Charlotte Farrell, "Entry on: The Last Battle (The Chronicles of Narnia, 7) by Pauline Baynes, Clive Staples (C.S.) Lewis", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1429. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Pauline Baynes , Clive Staples (C.S.) Lewis

The Last Battle (The Chronicles of Narnia, 7)

United Kingdom (1956)

TAGS: Aesop's Fables Bible Centaur(s) Faun Gods Nymphs Phoenix (Bird) Plato





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	The Last Battle (The Chronicles of Narnia, 7)
Country of the First Edition	United Kingdom
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1956
First Edition Details	C. S Lewis, *The Last Battle*. London: The Bodley Head, 1956, 184 pp.
ISBN	Not applicable for editio princeps
Genre	Children's novel*, Fantasy fiction
Target Audience	Children
Author of the Entry	Charlotte Farrell, University of New England, charlottefarrell@gmail.com
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators



Pauline Baynes , 1922 - 2008
(Illustrator)

Pauline Baynes, who illustrated many works (over 200, mostly for children), is best known for her illustration of C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings.* Born in Sussex, England, UK most of her first five years were spent in India due to her father's appointment to the Indian Civil Service. As a result of her mother's illness, Baynes and her sister returned to England and were placed in a convent and then sent to a boarding school in Camberley in Surrey. At the age of fifteen, she studied design at Farnham School of Art and later won a place at the Slade School of Art. When the second World War broke out both sisters joined the Women's Voluntary Service and were sent to the Camouflage Development Training Centre in Farnham Castle where they were put to work making demonstration models. Later, the sisters worked as mapmakers for the Admiralty's Hydrographic Department. Powell Perry, whose family owned a company that published picture books for children was one of their colleagues and gave Baynes her first professional commissions.

In 1948 Baynes began to develop her career by writing a book of her own, *Victoria and the Golden Bird* which was published. Her portfolio was given to J.R.R, Tolkien who was *s*eeking an illustrator for his book *Farmer Giles of Ham,* a comedy about dragons and knights. Tolkien was delighted with her work and although his *The Lord of the Rings* was too large a project for her she produced coloured maps of Tolkien's middle-earth. She also created a triptych of Tolkien's characters and locales, which became the iconic cover art for a one-volume paperback edition in 1968 and a three-volume version in 1981. In 1967 Baynes illustrated Tolkien's final piece of fiction *Smith of Wooton Major.*

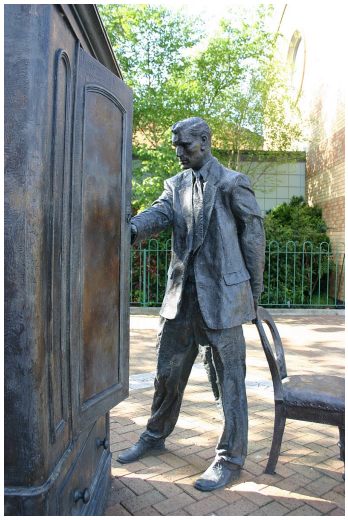
Tolkien introduced Baynes to C.S. Lewis. She signed a contract with Lewis's publisher and in 1949 sent drawings, and cover designs for *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.*She went on to illustrate the six sequels, *Prince Caspian: The return to Narnia* (1951), *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), *The Silver Chair* (1953), *The Horse and*

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His Boy (1954), *The Magician's Nephew* (1955) and *The Last Battle* (1956).

After many love affairs, Baynes met and married Fritz Gasch, a German ex-prisoner of war. They moved to Surrey where he worked as a gardener and she continued her drawing. They were a close couple and after Fritz's sudden death in 1988 Baynes poured her energies into her work producing her most accomplished pieces. Two years after Fritz's death Baynes had a call from his daughter from his first marriage in Germany who was delighted to find the woman who had loved her father. In old age, Baynes found she had a family. Baynes worked up to her death in 2008 illustrating both the Koran and Aesop's Fables. She remains one of the twentieth century's most influential illustrators.

Bio prepared by Beverley Beddoes-Mills, University of New England
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Belfast, statue of C. S. Lewis looking into a wardrobe. Entitled *The Searcher* by Ross Wilson. Retrieved from Wikipedia (accessed: May 4, 2022), CC BY 2.0.

