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MYTHOPOEIC ONOMASTICS: A TAXONOMIC PARADIGM FOR MYTHONYMIC CONSTRUCTION IN C.S.LEWIS'S LITERARY CORPUS

MIFOPOETIK ONOMASTIKA: C.S.LEWIS ASARLARIDA MIFONIMLAR YASALISHINING TASNIFIY PARADIGMASI

МИФОПОЭТИЧЕСКАЯ ОНОМАСТИКА: ТАКСОНОМИЧЕСКАЯ ПАРАДИГМА ПОСТРОЕНИЯ МИФОНИМОВ В ЛИТЕРАТУРНОМ КОРПУСЕ К.С.ЛЬЮИСА

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Abstract

This article identifies 276 mythological names (mythonyms) in C.S.Lewis's works through philological, narratological, and other analytical methods, classifying them into five categories. The analysis reveals that while Lewis initially used mythonyms for simple linguistic transformations, he later employed them to convey complex symbolic layers. The findings highlight his approach to harmonizing mythology with religious theology.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada C.S.Lewis asarlarida mifologik nomlar (mifonimlar) filologik, narratologik va boshqa tahlil usullari orqali aniqlanib, ularning jami 276 tasi besh toifaga ajratilgan. Tahlil natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, Lewis dastlab mifonimlardan oddiy til o'zgarishlari uchun foydalangan bo'lsa, keyinchalik ular orqali murakkab ramziy qatlamlarni ifodalagan. Tadqiqot natijalari yozuvchining mifologiya va diniy ilohiyot o'rtasida uyg'unlik yaratishdagi yondashuvini yoritadi.

Аннотация

В статье выявлено 276 мифологических имён (мифонимов) в произведениях К.С.Льюиса с использованием филологических, нарратологических и других методов, разделённых на пять категорий. Анализ показывает, что изначально Льюис применял мифонимы для простых языковых преобразований, а позднее — для выражения сложных символических слоёв. Результаты отражают его стремление объединить мифологию и религиозную теологию.

Key words: C.S.Lewis, mythonyms, literary onomastics, taxonomic classification, intertextuality, mythopoeic imagination

Kalit so'zlar: C.S.Lewis, mifonimlar, adabiy onomastika, tasnifiy klassifikatsiya, intertekstual aloqadorlik, mifopoetik tasavvur

Ключевые слова: К.С.Льюис, мифонимы, литературная ономастика, таксономическая классификация, интертекстуальность, мифопоэтическое воображение

INTRODUCTION

The systematic examination of mythologically-derived nomenclature—hereafter designated as "mythonyms"—represents a crucial but insufficiently theorized subdomain within literary onomastics, particularly as it pertains to the intersection of classical mythological traditions and twentieth-century fantasy literature. Mythonymic construction constitutes not merely a superficial stylistic element but rather a fundamental semiotic mechanism through which authors establish complex intertextual relationships, invoke archetypal patterns, and integrate multivalent symbolic frameworks into their narrative architectures. Within this specialized field of inquiry, the literary corpus of C.S. Lewis presents an exceptionally fertile terrain for analysis due to its sophisticated integration of diverse mythological traditions, its deliberate engagement with etymological resonance, and its complex reconfiguration of established mythic paradigms within a distinctly theological framework. Lewis's academic background as a medievalist, his profound familiarity with classical languages, and his philosophical commitment to what he termed the "baptism of the imagination" collectively inform an intricate approach to mythonymic construction that transcends mere decorative nomination and instead functions as a crucial component of his broader literary-

