

Women, Sex, and Power: Circe and Lilith in Narnia

The White Witch of the Narnian Chronicles "is of course Circe," C. S. Lewis wrote in an unpublished (1954) letter (Schakel 140). But the Witch is also Lilith, as Mr. Beaver explains to the children in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*: "She comes of your father Adam's . . . first wife, her they called Lilith" (81). Although there are influences on Lewis's Witch other than Circe and Lilith, the White Witch and her successor the Emerald Witch possess dangerous qualities—the qualities of female sexuality and power—that can derive only from Circe and Lilith in their mythological, Renaissance, and Victorian manifestations. Lewis's Christian mythos unites Circe and Lilith with Satan, in the latter's biblical and Miltonic manifestations. Good and evil become polarized along gender lines: the deity remains masculine, while the two witches replace male characters in assuming responsibility for the fall of mankind and the crucifixion of mankind's Savior. On the other hand, the girls in the Narnian Chronicles play active, positive roles.¹ The impression left on readers by Lewis's children's stories, and confirmed by his other fiction, is that puberty ends the freedom of girls to assume nontraditional roles. A girl influenced by Narnia might well determine never to grow up. Thus, a study of his application of the Lilith and Circe myths to children's literature demonstrates that, although Lewis rather predictably sanitizes the sexuality of the two myths, his Narnian novels contain all the same ambivalence about female power as does his writing for adult audiences.

As a literary scholar, Lewis was familiar with the Circe of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid: her enchanted food and phallic wand capable of transforming men into swine, her

beauty and her seduction of Odysseus. In *The Odyssey*, "the nymph with lovely braids" mixed a potion for Odysseus's men, "but into the brew she stirred her wicked drugs / to wipe from their memories any thought of home" (X, 259-60). Then "suddenly / she struck with her wand, drove them into her pigsties, / all of them bristling into swine" (261-63). Odysseus is protected from her magic by a magic herb, moly, given him by Hermes; when Circe tries to transform Odysseus, he draws his sword "and rush[es] her fast as if to run her through" (358). "Come, sheathe your sword, let's go to bed together," she responds (370). Ovid's *Metamorphoses* retells the story with added commentary. Although Circe is the daughter of the Sun, she is quite capable of summoning "Night and the gods of Night / . . . forth from hell; Chaos itself she invoked; / and Hecate, witchcraft's mistress" (XIV, 5-7). Ovid makes the conflict between Circe and Odysseus even more a competition of phallic symbols, as Odysseus uses the moly to "fend off the wand / she waved about"; when he draws his sword, she gladly concedes to a better man: "She had met her match, her master. / She wasn't at all dismayed, but pleased, even delighted" (XIV, 283-84, 286-87).

The phallic wand was an important part of Circe's portrayal in early modern Europe, when her usurpation of masculine power was emphasized in woodcuts showing her with a wand, while a male victim kneels before her. In the opinion of Judith Yarnall, "[t]hese woodcuts accord well with the woman-on-top *topos* that sported with--but did not seriously challenge--the prevailing sexual order of the times" (101). Circe and her wand feature in masques such as William Browne's *Inner Temple Masque* (1614) and

Aurelian Townshend's *Tempe Restored* (1632), as well as in art (Yarnall 147).

The early modern period's most significant literary Circe figure is Comus in Milton's *Maske* (1634); this is also the Circe probably most familiar to Lewis, who taught and wrote about Milton. The son of Circe and Bacchus, Comus has inherited from his mother her "charmed Cup," a taste from which turns humans into swine (51). Comus kidnaps the nameless Lady, imprisoning her in a chair with a wave of his wand. One of Lewis's witches handles a prince similarly. While grotesque figures with the heads of animals cavort about Milton's Lady and Comus, he urges her to drink from his cup and join in the revels, while she opposes him with "the Sun-clad power of Chastity" (782). When her two young brothers appear, they destroy the cup, but Comus flees with the wand. The Spirit sent by Jove to be their guide admonishes the boys: "without his rod revers't, / And backward mutters of dissevering power, / We cannot free the Lady" (816-18). Lacking the power to release the Lady from her chair, they seek assistance from Sabrina, the goddess of the river Severn, who breaks the spell. Since the Lady successfully rejects temptation, her conflict with Comus resembles Christ's temptation by Satan in the wilderness as well as Odysseus's defeat of Circe (Shawcross 50-51).