Clive Staples (C.S.) Lewis , 1898 - 1963 (Author)

Clive Staples Lewis was born in 1898 in Belfast, Ireland, the younger son of Albert Lewis, a soliciter, and Florence Lewis, a graduate of the Royal University of Ireland. In the Lewis household reading and education were considered of great importance and Lewis and his older brother Warren 'Warnie' (later a historian) were avid readers. Lewis loved tales about animals and was influenced by Beatrix Potter's books which encouraged him to write and illustrate his own. After his mother's death in 1908 Lewis attended several different schools in England and Belfast. During this time, Lewis became an atheist, abandoning his Christian faith and pursuing an interest in Norse mythology. As a teenager, became fascinated by ancient Scandinavian songs and legends preserved in the Icelandic sagas. Lewis was also influenced by his father's old tutor and former headmaster of Lurgan College, William T. Kirkpatrick, who instilled in him a love of Greek literature and mythology.

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In 1917 Lewis entered Oxford and studied at University College. That year he joined the Officers' Training Corps, at the university, and was drafted into a Cadet Battalion for training. He was commissioned into the British Army as a Second Lieutenant and shipped to France where on his19th birthday he fought in the front line, in the trenches at the Somme Valley. Following an incident in April of 1918, which Lewis was wounded, and two of his colleagues were killed by a shell, he was demobilized (in December of that year). He wrote in a letter that the horror of his wartime experiences were the basis of his pessimism and continuing atheism.

In 1920, Lewis returned to his studies at Oxford University, where he studied Greek and Latin Literature, Philosophy and Ancient History, and English. He achieved Firsts in all these subjects, and went on to tutor in Philosophy at University College. In 1925 he was appointed as a Fellow and Tutor in English Literature at Magdalen College, where he worked until 1954.

At Oxford, Lewis and J.R.R Tolkien, the Anglo-Saxon scholar, and writer of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* were close friends. They were active in the informal Oxford literary group known as the Inklings, a group of scholars and storytellers interested in the writing of fantasy, and which included Roger Lancelyn-Green, the biographer and reteller of mythology for children.

Lewis eventually returned to Christianity due Tolkien's influence. He describes these changes in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy* which is an account of his spiritual and intellectual life through the 30s. He became known as one of the foremost British writers of Christian thought which he explored in his scholarship, and fiction. Lewis's first scholarly book was *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (1936), an exploration of the treatment of love in Medieval and Renaissance English. Later he wrote *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (1942). Both are still cited today. He was commissioned to write *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century (Excluding Drama)*, for the Oxford History of English Literature (1954).

In 1956 he was appointed to the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, at Magdalene College, Cambridge University, where he worked until he died in 1963. In 1957, he married his friend Joy Davidson, an American divorcee, in a civil ceremony, in order to help her remain in the United Kingdom. Later, after she was diagnosed with bone cancer, their relationship developed and they had a

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Christian marriage. Davidson died in 1960 and Lewis wrote about this time of his life in *A Grief Observed* (1961) which was published under a pseudonym. His final book, *Letters to Malcolm*, was published in 1963, the same year in which he retired from his position at Cambridge. He died in November of 1963, following a period of ill health.

Lewis' writing covers many fields: he wrote important literary criticism such as *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1964), and *The Allegory of Love* (1936). He wrote works of personal reflection and novels for adults and children. Among his novels for adults, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (1956) recasts the story of Cupid and Psyche from the point of view of her older sister, Orual. In general terms, Lewis' best known works are the seven children's books about the fantasy world of Narnia: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), *Prince Caspian* (1951), *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), *The Silver Chair* (1953), *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), *The Magician's Nephew* (1955), and *The Last Battle* (1956). These books reveal a fantasy world and include talking animals, mythical beasts, magic, and epic action as well as children from our (real) world, and cast the main drama of the series as a battle between good and evil in the context of the world of Narnia. Aslan, a noble lion, who can be identified as an allegory for the Son of God, brings unity to Narnia (the exception is *The Horse and His Boy*, which provides the prehistory of Narnia). The Narnia books have been translated into 47 languages and sold worldwide.

Sources:

Britannica (accessed: May 7, 2021),

Wikipedia (accessed: May 18, 2021).

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Additional information

Translation

The Narnia Chronicles have been translated into 47 languages, see: here (accessed: March 31, 2022).

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs

There are two different orders that the books can be read: order of publication and order of narrative chronology. Both orders are listed below, with an asterisk next to the present title.

