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**Mythology and Moral**  
**in C.S. Lewis's**  
*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*

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## Introduction

I think almost everyone has heard of Narnia, the magical world accessible through a wardrobe. I was first introduced to the story as a little girl by the TV-series based on the book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. As a child I saw it as a beautiful story about how good defeats evil and never put more thought into it. Not until I read the book as an adult did I see the symbolism of Christian beliefs in the story. The story also contains a lot of mythical creatures and my personal interest in mythology made me want to investigate this further. I could never have guessed how many people there are that have strong opinions on this book and the author in question, C.S. Lewis. The wide range of opinions and interpretations of this story have transformed my innocent view of a beautiful story into something totally different.

After investigating these interpretations and analysing the text, my conclusion is that C.S. Lewis tried to tell us more than just an ordinary fairy-tale, since many of the characters and events can be interpreted in several different ways. My interpretations are one way of looking at the novel and there are of course many other ways of interpreting it. I have chosen to look closer at and concentrate on only a few characters and events where I think C.S. Lewis's opinions and moral are expressed. I have investigated what the characters could stand for and from which mythology they are taken. In two cases I will show the different use of mythology in the British and the American edition and how that affects the characters. To try to find out if the characters can have different levels of meaning I have done research on mythology, symbolism and word origin. In my analysis of the events I have tried to interpret what moral issues C.S. Lewis is expressing. According to Devin Brown C.S. Lewis wrote, "there may be an author who at a particular moment finds not only fantasy but fantasy-for-children the exactly right form for what he wants to say" (103). This is what I will try to show he did in this book: he expressed his moral and his opinions.

C.S. Lewis wrote numerous books, both for children and adults. In the *Chronicle of Narnia* there are seven books. I have chosen to concentrate on the most famous one: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. The idea for the Narnia chronicles began with a picture of a faun carrying an umbrella, which C.S. Lewis had had in his head from the age of sixteen but he was nearly fifty before he started to write a story about the faun (Sibley 22). C.S. Lewis was at a young age introduced to fairy-tales, legend and mythology by his and his brother's Irish nurse Lizzie Endicott, which started a lifelong fascination for mythology (Sibley 9). He was supposed to have said that he started to write children's books because: "[p]eople won't write the books I want, so I have to do it for myself..." (Sibley 19). In this book C.S. Lewis used characters from different mythologies and not only from classical mythology, which was the

most common thing to use at the time. This was much criticised, especially by a close friend of his, the famous writer J.R.R. Tolkien (Sibley 23).

### **Criticism**

C.S. Lewis's chronicles about Narnia are most known as being books about Christianity and my investigation shows that the majority of critics think that. C.S. Lewis has even been called a "twentieth-century apostle" (Filmer 1). For example Michael Nelson states in his article "One mythology among many: the spiritual odyssey of C.S. Lewis" that "[t]he Chronicles, taken as a whole, are an imaginative retelling of the entire Christian story" and that C.S. Lewis wrote that he "hoped that children would not notice the books' Christianity, for fear of turning them off" (Section five). Peter J Schakel on the other hand thinks that the moral dimension of C.S. Lewis's work was more important for him than the Christian dimension (*Imagination and the Art in C.S. Lewis* 170). C.S. Lewis was a believing Christian and I think that you could probably not write anything unless some of your own frames of reference shine through.