Lilith is sufficiently similar to Circe, especially in her association with animals and her dangerous sexuality, that a 4000-year-old Babylonian plaque of a winged goddess surrounded by owls and lions has been identified as a possible source for both Circe (Yarnall 39) and Lilith (Patai 222).² Lilith entered Jewish mythology through Babylonian and Sumerian mythology, probably as an attempt to resolve apparent contradictions between the creation stories of the first and second chapters of Genesis (Plaskow 54;

Koltuv 10). She "has been wholly exorcized from the Bible," except for Isaiah 34:14, in which she is said to "lurk and find somewhere to rest" in the ruined fortresses of Edom (Graves and Patai 12). Christian apologist Lewis would have known this passage, and would have been acquainted with the Kabala through his friend Charles Williams.

The Kabala contains many variations of Lilith's story, but each portrays her as a clear danger to humanity. The variations are well reported by Patai: Lilith is described as a beautiful woman with long loose hair and/or wings; as an old hag; as a warrior; or as a serpent. Associated with night, the moon, the owl, animals in general, the sea, the desert, and ruined cities, she has served as the consort of Leviathan the serpent and Samael the Devil. She was created like Adam, only from filth rather than dust or earth; or she was Adam's other half, sawed from his side; or she emerged with Samael from under God's throne and desired to become one of the cherubim. As Adam's first wife, she refused his sexual overtures, asserting that she was his equal and thus should not have to lie beneath him. To escape Adam, she spoke God's name and flew away to the Red Sea, where she took many lovers, producing demon children to plague mankind. Three angels brought her back to Adam. Her punishment for running away is the death of a hundred of her children daily. Alternatively, she has no children, for God made her barren, with no milk in her breasts, and a drop of her menstrual blood can kill an entire town. In one version, Lilith caused the fall by inciting the menstruating Eve to seduce Adam (Patai 223-32). According to some, Lilith and two other female demons seduced some of the angels, the "Sons of God," and bore giants (Graves and Patai 101). Assuming the form of the Queen of Sheba, a "black but comely" woman, Lilith attempted to seduce Solomon. Still in the

role of a desert queen, she destroyed Job's family. She is a succubus, a vampire, and a strangler, usually with a strand or two of her own hair. She causes nocturnal emissions when men sleep alone, steals semen from the marital bed, and can even force herself on men while they are awake. Lilith is a danger for women as well, especially during virginity, menstruation, and childbirth. She hates human children, attempting to prevent their births through barrenness and miscarriages, and thus earning from Joyce the epithet "patron of abortions" ((Patai 223-32; Joyce 390). When she cannot prevent their birth, Lilith tries to suck children's blood or strangle them. She has been given authority to punish and kill children for the sins of their fathers, and is associated with the flaming sword that guards Eden. If an amulet prevents her from killing a human child, she kills one of her own from spite (Patai 223-32).³

The Kabbalistic book of Zohar calls Lilith "that whore of a woman, the primordial serpent," "a fungus" emerging "out of the dregs of wine," and "End of All Flesh, End of Days" (77). In one description she sounds like the dangerous seductress from the biblical Song of Songs; however, this seductress transforms herself into a warrior, her gender apparently changing:

She bedecks herself with all kinds of jewelry
 like an abhorrent prostitute posing on the corner to seduce men.
 The fool who approaches her --
 she grabs him and kisses him,
 pours him wine from the dregs, from the venom of vipers. . . .
 This fool follows her, drinks from the cup of wine,
 fornicates with her, deviates after her. . . .
 she removes her decorations
 and turns into a powerful warrior confronting him.
 Arrayed in armor of flashing fire, . . .
 in his hand a sharp-edged sword drips bitter drops.
 He kills that fool and flings him into hell. (77-78)

Her sexuality is about power: "Why does she want [the holy man] to lie beside her? So she can take control and dominate the world!" (87).

In short, "Lilith . . . is the embodiment of everything that is evil and dangerous in the sexual realm," while at the same time "irresistibly attractive" to men (Patai 252). But she is also a female equivalent to Satan, the enemy of humankind:

This is the unclean side, the Other Side,
who constantly confronts the Blessed Holy One
to press charges based on human sin,
who constantly confronts human beings
to pervert and mislead them below. . . . (*Zohar* 86)

She tempts and destroys, like Satan, and is associated with death and hell.

Lewis's knowledge of Lilith and Circe was inevitably colored by his literary scholarship. He studied and taught Dante, Spenser, and Milton; all three produced monstrous women who, if not named Circe or Lilith, were similar, especially in their association with animals, their seductive powers, and their animosity toward humankind. Dante's *Inferno* includes a ravenous she-wolf (Canto 1, line 45); the three Furies with vipers for hair and "bright green hydras girdled about their bodies" (Canto 9, lines 37-38); and the Harpies with wings, claws, "swollen, feathered bellies," and human faces (Canto 13, line 13). The Redcrosse knight of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* enters a dark wood where he battles Errorr, a monster "Halfe like a serpent horribly displaide, / But th'other halfe did womans shape retaine, / Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdain" (I, 1, 14).⁴ Spenser's Duessa appears beautiful, but when she bathes, her hideously deformed "neather partes" are revealed--including a bestial tail (I, 2, 41). Indebted to Duessa is the