Publication Order

1. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe;*
2. *Prince Caspian*;
3. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*;
4. *The Silver Chair*;
5. *The Horse and His Boy*;
6. *The Magician's Nephew*;
7. *The Last Battle*.*

Chronological Order

1. *The Magician's Nephew;*
2. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe;*
3. *The Horse and His Boy;*
4. *Prince Caspian;*
5. *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader;*
6. *The Silver Chair;*
7. *The Last Battle*.*

Summary

The Last Battle is the final book in the *Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis. It serves as a culmination of all the events of the series. The reader is introduced to Shift, a bully of a gorilla who convinces Puzzle the donkey to wear a lion's skin and pretend to be Aslan, the Golden 'father' of Narnia. King Tirian, with his unicorn, Jewel, hears news of Aslan's return. Much death and destruction occurs in Narnia, supposedly at Aslan's command. Calormene men who are enemies of Narnia are found cutting down trees. This enrages King Tirian who engages Narnian troops to fight them.

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Shift becomes a tyrant that fools the Narnians into believing that the violent acts are in fact Aslan's will. He parades Puzzle dressed as a lion to trick them. Shift lies that Tash – the God that the Calormenes believe in – and Aslan are the same thing ("Tashlan"). King Tirian knows this couldn't be true. He is taken captive and tied to a tree from where he calls for the help from the Pevensie children: heroes from earlier books in the *Narnia Chronicles*. Tirian is catapulted into their world as if in a dream where he sees seven people at a table. Two of those people, Jill Pole and Eustace Scrubb, appear in Narnia shortly thereafter.

Jill, Eustace and the King venture towards a castle. They dress up as Calormenes and practice their battle skills. The three of them walk through a strangely silent Narnia before coming across a Calormene sentry. They inspect the stable where the King discovers Jewel who was taken captive there and binds the sentry. Jill disappears and then reappears with Puzzle the donkey. A parade of dwarves approaches them with Calormene soldiers at the front and the rear of the column. They are being led to work in the mines at Aslan's (apparent) orders. Eustace and Tirian kill the soldiers, expecting the dwarves to rejoice in their freedom, but they are critical of Tirian and don't believe the story about Aslan. As they travel onwards, they spread word that it is not the real Aslan making the evil commands but trickery.

Rishda Taarkan, a Calormene captain, and Ginger the cat partner up with Shift and are conspiring to make Narnia a Calormene province. Discovering this, the King's group decide to seek the help of Roonwit the centaur because he was bringing help from Cair Paravel – the royal castle in Narnia – to fight Shift and the Calormenes. Farsight the eagle brings news that everyone is dead at Cair Paravel, conquered by the Calormene army. They embark on a battle where they witness a midnight meeting between the fooled Narnians, Shift the Gorilla, Rishda and Ginger the cat.

Shift tells the crowd that a deceptive donkey dressed up as Aslan and now Tashlan is angry and will not parade for them anymore. A violent battle lead by King Tirian ensues. They defeat the Calormenes but then more and more of their army arrive. The dwarfs kill the Narnian horses and form their own independent party against both the Narnians and the Calormenes. Tirian defeats the Tarkaan captain (Rishda) and flings him into the stable. A terrible figure, the god, Tash, emerges from the stable with Rishda under his arm.

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Seven kings and queens including Jill, Eustace, as well as Peter, Lady Polly, Lord Diggory, Edmund and Lucy, appear. The battle scene transforms into a beautiful garden. They all pick delicious fruit and eat together. The dwarves are there, too, but they can't see anything and think they're in the dark. Aslan appears and there is a cascade of stars; old Father Time wakes up; and then everything dies and turns to rock and skeletons. The sun and moon burn red and everything turns dark.

They shortly discover that Narnia is not dead and they wade through a magical waterfall, after which they arrive at great golden gates. Reepicheep emerges, the mouse who sailed on his coracle to the world's end in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader.* Numerous characters from previous Narnia books emerge and there is a joyful reunion. Aslan reveals that there was a railway accident meaning that the children were actually dead and presumably, now, in heaven – reunited with all the Narnian creatures they had come to love.