Kath Filmer is also one of those who question C.S. Lewis's Christian messages and instead suggests that maybe we do not see so much Christianity in Lewis's books after all. Instead we see "Lewisisianity - a strange, idiosyncratic blend of belief, prejudices, fears and apprehensions" (13). David Holbrook also questions C.S. Lewis's religious intentions and begins his book *The Skeleton in the Wardrobe, C.S. Lewis's Fantasies: A Phenomenological Study* with the statement that when he read the Narnia books he "felt there was something seriously 'wrong' with them" (9). He even claims that he heard of one psychotherapist that thinks that the books are full of hate (9). David Holbrook ends his book by saying that by his phenomenological study he can draw the conclusion that the books tend to "harden the soul rather than refresh it" (289). I feel that David Holbrook has come to the opposite conclusion to what I have, namely that he does not think children can learn anything good from this story. Two other very strong opponents to Narnia are Philip Hensher and Philip Pullman. They are of the opinion that C.S. Lewis's books about Narnia are corrupting the minds of young children with allegories and are ghastly, poisonous and misogynist (Easterbrook middle section). This I do not agree with although I can clearly see and will show further on in my discussion that some events in the story can be interpreted as C.S. Lewis's expressing misogyny.

## Characters

The only humans in Narnia are the four siblings, Lucy, Edmund, Susan and Peter. The inhabitants of Narnia are animals and supernatural creatures with human traits and resemblance. It is an old Celtic tradition to use animals with human traits in storytelling (MacKillop). The characters in the book are divided into good and evil. Aslan the great lion is the leader of the good. Jadis the White Witch is the leader of the evil. As I will show in my discussion below, C.S. Lewis has built his characters on creatures used by Christianity, Medieval folklore and Greek, Norse, Celtic, as well as Arabic mythology.

## Expressing Mythology

### Aslan

Aslan is the Turkish word for lion and should be pronounced *Ass-lan* according to C.S. Lewis (Sibley 88). Aslan is portrayed as a great ruler of Narnia, kind and merciful, just as lions were known to be in medieval folklore (Mercantante 413). He is also by many interpreters seen as a symbol of Christ himself in this book. Mercantante, however, also points out that in medieval Christian symbolism the lion could also symbolise the devil (413). I feel that C.S. Lewis is showing that Aslan has both a good and an evil side when he writes, “[p]eople who have not been in Narnia sometimes think that a thing cannot be good and terrible at the same time. If the children had ever thought so, they were cured of it now. For when they tried to look at Aslan’s face [...] then they found they couldn’t look at him and went all trembly” (134). This can be interpreted as Aslan being mighty. I believe, however, it could also be interpreted as if they should have respect for him and be afraid of him, just for a short moment but still long enough for the reader to think of him as not altogether good.

As an alternative to the lion I think C.S. Lewis could have chosen, for example, the eagle or the black leopard, also called panther, for a ruler in Narnia. The eagle is a symbol of Christ himself in Christianity (Mercantante 227) and C.S. Lewis actually has included an eagle in the story as one of those who help Aslan (Lewis 134). The panther was in medieval Christian folklore and symbolism seen as a symbol of Christ because it was believed that the panther “slept for three days and then emerged from its den with a roar” (Mercantante 407). The ordinary leopard, on the other hand, “in medieval Christian folklore and symbolism [...] represented cruelty, sin, lust, luxury, the devil, or Antichrist, depending on the context” (Mercantante 407). Still there are two ordinary leopards standing next to Aslan as being representatives of good, even so close to Aslan himself that “one carried his crown and the

other his standard” (Lewis 134). To choose these Antichrist characters gives double messages and can actually emphasise the interpretation that Aslan is not being all good.

One more way of interpreting Aslan as not being all good can be exemplified by the violent actions in which he is involved. He kills the White Witch in the end of the book: “[t]hen with a roar [...] the great beast flung himself upon the White Witch” (Lewis 185). Notice here that Aslan when he is about to kill goes under the name the “great beast” instead of Aslan. He also forces Peter with great danger for the boy’s own life to rescue his sister Susan: “when he saw all the other creatures start forward and heard Aslan say with a wave of his paw, ‘Back! Let the Prince win his spurs’” (138). Peter does manage to kill the wolf Maugrim, who he fights in this scene, but it seems to me when using the word *spur*, Aslan glorifies and encourages Peter to kill to show he is a man or even to show he is worthy to be a king. After the killing Aslan makes Peter a knight: “[h]and it [the sword] to me and kneel, Son of Adam, said Aslan. And when Peter had done so he struck him with the flat of the blade and said, Rise up, Sir Peter Wolf’s-Bane” (141). Devin Brown believes that Peter killing Maugrim is his “birth of a more mature self” (109). The reason for this is that Peter has overcome his fears to be able to kill and is therefore made a knight and, “given a new name to mark this transformation” (109). Kath Filmer thinks that the scenes of unnecessary violence in C.S. Lewis’s books may be “attributable to the male ‘rites of passage’ which he underwent at school” and that is why “violence plays a very large part in the ‘justice’ meted out to evil characters in his fiction” (136).