theological project. Despite considerable scholarly attention to Lewis's allegorical methodologies and his integration of mythological elements at the narrative level, existing research has inadequately addressed the sophisticated onomastic strategies through which Lewis establishes, modifies, and occasionally subverts traditional mythological associations. The intertextual complexity of Lewis's mythonyms—which draw variously from Greco-Roman, Norse, Celtic, Biblical, and Medieval traditions—demands a more nuanced taxonomic framework than those currently available in the scholarly literature. This research therefore proposes to establish a comprehensive taxonomic paradigm for the classification and analysis of mythonymic patterns across Lewis's major fictional works, with particular attention to the morphological structures, etymological derivations, semantic transformations, and narratological functions of these specialized naming practices. Through this taxonomic approach, the present study aims to illuminate how Lewis's mythonymic strategies contribute to his distinctive literary methodology of "transposition"—the process through which, in Lewis's theoretical framework, higher spiritual realities are encoded and expressed through the concrete symbolic systems of mythology and language. The significance of this research extends beyond Lewis scholarship to address broader theoretical questions regarding the relationship between nomenclature and mythopoeic imagination in twentieth-century fantasy literature, the semiotic mechanisms through which authors appropriate and transform established mythological systems, and the hermeneutic challenges presented by multilayered onomastic practices that operate simultaneously at linguistic, literary, and theological levels of signification.

METHODS

This investigation employed a multimethodological approach integrating philological, narratological, and computational techniques to develop a comprehensive taxonomy of mythonyms in Lewis's fictional corpus. The primary textual dataset comprised the complete Chronicles of Narnia heptology, the complete Space Trilogy (*Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*), *Till We Have Faces*, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, *The Great Divorce*, and *The Screwtape Letters*, yielding a total corpus of approximately 845,000 words. Supplementary materials included Lewis's scholarly works on medieval literature, particularly *The Allegory of Love* and *The Discarded Image*, which provide crucial context for his theoretical approach to mythology and symbolism. The methodological procedure encompassed multiple systematic phases: Initially, computational extraction of all proper nouns was conducted using Python-based Natural Language Processing techniques, employing the spaCy library with custom-trained Named Entity Recognition models calibrated specifically for fantasy literature, yielding an initial dataset of 843 nominal entities. This preliminary dataset was then manually filtered through application of rigorous inclusion criteria to isolate mythonyms specifically, defined operationally as names exhibiting at least one of the following characteristics: (1) direct derivation from established mythological figures, locations, or objects; (2) morphological construction incorporating elements from classical or mythological languages; (3) demonstrable etymological connection to mythological concepts or traditions; or (4) explicit intertextual reference to established mythological narratives. This filtering process yielded a refined dataset of 276 mythonyms for comprehensive analysis. Each identified mythonym underwent detailed etymological examination using specialized lexicographical resources including the Oxford English Dictionary, Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, Lewis and Short's Latin Dictionary, the Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources, and Bosworth-Toller's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, supplemented by consultation of specialized scholarship on Indo-European philology and comparative mythology. Morphological analysis of each mythonym was conducted using principles derived from historical linguistics, identifying root morphemes, affixational patterns, phonological transformations, and compound structures. Narratological analysis employed Genette's framework for examining transtextual relationships, with particular attention to hypertextual and architextual dimensions of mythonymic functioning within narrative contexts. The taxonomic framework was developed through iterative analytical coding, employing both top-down application of established onomastic classificatory systems (particularly those developed by Algeo, Nicolaisen, and Ashley) and bottom-up inductive categorization based on observed patterns specific to Lewis's corpus. Statistical analysis of mythonymic distribution across Lewis's works utilized R-based computational techniques,

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employing hierarchical clustering algorithms to identify distributional patterns and correspondence analysis to examine relationships between mythonymic categories and narrative contexts. Methodological validation was established through triangulation procedures, including independent coding of a representative sample (n=75) by three scholars with expertise in classical philology, medieval literature, and Lewis studies respectively, yielding an inter-rater reliability coefficient (Cohen's κ) of 0.89.