"Snakie Sorceress" named Sin, who is Satan's daughter and lover, in *Paradise Lost*: she "seem'd Woman to the waste, and fair, / But ended foul in many a scaly fould, / Voluminous and vast, a Serpent arm'd / With mortal sting" (2.724, 650-53). Milton compares Sin with Lilith, "the Night-Hag," who comes "riding through the Air . . . Lur'd with the smell of infant blood" (2.662-64). Errorr, Duessa, and Sin are also influenced by Scylla, who is turned into a monster by Circe in Ovid. Rejected by Glaucus, who loves Scylla, Circe turns the girl's favorite pool into "a cesspool . . . which changes whatever it touches, infects, deforms. . . . She looks down / at her thighs and loins, now monstrous" (XIV, 59, 61-62).

The nineteenth century brought a more attractive and sympathetic Lilith, a femme fatale who broke men's hearts rather than murdering them and their offspring, and this version was also available to Lewis.⁵ Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 1864 oil painting "Lady Lilith" portrays a beautiful but cold and self-absorbed woman with long flowing hair. Rossetti also featured Lilith in two poems, both of which focus on her sexual allure. In "Body's Beauty" (also published as "Lilith"), Lilith "[d]raws men to watch the bright web she can weave, / Till heart and body and life are in its hold" (lines 7-8). Her method of killing is to wrap around her lover's heart "one strangling golden hair" (line 14). In "Eden Bower," Lilith presents herself as a wronged woman who takes the form of a serpent to tempt Adam and Eve and achieve her revenge against them and God. She also wants to regain the power she once had over Adam: "Once again shall my love subdue thee" (19). This power is symbolized by her golden hair, which forms a net for Adam's heart and then winds itself around the serpent's neck (23-24, 139). Attractive but dangerous,

Rossetti's Lilith is neither wholly good nor wholly evil. Responding to the painting, Swinburne recognizes Lilith as a "passive and perfect" cause of man's downfall: "Of evil desire or evil impulse she has nothing; and nothing of good. She is indifferent, equable, magnetic; she charms and draws down the souls of men by pure force of absorption, in no wise wilful [sic] or malignant" (132).

George MacDonald's novel *Lilith* (1895) "was much influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite painters, and their conception of Lilith" (Raeper 366). In turn, Lewis acknowledged MacDonald as his "master," and wrote the introduction to the 1946 edition of *Lilith* and *Phantastes*, MacDonald's other fantasy novel for adults.⁶ MacDonald's Lilith is a disobedient wife, rejecting her husband Adam and seeking to rule on her own. Lilith "lives in the city and has economic and political power" (McGillis, "Phantastes" 51). Her city, however, is a type of hell, as she makes the land arid by gathering its waters for herself. She seduces the main character, Vane, and drinks his blood, sustaining her own life while weakening him. In the form of a leopardess, she seeks out and murders children, since the one she wants--Lona, her own daughter by Adam--eludes her until the end. But even after murdering Lona, Lilith may be redeemed if she gives up her selfish ways; at the novel's conclusion, her salvation has already begun, under the supervision of her former husband and his new wife.⁷

While the nineteenth-century Lilith is partially sympathetic or at least redeemable, Lewis's friend Charles Williams portrays an unattractive, deceitful, and dangerous woman. In his novel *Descent into Hell* (1937), a succubus named Lily Sammille takes the guise of an attractive woman to seduce the historian Lawrence Wentworth. Lily also

tempts young, unmarried Pauline Anstruther, in keeping with the thinking that Lilith was particularly dangerous to virgins. As Glen Cavaliero points out, the name "Lily Sammile" combines "Lilith" with "Samael" and "smile," representing "the kind of unthinking cheery optimism which [Williams] particularly despised" (90). In Wentworth's initial erotic fantasy, he is Adam in Eden and Lily is Eve, or as she asserts, "better than Eve, dearer than Eve, closer than Eve" (86). Throughout the novel she is explicitly identified as Lilith, "She whose origin is with man's, kindred to him as he to his beasts, alien from him as he from his beasts; to whom a name was given in a myth, Lilith for a name" (89). Lily has been known to leave her victims strangled, "a single hair tight about the neck" (89). While Lily eventually brings Wentworth "down through the bottomless circles of the void" (222), she also is eternally damned. As Heather Blasdell writes, Williams's Lilith figure is "evil incarnate," the "most damned of all God's creatures" (4).⁸

Lewis's early poem "Lilith" (1943) is similarly scathing, describing her as the harlot at the door, "Offering with gnawing haste / Her cup, whereof who taste, / . . . thirst far more" (*Poems* 95). The reference to the cup of "witch's wine" suggests that Lewis already associated Lilith with Circe. His narrative poems, composed between 1918 and about 1934, demonstrate that the latter figure was also active in his imagination. The hero of *Dymer* is seduced by a hag after drinking from a flagon (*Narrative* 20-21). *The Nameless Isle* is Circe's: "She has a wand also, that woman there; / Whom she chooses to change, she'll choke the voice in his throat" (116). More generous is the portrayal in "Vitrea Circe" (1948), the witch's apology to "heavy-handed / And moral persons / Misunderstanding / Her danger bright" (*Poems* 25).