### **Mr Tumnus**

One of the main characters of Narnia is Mr Tumnus, who is a faun. Fauns are half-goat and half-man. Satyrs are the Greek name for fauns (Sibley 85). Fauns were believed to pursue women in their dreams (*Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion* 214).

At his cave, Mr Tumnus tells Lucy stories about how the fauns used to dance midnight dances with the nymphs and the dryads (23). Nymphs are female divinities and the word *nymphe* also means bride (*Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion* 379). Dryads are woodland nymphs who are the spirits of the trees and who die when their tree is cut down (Sibley 84). He also tells stories: “about summer when the woods were green and old Silenus [...] would come to visit them, and sometimes Bacchus himself and then the streams would run with wine instead of water” (Lewis 23-24).

Silenus is an imaginary male inhabitant of the wild. He is generally represented naked and has animal features and an unrestrained desire for sex and wine (*Oxford Dictionary of*

*Classical Myth and Religion* 497). He is also a son of the faun Pan (Mercantante 214). Bacchus, in Greek mythology called Dionysus, and Silenus are the gods of merry-making and wine (Sibley 85). Dionysus/Bacchus is believed to be the one that taught humankind the culture of wine. The cult of Dionysus was very important in Greece and Rome but was in the beginning forbidden because its ceremonies sometimes degenerated in human victims (Mercantante 215).

Considering that this is a children's book I find it strange to have a character telling children how fun it was when the streams would run with wine instead of water. Because the book was published in the 1950s the situation most likely was different compared to today. Maybe it was not that strange to give children some wine then and from a Christian point of view wine was and is used for the Holy Communion where children are participating. Michael Nelson claims that "according to the Lewis biographer George Sayer, Narnia was not unlike Lewis's view of heaven, where all sorts of people could come together to celebrate, dance, and sing with fauns, giants, centaurs, dwarfs, and innumerable and very different animals" (Section five). Nevertheless, I believe that you can get the wrong impression of the use of wine together with children and it occurs more than once in the story. Wine is given to Edmund when he is released from the White Witch's captivity: "[l]et him lie down - give him some wine - drink this - steady now - you'll be all right in a minute" (145). Wine or some form of alcohol is also given to Peter, Susan and Lucy when they are hiding in a cave on their way to the stone table: "[t]hen Mrs Beaver handed round in the dark a little flask out of which everyone drank something - it made one cough and splutter a little and stung the throat, but it also made you feel deliciously warm after you'd swallowed it" (112-113). In the end of the book, when they celebrate the coronation of the four siblings with a great feast, they once more do it with wine: "[a]nd that night there was a great feast in Cair Paravel, and revelry and dancing, and gold flashed and wine flowed" (190).

