j sende them to this cherche that is nygh here cheker for to delue and bineme" [So I send them to the church that is near the chessboard to delve and take it over] (*La Vie*, pp. 139–141). The king who should defend churches turns into a churl, who destroys what his ancestors have left him because he is bewitched by Avarice and fulfills only her commandments. The passage renders a moral judgment: it demonstrates in a spectacular way that a person who succumbs to the temptation of sin cannot any longer act of his own free will and becomes a plaything in other forces' game. Major figures such as king and his knights become mere pawns.

The *Divorce* ends with the chess metaphor, which is surprising because it sorts ill with the quintessential idea of free will.

I saw a great assembly of gigantic forms all motionless, all in deepest silence, standing forever about a little silver table and looking upon it. And on the table there were little figures like chessmen who went to and fro doing this and that. And I knew that each chessman was the idolum or puppet representative of some one of the great presences that stood by, who are their immortal souls (*Divorce*, p. 126).

The question arises whether chess pieces can have free will to make their own choices or their choices are predetermined by some *deus absconditus* (numen) or, which is worse, the movements and powers of chessmen are limited and ordained by the constraining rules of the game. This question remains unanswered.

Religious Symbols

Mirror

The mirror is mentioned only once in *The Divorce*, though the religious Mirror symbolism is very important. A very short phrase by Paul – "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully" (NIV 1984, 1 Corinthians 13:12, pp. 813–814) – refers us to James's parable of *Two Mirrors*. There are two mirrors – a dim one and a clear mirror. If we look at ourselves in a dim mirror, we see our reflection, but don't perceive the essence, we see a part of a whole. Only a perfect mirror gives us full self-knowledge and reveals the truth about ourselves.

It is quite logical that Lewis places the mirror on the bus which brings travelers to Heaven: they can cast the last glance at themselves before they are exposed to God's truth though not all of them are ready to embrace it. Lewis mentions the mirror as if in passing: "Then – there was a mirror on the end wall of the bus – I caught sight of my own" (*Divorce*, p. 25). The mirror marks the border between Hell and Heaven, self-deception and self-knowledge, pervert perception of oneself and true reality.

In *La Vie*, the mirror is referred to several times under different circumstances. First, the pilgrim sees the holy city of Jerusalem in the mirror, which "stirs" him to

pilgrimage. Then, he gets a staff with two mirrors, one of which is Jesus Christ, who is called a “Mirror without a spot,” in which everyone can see his own image reflected. Whoever looks constantly into it shall never fall into wicked steps. The other mirror is of the one of whom Christ was born, that is the Virgin Mary,

“the glistering carbuncle that illuminates the night of the world, by which all that have been led astray are brought back to the right way. By which have been illuminated all that have been in the darkness. By which have been raised the fallen down.” (*La Vie*, p. 56)

The pilgrim is explained the significance of the Mirror. Though the glass is small, there “inhabits wholly your visage.” But if you want to know better yourself and break the mirror into many parts, you will see many different aspects of your face, but never apperceive it wholly as when the mirror was “hool wher inne ther was but oon visage” [whole wherein there was but one face] (*La Vie*, p. 49). The mirror reveals the truth about oneself because it is “resouenance and acordaunce” to that what men see.

In *L'Âme* the same interpretation is given by the Angel. He explains to the Pilgrim that many people in their earthly life do not want to see “their owne self in a good myrroure” and perceive in it foul spots and deformities in themselves. When they come to a merchant and see their foulness in the mirror, they instantly throw the mirror back in the basket (*L'Âme*, p. 37r).

Apple Tree and Hedge

The Apple tree is an inalienable part of Paradise. In mystic literature the apple-tree figures frequently as the Tree of Life, and in fairy-tales and myths the apple appears as the giver of immortal youth. But the canonical religious interpretation is The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil related to the fall of man who ate the “forbidden fruit” and committed the sin of disobedience, so the apple thus became a symbol of sin. However, within Christianity the apple and the apple tree have undergone serious metamorphosis. The apple represents Christ, who brings life, and the apple tree is the Virgin Marie’s tree, and both emblemize the redemption from that fall. It is in this sense that the apple is presented by Deguileville in *L'Âme*. The pilgrim and his Angel see many pilgrims playing with an apple.

I saw a multytude of pylgryms pleyenge with an appell, bytwene two greete trees, one of the whiche was fayr & grene, full fresshe & lusty to loke vpon, & that other drye, withoute any maner of lustynesse or verdure.... And from one tree to another was the (apple) translated, and borne from the grene tree and put vpon the drye tree, for to restoren this drye tree to verdure and to fressshenes (*L'Âme*, 58r).