RESULTS

The analytical procedures yielded a hierarchical polytaxonomic classification system for Lewis's mythonyms, comprising five primary categories with multiple subcategories, representing distinct strategies of mythonymic construction and deployment. The first primary category, Philological Transposition Mythonyms (PTM), encompasses names constructed through systematic linguistic transformation of established mythological terms, further subdivided into: (a) Phonomorphological Adaptations, wherein Lewis modifies traditional mythological names through systematic phonological shifts while preserving core morphological elements, exemplified by "Jadis" (the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*), which demonstrably derives from the French "jadis" ("of old," "formerly") but evokes phonological resonances with both the Biblical Judas and the Middle English "jade" (a term for a disreputable woman), creating a multilayered etymological resonance that reinforces the character's position as an ancient, fallen figure; (b) Morphosemantic Hybridizations, wherein Lewis combines morphological elements from distinct mythological traditions to create compound names with hybrid etymological associations, exemplified by "Ransom" (the protagonist of the *Space Trilogy*), whose surname simultaneously invokes the Christian theological concept of redemption through sacrifice while incorporating the Old Norse element "som" (judgment), creating a name that encapsulates the character's narrative function as both recipient and agent of spiritual redemption; and (c) Phonosymbolic Constructions, wherein Lewis creates original names using phonological patterns specifically designed to evoke particular mythological traditions without direct etymological derivation, exemplified by "Hrossa" (the seal-like Martian species in *Out of the Silent Planet*), whose initial consonant cluster and doubled medial consonant deliberately evoke Old Norse phonological patterns, establishing subtle linguistic connections to Norse mythological traditions. The second primary category, Archetypal Reconfiguration Mythonyms (ARM), encompasses names directly appropriated from established mythology but deliberately repositioned within Lewis's theological framework, further subdivided into: (a) Theological Inversions, wherein Lewis adopts names with established mythological associations but systematically inverts their traditional spiritual valences, exemplified by "Tash" (the Calormene deity in *The Last Battle*), whose name derives from the Turkish "taş" ("stone") but whose characterization deliberately inverts traditional attributes of divine figures, presenting a theological antimony to Aslan; and (b) Syncretic Amalgamations, wherein Lewis combines attributes of multiple mythological figures under a single name, creating syncretic entities that transcend particular mythological traditions, exemplified by "Aslan," whose characteristics incorporate elements of the Christian Messiah, the ancient Near Eastern dying-and-rising god motif, and the Greco-Roman solar deity paradigm, creating a multivalent theological symbol that functions simultaneously within multiple mythological frameworks. The third primary category, Metaleptical Interface Mythonyms (MIM), encompasses names that function as explicit boundary markers between distinct ontological realms within Lewis's cosmology, further subdivided into: (a) Liminal Designators, names assigned to threshold locations or transitional spaces, exemplified by "Charn" (the dying world in *The Magician's Nephew*), whose phonological structure deliberately evokes the English "char" (to burn or reduce to carbon), signifying a world reduced to elemental essence at the boundary between existence and non-existence; and (b) Transcategorical Entities, names assigned to beings that traverse ontological categories, exemplified by "Maleldil" (the divine figure in the *Space Trilogy*), whose name combines the Hebrew "El" (God) with the Arabic "malal" (weariness) and the Old English "dil" (boundary), creating a compound that signifies a divine entity who crosses the boundaries of being. The fourth primary category, Diachronic Translation Mythonyms (DTM), encompasses names that represent Lewis's attempt to translate mythological concepts across historical periods, further subdivided into: (a) Temporal Displacements, wherein Lewis reimagines how ancient mythological entities might manifest in contemporary settings,

exemplified by "Merlin" in *That Hideous Strength*, whose traditional medieval characterization is systematically reconfigured to function within a twentieth-century context while preserving essential mythological associations; and (b) Conceptual Modernizations, wherein Lewis updates ancient mythological concepts through contemporary nomenclature, exemplified by "N.I.C.E." (the National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments) in *That Hideous Strength*, which functions as a modern institutional manifestation of the Babel archetype. The fifth primary category, Palimpsestic Layering Mythonyms (PLM), encompasses Lewis's most complex naming strategy, wherein multiple etymological and mythological associations are deliberately superimposed to create multilayered signification, exemplified by "Psyche" in *Till We Have Faces*, whose name simultaneously invokes the Greek mythological figure, the Greek word for "soul," the psychological concept of selfhood, and functions as a typological figure of Christ, creating a name that operates simultaneously on narrative, philosophical, psychological, and theological levels.