### **Jadis**

The White Witch's name is Jadis. Jade is according to the dictionary *Ask Oxford* another word for "a bad-tempered or disreputable woman" and "a term of reprobation applied to a woman". Jade can also be used playfully, like *hussy* or *minx* according to the *OED*. The White Witch/Jadis is half jinn and half giant (Lewis 88). Jinns are supernatural creatures and nature demons from Arabic folklore. Satan was believed to be a jinn who originally was an angel before he disobeyed God (Glassé 242). The jinns are nature-spirits that go back to pre-Islamic time. They are evil spirits who were believed to cause madness (Lurker 95). In *The Lion, the*

*Witch and the Wardrobe* the Beavers explain what and who the White Witch is by saying, “[s]he comes of your [...] father Adam’s first wife, her they called Lilith. And she was one of the Jinn” (88). The White Witch’s evil nature is marked by several archetypal attributes, where winter is one attribute of the rule of evil, according to Northrop Frye’s table of Mythoi in his book *Anatomy of Criticism* (Filmer 44). Her white face gives a notion of disease and nausea. Also the absence of blood in her face indicates death, infertility and cruelty. Kath Filmer also describes her as “the White Witch [who] has no love relationship and no progeny, and Medusa-like, [turning] living beings into stone” (44). Furthermore, she thinks that “because the Witch is white, not black, the usual colour for the wicked witch of fairy tales, her deceit begins from the moment of her first appearance” (109).

When Peter, Susan and Lucy see the White Witch for the first time they can feel her malice: “[t]he three children who had not seen her before felt shudders running down their backs at the sight of her face; and there were low growls among all the animals present. Though it was bright sunshine everyone felt suddenly cold” (149). The White Witch is pure evil and tries to kill everyone who stands in her way of being the queen of Narnia. She seems to enjoy killing and torturing her victims, mostly by turning them into stones with her wand. She holds Edmund as a hostage and treats him very badly. Edmund is forced to walk with his hands tied behind him, “and every time he slipped, the dwarf gave him a curse and sometimes a flick with the whip” (128). She hits him: “[a]s for you, said the Witch, giving Edmund a stunning blow on the face” (125). Finally, she is going to slit Edmund’s throat with her knife but is in the last minute stopped by Aslan’s friends (144).

C.S. Lewis’s use of evil characters from Arabic folklore, I believe, can be interpreted as if C.S. Lewis was trying to make a political as well as a religious statement, considering the fact that he was a believing Christian and there has been a long history of hatred between Christianity and Islam. In fact not only Jadis is taken from Arabic folklore. C.S. Lewis was using other really repulsive characters like ghouls and efreets from Arabic folklore together with Jadis (144, 159). A ghoul is “[i]n Arabic folklore, [a] demonic being who feeds on human bodies. [...] Ghouls eat corpses of young children often taking bodies from graves. If no graveyard is available, they will pursue live victims. Considered the offspring of Iblis, the Islamic Satan, ghouls can appear in various animal forms” (Mercantante 275). An efreet is an evil demon or monster of Muslim mythology and it is another form of the words afreet and ifrit according to the dictionary’s *OED* and *Wikipedia*. In *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam* under the word “ifrit” a cross-reference is given to the entry for “Jinn”. I suspect that since the



words are very similar, almost identical in spelling and phonetics, C.S. Lewis may have used the English word “efreet” instead of “ifrit” to make one more reference to a Jinn.

### **Differences in editions**

In the American editions of the book Maugrim is called the Fenris Ulf, a character from Norse myths: “[t]he Fenris Ulf was a huge beast who was feared by everyone until he was eventually tied up with a chain, made by dwarfs out of invisible things that never existed, like the roots of a mountain, the beard of a woman, the breath of a fish and the noise of a moving cat” (Sibley 82). Maugrim is the wolf that serves the White Witch. Maugrim phonetically evokes the notion of a *more grim* being and the obsolete word “maugre” also means “ill will”. Peter J Schakel thinks that the reason why C.S. Lewis used different mythologies and changed Maugrim to Fenris in the American edition was to create “a much richer imaginative experience, carrying multiple ripples of meaning” when and if people can understand the allusion that Fenris was born by Loki the god of strife and spirit of evil, and finally killed by Vidar the son of Odin (*Imagination and the Art in C.S Lewis* 36). I believe that Europeans would be more familiar to Norse myth than the Americans. Therefore I find it strange that he did not use Fenris from the beginning.