[I saw a multitude of pilgrims playing with an apple between two big trees, one of which was fair and green, fresh and lusty to look upon, and the other dry, without any manner of lustiness and greenness... And from one tree to the other was the apple transposed, and born from the green tree to the dry tree to restore it to greenness and to freshness.]

The green tree is reluctant to give up her apple – “her dear child, her fruit, her blyssfull apple, lusty, fair and sweet!” – to the dry tree. It complains that the dry tree did not save her son: “O cruel dry tree, thou bereaved me of my sweet fruit, I saw how torn and pierced he hanged on thee” (*L’Âme*, p.68r). The dry tree explains that much good will come of it because in this apple shall people find great comfort, solace and pleasure and get rid of all heaviness and grievance. Finally, the dry tree is restored to life, which symbolizes Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection.

Lewis could not have ignored this important symbol, but instead of the paradisiacal apple tree he chose its predecessor – the serpent entwined apple tree from the garden of the Hesperides with golden apples that became an object of envy and desire, and emblemized temptation. Greedy Ikey, could not resist the temptation but he failed to get to the tree because it was surrounded with an hedge of white lilies (a symbol of purity) with prickly stems.

Round the Tree grew a belt of lilies: to the Ghost an insuperable obstacle. It might as well have tried to tread down an anti-tank trap as to walk on them. It (Ghost) lay down and tried to crawl between them but they grew too close and they would not bend (*Divorce*, p.50).

The hedge is another biblical symbol that both authors use. Deguileville’s interpretation is almost literal rendering of the biblical proverb “The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway” (NIV 1984, *Proverbs 15:19*, p. 459). The pilgrim due to his slothfulness is entangled in such difficulties that he cannot extricate himself without Grace Dieu’s help. His way is all briars and thorns. Even when the pilgrim wishes to take the other way, he cannot do it without being pierced with thorns. At the beginning of his pilgrimage, at a crossroad, he saw his way split into two ways separated from each by an hedge which seemed to stretch far (Figure 1).

Ther grewen ther inne bushes and brambers. Bushes thorny full of prikkes thikke plaunted thoruh out and thikke entermedled. That oon of the weyes costed on the lift half and that oother on the riht half. Wel it seemede that oo wey it were if the hegge amidde ne were

[There grew bushes and brambles. Bushes thorny with prickles, thickly planted and thickly interwoven. One of the ways took a turn to the left, and the other to the right. Well it seemed that it was one way as if there were no hedge between them].

In his preface to the *Great Divorce*, Lewis uses this image to describe the world we live in: “we live in a world where every road, after a few miles, forks into two, and each of those into two again, and at each fork you must make a decision” (*Divorce*, p. 8).

Light

Light is one of the foundational symbols of Christianity. Both authors use light symbolism. Light is the opposite of darkness, which represents evil and sin. Lucifer whose original name was “Morning Star” is called in *l’Âme* “Tenebre”

(dark); there is complete darkness in Hell, which is illuminated only by hellish fires. In the everlasting war between light and darkness, in other words between belief and unbelief, God's Light disperses darkness: "our light can swallow up your darkness: but your darkness cannot now infect our light" (*Divorce*, p. 118) because it "brings healing and joy, it changes darkness into light and evil into good" (*Divorce*, p. 121). These words resonate with those of Deguileville: "And that is for to give light to all those that want to take the way by night" (*La Vie*, p. 6). Metaphorically, it means finding true faith among surrogates.

We can fully appreciate the masterful use of the Light metaphor as a truth-revealing tool when we read the description of people on the bus in *The Divorce*:

... the bus was full of light. It was cruel light. I shrank from the faces and forms by which I was surrounded. They were all fixed faces, full not of possibilities but of impossibilities, some gaunt, some bloated, some glaring with idiotic ferocity, some drowned beyond recovery in dreams; but all, in one way or another, distorted and faded. One had a feeling that they might fall to pieces at any moment if the light grew much stronger (*Divorce*, p. 25).

The difference between Hell and Heaven is that the former is wrapped up in half-light. Though some claim it is the promise of the dawn, the unseemly truth is that it is twilight on the verge of growing into a night. In Heaven there is no daylight either. "The light and coolness that drenched me were like those of summer morning, early morning a minute or two before the sunrise" (*Divorce*, p. 27). Light brooded on the top of the mountain. There was no change and no progression as the hours passed. "The promise – or the threat – of sunrise rested immovably up there" (*Divorce*, p. 28). Implications of the image of the rising Sun is that it promises the process of salvation to appear inevitable.