Analysis

As with all books in *Chronicles of Narnia*, there is a wealth of mythic elements present in *The Last Battle*. Numerous mythological creatures appear in the last volume, particularly because it is the culmination of all the books in the series. Many of the characters who have appeared in previous books converge together for the final installment. Tumnus the Faun, Roonwit the Centaur, a dryad who is a "nymph of the beech tree" (p. 20), satyrs, and innumerable talking animals feature in the book. These creatures reference classical mythology as well as mythical elements of Aesop's fables. These aspects create a sense of magical atmosphere and intertextual intrigue particular to the Narnian world that C. S. Lewis created over the series of seven books.

The book also explores occularcentric themes of visibility and invisibility and equates these with faith and/or lack thereof recalling John 9:25 from the Bible, "I was blind but now I see". This parallel is most clearly expressed when Farsight the eagle, on witnessing the resurrection of Narnia after its destruction proclaims, "we have all been blind" (p. 159). There is also reference to Plato's cave in this regard, when Lord Diggory draws a connection between the difference between illusion and reality when he declares, "It's all in Plato" (p. 160). Similarly, when Aslan appears in the fruit-filled garden, he provides the dwarves with an elaborate feast, but, notably,

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they cannot see it. It is certainly implied that they *choose* not to see it, and therefore remain in the dark. They believe the feast is only stable scraps, to which Aslan declares "they have chosen cunning instead of belief" (p. 140). The moralistic underpinning of the Narnia books comes to a head in *The Last Battle* through the Christian dialectics of good and evil, seeing and blindness, ultimately communicating the (potentially ableist) message that those who see and therefore believe are right.

As mentioned in the entry on *The Horse and His Boy* the racialized configuration of good and evil – in addition to the usual at the time sexist portrayal of the girl characters – presents significant problems when engaging younger readers with *The Last Battle* and other books in the *Chronicles of Narnia* without some accompanying critical analysis or supervised discussion around perceived sexism, white supremacy, and colonialism of C. S. Lewis' novels.

Lewis creates a complex world view that has some elements which might be challenged in later works: the association of female sexuality with wickedness; the schematism of good and evil and its connection to racist tropes of light and dark; and the application of eschatological ideas about sight and blindness. Nevertheless, figures that challenge these divisions appear: Jadis, the wicked sorceress, is white; Aravis from *The Horse and His Boy*, is an example of a good Calormen, and some Calormenes do appear at The World's End (an allegory for the Christian Heaven). As Lewis was drawing the Chronicles of Narnia to a close, summarizing (or applying) a worldview for his whole series, one can see the awareness that broad generalisations are there to be challenged.

Overall, then, understanding the mythological elements of Lewis's work requires readers to be aware of the nature of world-building in fantasy, to consider both the back-story of a particular figure and its application in the world of Narnia. It requires an awareness of time (of writing or publication, and of reading). The atheist fantasy writer Philip Pullman* has criticised the Christian worldview of the Lewis novels, viewing them as overly didactic, and imposing a particular ideology on young readers: this begs the question, however, does not every text represent a particular worldview?**

* See for instance, Philip Pullman, *Dæmon Voices. Essays on*

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	Storytelling, Simon Mason, ed., Oxford: David Fickling Books, 2017, 446–451. ** To restore thematic balance, the Survey's editors shortened parts of the Analysis unrelated to classical Antiquity.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aesop's Fables Bible Centaur(s) Faun Gods Nymphs Phoenix (Bird) Plato
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Adversity Animals Appearances Child, children Christianity Conflict Death Gender expectations/construction Good vs evil Heroism Journeys Magic Morality Murder Nation Philosophy Political changes Prediction/prophecy Race Sacrifice Talking animals Transformation Travel Tricksters Truth and lies Violence War
Further Reading	Hulan, David, "Narnia and the Seven Deadly Sins", *Mythcon Proceedings* 1.1.6 (1970) (accessed: April 1, 2022). King, Don, "Narnia and the Seven Deadly Sins", *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature* 10.4.3 (1984) (accessed: April 1, 2022). Martin, Thomas L., "Seven for Seven: The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' and the Literary Tradition", *Mythlore* 34.2 (2016): 47–68. Pietrusz, Jim, "Rites of Passage: The Chronicles of Narnia & the Seven Sacraments", *Mythlore* 14.4/54 (1988): 61–63 (accessed: April 1, 2022). Schakel, Peter J., "The 'Correct' Order for Reading the Chronicles of Narnia", in Shanna Caughey, ed., *Revisiting Narnia: Fantasy, Myth and Religion in C. S. Lewis' Chronicles*, Dallas: BenBella Books, 2005, 91–102.

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