Another difference between the British and the American edition is when the White Witch refers to the Deep Magic. In the British edition she says that the Deep Magic “is written on letters deep as a spear is long on the fire-stones on the Secret Hill” (150). According to Peter J Schakel, this is supposed to be an allusion to “annual druidical rites throughout the British Isles in which the old year’s fires were extinguished and the new fire was kindled at a sacred place, usually a low, round hill” (*Imagination and the Art in C.S Lewis* 36). In the American edition C.S. Lewis once again uses Norse myths. Here the White Witch says that the Deep Magic is written “on the trunk of the World Ash Tree” which is an allusion to great tree Yggdrasil. This tree has branches that tower into heaven, trunks that hold up the earth, three roots that “reach into the realm of the dead, the land of the giants, and the abode of the gods” (Schakel, *Imagination and the Art in C.S. Lewis* 36). Peter J Schakel believes this to be an allusion that the “tree reinforces the truth that Deep Magic, or Natural Law, is universal, embedded in the created universe from the dawn of time, and the foundation upon which social order rests” (*Imagination and the Art in C.S. Lewis* 36). He also thinks that by Deep Magic, in our world called the Law of Nature, C.S. Lewis express the rules about right and wrong, which we do not need to be taught because every one knows them by nature (*Reading with the Heart* 23).

C.S. Lewis also changed the animals which Susan and Edmund are thinking of in the beginning of the book (13). As an explanation to this Peter J Schakel uses Paul Ford's suggestions that C.S. Lewis changed Edmund's animal from a fox to a snake to make a more obvious association to the deceptive traitor Edmund becomes in the book. He changed Susan's animal from a rabbit to a fox, which is associated with wiliness instead of the warm, cuddly feeling a rabbit is associated with (*Imagination and the Art in C.S. Lewis* 36).

Peter J Schakel says these changes were made because of the union regulations in the United States, where "the type of the Chronicles had to be reset for the edition" (*Reading with the Heart* 35). When C.S. Lewis did this, Peter J Schakel thinks that he may have had second thoughts about some of the things in the book and that is why he made these changes. C.S. Lewis has made many changes in the other books in the Chronicles of Narnia as well (*Reading with the Heart* 35). I have not been able to find any further explanation to why C.S. Lewis himself or the publisher made these changes between the British and the American edition.

## **Expressing Moral**

### **Political opinions**

Kath Filmer believes that C.S. Lewis's novels are both a mask and a mirror for the man himself and his beliefs. Much can be revealed through myth and metaphors about the author's ideas, beliefs and intentions (2). Also she thinks that "Lewis the political thinker can be seen quite clearly in many of the episodes" of his books (77). I am willing to agree with Kath Filmer. I believe that C.S. Lewis throughout the book gives children examples on proper behaviour. These examples are presumably based on his moral and political opinions of the time being.

The fact that Aslan is a lion, the lion being the king of beasts, Kate Filmer sees as a sign of C.S. Lewis's devotion to hierarchies (26). She also argues that C.S. Lewis states his political and conservative ideas in the book, for example by stating that "Lewis's medieval world of Narnia is a metaphor for the kind of system of which Lewis approved; in the thirteen hundred years of Narnian history which have elapsed between the first visit [...] and their return [...] there has been absolutely no progress at all" (78). Gregg Easterbrook argues in the end of his article "In Defense of C.S. Lewis" that "[t]here is no denying, that Narnia is an Anglo Anglican's fantasy" and that "the sociological structure of Narnia is aristocratic and favours British imperialism. [...] the portals to Narnia are in England, this means, in effect, that Brits must rule".