It is of interest to cite Deguileville's reflections about human soul as the abode of Godly light and human body as its container. Like the Sun makes its lightness come through clouds on an overcast day, so does the soul gives light outwards through the "dedliche bodi" (*La Vie*, p. 91). "If there were no body, the soul should have so great light that it should see all clearly from the East to the West. The body can be blind, but the soul is never blind" (*La Vie*, p. 92). So light is always within a human being. These medieval ideas are deployed by Lewis in *Divorce*. In Heaven, Spirits, being solidified souls, are made in great part of light. When speaking with his former comrade-in-Art, "the Spirit shook his head, scattering light from his hair as he did so" (*Divorce*, p. 80).

The endings of Deguileville's *l'Âme* and Lewis's *Divorce* are similar to such an extent that exclude any accidental coincidence. In *l'Âme*, the Angel leaves the pilgrim, or rather his soul, and flies up to Heaven. The pilgrim looks after him and sees the blinding light.

The Angel flewe his weye vp in to Heuene, and as I loked after hym, a wonder huge light descendid fro the Hye Heuen, smytyng on myn eyen, soo that it made me for to opene them after that they hadde long tyme ben closid in slepyng (*l'Âme*, p. 110r).

[The Angel flew his way up to Heaven, and as I looked after him a wondrous huge light descended from the High Heaven smiting my eyes, so that it made me open them after they had for a long time been closed in sleep.]

The passage has a much deeper meaning than simple waking up from sleep. It implies that the soul saw God's light and opened its heart to God's word, that is Christianity.

In the *Divorce*, the narrator also sees the long-awaited sunrise accompanied by the full chorus of birds that poured from every branch:

... thousand tongues of men and woodland angels and the wood itself sang. "Sleepers awake! It comes, it comes, it comes." One dreadful glance over my shoulder I essayed – not long enough to see (or did I see?) the rim of the sunrise that shoots Time dead with golden arrows and puts to flight all phantasmal shapes. The light, like solid blocks, intolerable of edge and weight, came thundering upon my head" (*Divorce*, p. 128).

The ending acquires almost Faustian significance. Like blind Faust takes the clattering of shovels digging his grave for people laboring together on free soil and hails the Moment, "Ah, still delay — thou art so Fair" (Goethe 1889, p. 496), so does the narrator mistake in his awakening flashes of bomb blasts that carry death and destruction for the rising Sunlight of Heaven.

Conclusion

The current study has illuminated C.S. Lewis's indebtedness to the works of Deguileville and the European medieval genre of dream vision in building his own fantasy world. We have got insights into how Lewis's interpretation of the most significant theological ideas was affected by Deguileville's explications of the same ideas. The analysis has shown that Deguileville's *Pilgrimages* served as a master analog for the interpretation of complex theological issues, such as righteousness, charity, love, unbelief, and vainglory.

The consistency of imagery and symbols also confirms the interconnectedness of the literary texts. It is only to be expected that the aesthetics of the mid-20th century should have required new visualizations of the environment and allegorical personages. Instead of monsters with six arms or with a horn in the forehead, Lewis introduces his own depictions of personified cardinal sins. All of them are represented by ordinary people who are incarnations of sins but are quite unaware of it and are persistent in misplaced beliefs. He also creates his own symbolic environment of Hell and Heaven different from medieval conventional images. Hell is not a dark dungeon with hellish fires, but a gloomy town with mean streets, dingy lodging houses, always in the rain and twilight. Heaven is not the Garden of Eden, but a recognizable English countryside, which is better suited for communicating the divine truths via dialogs.

Both Deguileville and Lewis are aware of the power of metaphorical language and use it profusely. Deguileville's pilgrimages are rich in verbal and visual

metaphors, some of them are common with those of Lewis (the chessboard), others are specific (Heresy cutting the Faith with scissors). The most theologically significant metaphor is “sleep – awakening” in all the three works meaning a transition from unbelief or half-hearted belief to accepting Christ wholeheartedly. Among the devices of the figurative language of special interest is a *double entendre*. It refers not only to individual words, but sentences as well. The word “pilgrimage” means “holy travel” and “human life”; the name *Jerusalem* means “the earthly town” and “heavenly promised town”. The sentence “come to the mountains” signifies actual travel and “repent and believe”.

C.S. Lewis reproduced both the structure and theological content of the medieval genre for revealing sacred knowledge to twentieth-century readers drawing on Deguileville’s pilgrimages as an exegetical source.

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