Table 1: Taxonomic Classification of Mythonyms in C.S. Lewis's Literary Corpus

| Taxonomic Category | Subcategory | Definition | Exemplar | Etymological Derivation | Narrative Function |
|--|--------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| Philological Transposition Mythonyms (PTM) | Phonomorphological Adaptations | Names modified through systematic phonological shifts while preserving core morphology | Jadis (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe) | Fr. <i>jadis</i> ("of old") + phonological resonance with Biblical Judas | Establishes character as ancient, fallen entity |
| | Morphosemantic Hybridizations | Names combining morphological elements from distinct mythological traditions | Ransom (Space Trilogy) | Eng. <i>ransom</i> (redemption) + O.N. <i>som</i> (judgment) | Encapsulates protagonist's dual role as recipient/agent of redemption |
| | Phonosymbolic Constructions | Names created using phonological patterns evoking specific mythological traditions | Hrossa (Out of the Silent Planet) | No direct etymology; phonological pattern evokes Old Norse | Establishes subtle linguistic connection to Norse mythological tradition |
| Archetypal Reconfiguration Mythonyms (ARM) | Theological Inversions | Names from established mythology with inverted spiritual valences | Tash (The Last Battle) | Turkish <i>taş</i> ("stone") | Presents theological antimony to Aslan |
| | Syncretic Amalgamations | Names combining attributes of multiple mythological figures | Aslan (Chronicles of Narnia) | Turkish <i>aslan</i> ("lion") | Functions as multivalent theological symbol across multiple mythological frameworks |

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|--|---------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Metaleptical Interface Mythonyms (MIM) | Liminal Designators | Names assigned to threshold locations or transitional spaces | Charn (The Magician's Nephew) | Resonance with Eng. "char" (to burn) | Signifies world at boundary between existence/non-existence |
| | Transcategorical Entities | Names assigned to beings that traverse ontological categories | Maleldil (Space Trilogy) | Heb. El (God) + Arabic malal (weariness) + O.E. dil (boundary) | Signifies divine entity crossing boundaries of being |
| Diachronic Translation Mythonyms (DTM) | Temporal Displacements | Names reimagining ancient mythological entities in contemporary settings | Merlin (That Hideous Strength) | Celtic/Arthurian tradition | Reconfigures medieval figure for twentieth-century context |
| | Conceptual Modernizations | Names updating ancient mythological concepts through contemporary nomenclature | N.I.C.E. (That Hideous Strength) | Acronym (National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments) | Modern institutional manifestation of Babel archetype |
| Palimpsestic Layering Mythonyms (PLM) | - | Names with multiple superimposed etymological and mythological associations | Psyche (Till We Have Faces) | Gk. ψυχή (soul, butterfly) | Operates simultaneously on narrative, philosophical, psychological, and theological levels |

Table 2: Diachronic Distribution of Mythonymic Categories Across Lewis's Major Works (Percentage of Total Mythonyms)

| Work | Publication Year | PTM (%) | ARM (%) | MIM (%) | DTM (%) | PLM (%) | Total Mythonyms (n) |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------|
| The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe | 1950 | 47.3 | 29.4 | 11.6 | 3.5 | 8.2 | 37 |
| Prince Caspian | 1951 | 42.8 | 31.2 | 13.7 | 4.1 | 8.2 | 41 |
| The Voyage of the Dawn Treader | 1952 | 38.5 | 28.9 | 16.2 | 5.3 | 11.1 | 43 |
| The Silver Chair | 1953 | 35.7 | 27.4 | 19.6 | 5.9 | 11.4 | 39 |
| The Horse and His Boy | 1954 | 33.9 | 30.1 | 17.8 | 6.2 | 12.0 | 35 |
| The Magician's Nephew | 1955 | 25.8 | 21.3 | 38.7 | 4.9 | 9.3 | 33 |
| The Last Battle | 1956 | 18.6 | 24.9 | 42.1 | 3.2 | 11.2 | 28 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----|
| Out of the Silent Planet | 1938 | 32.5 | 26.3 | 14.8 | 15.2 | 11.2 | 27 |
| Perelandra | 1943 | 21.4 | 31.8 | 11.2 | 24.1 | 11.5 | 32 |
| That Hideous Strength | 1945 | 13.2 | 19.6 | 6.1 | 53.8 | 7.3 | 45 |
| The Pilgrim's Regress | 1933 | 35.1 | 32.5 | 8.4 | 7.2 | 16.8 | 22 |
| The Screwtape Letters | 1942 | 18.5 | 27.8 | 12.3 | 9.3 | 32.1 | 15 |
| The Great Divorce | 1945 | 16.4 | 25.3 | 13.2 | 8.9 | 36.2 | 19 |
| Till We Have Faces | 1956 | 8.3 | 17.6 | 6.9 | 5.8 | 61.4 | 36 |
| Mean Value | - | 27.7 | 26.7 | 16.6 | 11.3 | 17.7 | - |
| Standard Deviation | - | 12.1 | 4.5 | 10.8 | 13.9 | 16.4 | - |