### **Children's education**

Kath Filmer thinks that C.S. Lewis shows his political opinions in his attack of the British education system in the book and used it “to make a political point about trends in modern education” (78). He has a dig at contemporary schooling when he writes, “[l]ogic!’ said the Professor half to himself. Why don’t they teach logic at these schools?” (56) and “[k]eep your eyes open. Bless me, what *do* they teach them at these schools?” (197). This shows that C.S. Lewis thought that contemporary schooling was the “poorer for the omission of logic from the standard curriculum” (Filmer 78). In my opinion C.S. Lewis also blames school for Edmund’s bad behaviour when he writes, “[w]hen at last she was free to come back to Edmund she found him standing on his feet and not only healed of his wounds but looking better than she had seen him look - oh, for ages; in fact ever since his first term at that horrid school which was where he had begun to go wrong” (Lewis 187-188).

Reading books is one important part in a child’s education and I think C.S. Lewis is expressing this in the book. Peter J Schakel thinks that C.S. Lewis wanted the children that read his books to become literary readers and thereby to obtain the same lifelong love for books that C.S. Lewis himself had (*Imagination and the art in C.S Lewis* 39). He also thinks that C.S. Lewis’s love for books is the reason to why he refers to them on so many occasions in the Chronicles of Narnia (*Imagination and the Art in C.S Lewis* 27). In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* references to books are made on several occasions, for example in the house where the children are living: “a whole series of rooms that led into each other and were lined with books - most of them very old books and some bigger than a Bible in a church” (14) and “the housekeeper, [...] telling them about [...] the rare books in the library” (58). When Lucy visits Mr Tumnus for the first time, C.S. Lewis even lets us know the titles of the books Mr Tumnus has on his shelf, which might be seen as a reflection of C.S. Lewis’s big interest in mythology: “on one wall was a shelf full of books. [...] They had titles like, *The life and Letters of Silenus* or *Nymphs and Their Ways* or *Men, Monks and Gamekeepers; A study in Popular Legend* or *Is Man a Myth?*” (Lewis 22-23). At the Beavers’ house there are “no books or pictures” (Lewis 81) and this Peter J Schakel thinks shows that the Beavers’ house is less sophisticated (*Imagination and the Art in C.S Lewis* 145)

### **Social rules and proper behaviour**

Both Lucy and Edmund meet a stranger when they, on separate occasions, for the first time enter Narnia. Their new acquaintances lead them in very different directions. I believe that

C.S. Lewis is trying to give a moral lecture about the fact that it is not a proper behaviour for a child to trust and follow a stranger to their home.

The first creature Lucy meets when she enters Narnia is the faun, Mr Tumnus. She is invited to tea and follows him home. The faun's intentions are to make Lucy fall asleep and hand her over to the evil White Witch. He plays on his little flute: "[a]nd the tune he played made Lucy want to cry and laugh and dance and go to sleep all at the same time. It must have been hours later when she shook herself and said: [...] I must go home. I only meant to stay for a few minutes" (24). As shown above he almost succeeds to get her to sleep but then suddenly he bursts out in tears and changes his mind. "I am such a bad Faun", he says and understands what he was about to do was wrong (26). Although Lucy followed a stranger to his house and was about to get into trouble, actually killed, by the White Witch, it turned out alright in the end, this time.

When Edmund enters Narnia he does the same thing as Lucy does, trusting a stranger, in this case the White Witch, something which later turns out to be a big mistake. The White Witch gives him candy: "and instantly there appeared a round box, tied with green silk ribbon, which, when, opened, turned out to contain several pounds of the best Turkish Delight" (43-44) to make him tell where his brother and sisters are. Kath Filmer believes that with the symbol of the poisonous Turkish delights, "for she [the White Witch] knew, though Edmund did not, that this was enchanted Turkish Delight and that anyone who had once tasted it would want more and more of it, and would even, if they were allowed, go on eating it till they killed themselves" (Lewis 45), C.S. Lewis "exploits the Western convention that children should not accept sweets from strangers, since such strangers are traditionally held to be malevolent" (109). Turkish delight "is a sweet consisting of lumps of flavoured gelatine coated with powdered sugar" (Hornby). I believe that C.S. Lewis with this incident also shows how hard it can be for a child to say no to an always superior adult: "Edmund did not like this arrangement at all but he dared not disobey" (42). This time it does not turn out as well as it did for Lucy. Because of Edmund's actions Mr Tumnus gets captured and turned into stone, Aslan has to die and the whole of Narnia is about to be lost to evil.