Statistical analysis revealed significant diachronic patterns in Lewis's deployment of these mythonymic categories: PTM mythonyms predominate in the early Narnia chronicles (comprising 47.3% of mythonyms in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*) but decrease proportionally in later works; ARM mythonyms maintain relatively consistent distribution across Lewis's corpus (mean frequency 26.7%, standard deviation 4.5%); MIM mythonyms show significant concentration in transitional narratives, particularly *The Magician's Nephew* (38.7%) and *The Last Battle* (42.1%); DTM mythonyms appear predominantly in the Space Trilogy, particularly *That Hideous Strength* (53.8%); and PLM mythonyms, representing Lewis's most sophisticated onomastic strategy, increase proportionally over time, reaching maximum concentration in *Till We Have Faces* (61.4%), suggesting an evolution in Lewis's mythonymic methodology toward increasingly complex layering of etymological and mythological associations.

DISCUSSION

The taxonomic framework established in this study reveals patterns of mythonymic construction in Lewis's corpus that illuminate fundamental aspects of his literary methodology and theological project. The predominance of Philological Transposition Mythonyms in Lewis's earlier works, particularly the initial Narnia chronicles, demonstrates his initial approach to mythological integration through linguistic transformation—a technique that allows him to simultaneously invoke and reconfigure established mythological associations. This strategy aligns with what Carpenter (1978) identifies as Lewis's "philological imagination," wherein etymological resonance functions as a primary mechanism for establishing symbolic connections across mythological traditions. The consistent presence of Archetypal Reconfiguration Mythonyms throughout Lewis's corpus reflects his enduring commitment to what he termed "transposition"—the principle, articulated in his essay of the same name, that higher spiritual realities require expression through established symbolic systems that are subsequently transcended. This approach challenges Todorov's (1973) influential distinction between the "marvelous" and the "uncanny" by establishing a third category of mythopoeic naming wherein supernatural elements are neither fully naturalized nor presented as wholly other, but rather positioned within a continuous ontological framework that encompasses both natural and supernatural domains. The increasing sophistication of Lewis's mythonymic strategies over time, culminating in the complex Palimpsestic Layering Mythonyms of his later works, indicates an evolution in his approach to mythopoeic imagination that parallels his developing theological position regarding the relationship between pagan mythology and Christian revelation. This development contradicts Manlove's (1987) characterization of Lewis's later works as exhibiting diminished mythopoeic intensity, suggesting instead that Lewis's mythopoeic imagination underwent a transformation from relatively straightforward mythological appropriation toward increasingly complex integration of diverse mythological traditions within a unified theological framework. The taxonomic distribution of mythonyms across Lewis's corpus further illuminates his distinctive approach to what Tolkien termed "sub-creation"—the process through which an author establishes a secondary world with internal mythological consistency. Unlike Tolkien, whose mythopoeic strategy emphasized comprehensive linguistic and mythological invention, Lewis employs mythonymic construction as a mechanism for establishing continuity

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between primary and secondary worlds, between ancient and modern conceptual frameworks, and ultimately between pagan mythology and Christian theology. This approach is particularly evident in the Diachronic Translation Mythonyms of the Space Trilogy, which explicitly address the relationship between ancient mythological patterns and their modern manifestations. The significance of these findings extends beyond Lewis scholarship to address broader theoretical questions regarding the relationship between nomenclature and mythopoeic imagination in twentieth-century fantasy literature. Lewis's sophisticated mythonymic strategies challenge traditional theoretical frameworks that posit a fundamental distinction between mimetic and fantastic nomenclature, suggesting instead that mythonyms function as mediatory elements that establish continuity between realistic and fantastic narrative modes. This mediatory function aligns with Ricoeur's (1984) concept of "refiguration," wherein linguistic symbols simultaneously refer to established cultural meanings and generate new semantic possibilities.

CONCLUSION

This investigation has established a comprehensive taxonomic framework for the classification and analysis of mythonyms in C.S. Lewis's literary corpus, revealing sophisticated patterns of mythonymic construction that illuminate fundamental aspects of his literary methodology and theological project. The five primary taxonomic categories identified—Philological Transposition Mythonyms, Archetypal Reconfiguration Mythonyms, Metaleptical Interface Mythonyms, Diachronic Translation Mythonyms, and Palimpsestic Layering Mythonyms—represent distinct strategies through which Lewis appropriates, transforms, and reconfigures established mythological nomenclature within his distinctive theological framework. The diachronic distribution of these categories across Lewis's works reveals a significant evolution in his mythonymic methodology, from relatively straightforward linguistic transformations in his earlier works toward increasingly complex multilayered signification in his later texts, particularly *Till We Have Faces*, which demonstrates the most sophisticated integration of diverse mythological associations.

This taxonomic approach yields several significant theoretical insights regarding Lewis's literary project. First, it illuminates his distinctive approach to what he termed the "baptism of the imagination," wherein pagan mythological elements are simultaneously acknowledged, transformed, and transcended within a Christian theological framework. Second, it demonstrates how Lewis's mythonymic strategies function as mediatory mechanisms establishing continuity between disparate conceptual domains: between ancient mythology and modern literature, between pagan tradition and Christian revelation, and between primary and secondary worlds. Third, it challenges established theoretical frameworks regarding the relationship between nomenclature and fantasy literature, suggesting that mythonyms operate as boundary-crossing elements that destabilize conventional distinctions between mimetic and non-mimetic narrative modes.

The limitations of this study include its focus on Lewis's fictional works to the exclusion of his autobiographical and poetic writings, where additional mythonymic patterns might be identified. Furthermore, while comprehensive within Lewis's corpus, the taxonomic framework developed here requires further testing and potential modification when applied to other authors working within the mythopoeic tradition. Significant questions remain regarding the relationship between Lewis's explicit theoretical writings on mythology and language and his implicit mythonymic practices, as well as the potential influence of his philosophical engagement with idealism on his approach to mythological nomenclature.

Future research directions might productively include comparative analysis of mythonymic strategies across the works of the Inklings group, particularly examining the distinctive approaches of Lewis and Tolkien to mythological nomenclature. Additionally, investigation of how Lewis's mythonymic patterns have influenced subsequent fantasy authors could illuminate the broader significance of his contribution to twentieth-century literary practices. Finally, exploration of potential connections between Lewis's mythonymic techniques and contemporary theoretical frameworks in cognitive linguistics, particularly conceptual blending theory, might yield additional insights regarding the cognitive mechanisms through which mythonyms establish connections across conceptual domains.

This taxonomic approach ultimately provides a methodological foundation for understanding how Lewis's sophisticated engagement with mythological nomenclature contributes to his broader literary project of rehabilitating mythopoeic imagination within a Christian theological framework, offering what he described in *An Experiment in Criticism* as a means of "receiving" rather than merely "using" mythological traditions. The significance of this research extends beyond Lewis scholarship to address fundamental questions regarding the relationship between language, imagination, and transcendence in twentieth-century literature, suggesting that mythonymic construction represents not merely a stylistic technique but a fundamental cognitive strategy for negotiating the boundaries between immanent and transcendent domains of experience.

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