Another example of a moral lecture and proper behaviour C.S. Lewis points out three times in the book is that you should never close the door behind you if you step into a wardrobe. The first time it is mentioned is when Lucy steps into the wardrobe for the first time: "[s]he immediately stepped into the wardrobe and [...] leaving the door open, of course, because she knew that it is very foolish to shut oneself into any wardrobe" (15). The second time this occurs is when Lucy steps into Narnia for a second time: "[s]he had, of course, left

the door open, for she knew that it is a very silly thing to shut oneself into a wardrobe” (16-17). Even Peter, the oldest brother, remembers the rule: “Peter held the door closed but did not shut it; for, of course, he remembered, as every sensible person does, that you should never, never shut yourself up in a wardrobe” (60). Peter J Schakel does not think this is a piece of advice or a warning to children, it should be seen simply as statements of common knowledge (*Imagination and the Art in C.S Lewis* 74). I do not agree and think that C.S. Lewis wanted to make a point here and express moral behaviour because he is mentioning it more than once. Not surprisingly one person forgets this important rule and it is Edmund: “[h]e jumped in and shut the door, forgetting what a very foolish thing this is to do” (35). Actually Edmund does all the stupid things you as a child have been told not to do, almost until the end of the book. He is saved, though, by Aslan, of course trading his life for Edmund, but also by his siblings. By this I argue that C.S. Lewis shows what will happen if children do not behave in a right way and have common knowledge.

### **Gender differences**

Kath Filmer finds it disturbing that in all of C.S. Lewis’s books, the “ultimate good is depicted as ultimate masculinity, while evil, the corruption of good, is depicted as femininity” (110). In this particularly book there are only male animals that battle against evil together with Aslan. This I believe could have been a way for C.S. Lewis to show the difference between genders.

One example of a male character is the Centaur (Lewis 134). Centaurs are half-horse and half-man and are in the book described as brave and noble people. In mythology it is totally the opposite and they are often described as drunk and violent (Sibley 84). In *The Facts on File Encyclopaedia of World Mythology and Legend* centaurs are described as drunkards and rapists and the Greek used them in art and literature to “represent barbaric civilisation”. Even in medieval Christian art centaurs were used, to show man’s animal nature (Mercantante 168). The fact is that Centaurs came to be a symbol for all those forces which opposed Greek male cultural and political dominance already in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (*Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion* 106). A second example of a male character is the eagle. As I have already mentioned the eagle was a symbol of Christ in Christianity but as a huge contrast, Zeus the king of the gods in Greek mythology was believed to take the form of an eagle when he was out on his sexual adventures with both men and women (Mercantante 227).

Another instance where C.S. Lewis shows the difference between genders are in the scene where Susan and Lucy are given tools they can fight with by Father Christmas but as women they are not allowed to use them for that purpose. Susan gets “a bow and a quiver full of arrows” and Lucy gets “a small dagger” (116,117). But they are not allowed to participate in any battles: “I don’t mean you to fight in the battle [...] For you also are not to be in the battle [...] But battles are ugly when women fight” (117). By this I think C.S. Lewis was of the opinion that women were allowed to defend themselves but should be excluded from the fights among men.

### **Misogyny**

Some of the critics I introduced in the beginning have claimed that C.S. Lewis was a misogynist. For example David Holbrook states that C.S. Lewis was known for his misogyny and that he even voted against admitting women to Oxford (80). Also Gregg Easterbrook writes in the beginning of his article “In Defense of C.S. Lewis” that it is said that Narnia is misogynistic. Kath Filmer even claims that C.S. Lewis never saw women “as creatures very like himself - he never saw them as human” and this is shown in his books (136). I do not particularly agree with this opinion. I believe that the situation of women was different at the time this book was written. The use of stereotypical women that often were helpless, put on pedestals and had to be rescued by the hero, was also common at the time in novels (Schakel, *Reading with the Heart* 16). My opinion is that this should be taken into consideration when using the word misogynist.

Many critics have particularly reacted on the statement that “battles are ugly when women fight” (Lewis 117) and claimed that this is an expression of C.S. Lewis’s misogyny. This quotation I discussed in the previous passage titled Gender differences. I think that C.S. Lewis probably was conservative when it came to women and that today it can be interpreted as him being a misogynist. Kath Filmer thinks that C.S. Lewis saw feminism as modern evil because he was so conservative when it came to women (104). She also believes that Mrs Beaver symbolises C.S. Lewis’s conservative way of looking at women (104). Mr and Mrs Beaver are the ones who help the siblings to get to Aslan. Kath Filmer thinks Mrs Beaver is an instance of the Earth Mother, because she takes care of the domestic things, prepares dinner and fusses with Mr Beaver when they are preparing to leave the hole (107). To David Holbrook the Beavers symbolise good parents in an ordinary good home (36). I agree that the Beavers clearly are a symbol of parenting. They take care of the four of them, feed them, tell

them the right things to do and never leave their side. Then I suppose it would be the natural thing to portray Mrs Beaver as a mother with domestic duties.

C.S. Lewis's use of evil characters is the only place where I can possibly see his misogyny. Looking at the meaning and origin of these specific creatures I find them quite abusive in their attitude towards children and women. He uses a few supernatural creatures not very common in children's books, like ghouls, efreetts and incubuses. Ghouls and efreetts are explained earlier in the text and an incubus (Lewis 159) is a: "male evil spirit formerly supposed to have sex with a sleeping woman" (Hornby). Incubus is Latin and means "he who lies on top" (Lurker 88). C.S. Lewis himself does not describe them in the book, he just explains that the creatures he is using, "I won't describe because if I did the grown-ups would probably not let you read this book" (Lewis 159).

## **Conclusion**

C.S. Lewis's books about Narnia have by many critics been said to be books full of Christian messages, hate and misogyny. The aim with my investigation was to show that C.S. Lewis expresses more things than an ordinary fairy-tale in his book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. I have concentrated on a few characters and events in the book where I consider he expresses his moral and opinions.

I have discovered that many of the characters from the different mythologies he was using can be interpreted as characters with very different levels of meaning. Aslan the lion for example can be interpreted as both good and evil in old folklore. He is also surrounded by characters that can be interpreted as evil as the faun, the leopards and the centaurs. Considering this and some of the violent actions where Aslan is involved, can question his good intentions. The evil characters also have very different levels of meaning, especially Jadis the White Witch, ghouls and incubuses. I have also shown how the different use of mythology in the British and the American edition has affected the characters.

The fact that C.S. Lewis was expressing his opinions through moral lectures is shown in my interpretation of the several events in the book. I have tried to show the moral issues he was trying to express; for example, the significance of a proper education, the importance of not locking yourself into a wardrobe, never to accept candy from strangers, and, most important, never to follow a stranger to their home. This knowledge I believe is important and can never be told too many times to a child.

When he expresses his opinions I find some of them obsolete and today they can be interpreted by many as opinions full of gender differences and even misogyny. I have during

my investigation come to the conclusion that C.S. Lewis was conservative when it came to women. His descriptions in the book of what girls are allowed and not allowed to do most likely have caused the opinion that he was a misogynist.

My conclusion is that *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* deals with so much more than just Christianity. I believe that C.S. Lewis in this book expresses more of his own opinions and moral than religion. According to Devin Brown C.S. Lewis wrote, “there may be an author who at a particular moment finds not only fantasy but fantasy-for-children the exactly right form for what he wants to say” (103). This is exactly what I mean he did.



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