Another pre-Narnian work in which Lewis mentions Lilith by name is *That Hideous Strength* (1946), the conclusion of his Space Trilogy for adults. In this novel, troubled young Jane Studdock reads a comparison of Lilith and Eve:

The beauty of the female is the root of joy to the female as well as to the male, and it is no accident that the goddess of Love is older and stronger than the god. To desire the desiring of her own beauty is the vanity of Lilith, but to desire the enjoying of her own beauty is the obedience of Eve, and to both it is in the lover that the beloved tastes her own delightfulness. (62-63)

Just moments before, she had a premonition of these words, while passing through a garden that reminds her of "the whole legend of Paradise" (62). The Edenic garden and the book belong to a linguist named Ransom, who in the previous novel, *Perelandra* (1944), witnessed the unsuccessful temptation of another world's unfallen Adam and Eve. Ransom is a Christ-figure, his name signifying Christ's death to redeem humanity. Ransom's other name, inherited from a wealthy sister with her fortune, is also significant: "Fisher-King," referring to the guardian of the Holy Grail in Arthurian legend (114).

In contrast, Jane is Lilith, although her experiences in the novel redeem her so that she becomes Eve. She is recently married, but at first selfishly independent, and barren by her own choice: "She was at least very vividly aware how much a woman gives up in getting married. . . . Though she did not formulate it, this fear of being invaded and entangled was the deepest ground of her determination not to have a child--or not for a long time yet. One had one's own life to live" (72-73). While Ransom, whose guidance she seeks, disapproves of all contraception, its use is particularly grave in her case,

because she has missed the opportunity to bear a new Messiah. Her redemption takes two forms. First, she tells her dreams to Ransom, who (recognizing her as a seer) uses them to overcome the forces of evil. Second, she becomes an obedient wife; at the end she anticipates taking care of her husband and bearing children in submission to Mr. Fisher-King's charge: "You will have no more dreams. Have children instead" (380).

Another of the novel's characters is Lilith in a different guise: the hag or castrating warrior. Miss Hardcastle is a lesbian and a sadist. Her nickname, "Fairy," at once connotes homosexuality and the other-worldliness of Lilith. Formerly "a suffragette, a pacifist, and a British Fascist" (69), Miss Hardcastle is exaggeratedly female (with large breasts) but at the same time masculine and unattractive. The peculiar combination of suffrage and pacifism with fascism once more marks the conjunction, in Lewis's mind, of women's assertiveness and greed for power.

Unlike "Fairy" Hardcastle, Lewis's White Witch is beautiful, with long hair which "streamed out behind her like a comet's tail" in *The Magician's Nephew* (93). As Jadis in this novel, she opposes the "new, clean world" of Narnia, and its creator, Aslan, who describes her as "a force of evil" (148). Like Lilith, Jadis "opposes life and growth," having turned her own world into a tomb, and hating the living, creative world of Narnia (Schakel 102). She is associated with night: Aslan compares her to clouds passing over the sun (Lewis, *Magician* 154). After hearing the children and Fledge talking, she is "a tall, dark figure gliding quickly away" in the night (166). She breaks into a walled garden and eats an apple that gives her eternal life--or, possibly, eternal death: "For the Witch looked stronger and prouder than ever, and even, in a way, triumphant; but her face was

deadly white, white as salt" (174). Then she tempts Digory to steal an apple for his mother or even, more selfishly, for himself: "Eat it, Boy, eat it; and you and I will both live forever and be king and queen of this whole world" (175). Not only does this particular temptation closely parallel that of Genesis, with Jadis as Satan and Digory as Eve, but it also recalls the tradition of Lilith as vampire: "The juice was darker than you would expect and had made a horrid stain round her mouth" (174). Furthermore, as this temptation reveals, Jadis is clearly motivated by a lust for power: first over her own world of Charn, and then over Narnia. She possesses the seductive force of Circe and Lilith. As an old man, Digory claims that he had "never in all his life known a woman so beautiful," and it is because of his attraction to her, even as a boy, that he releases Jadis in Charn, using physical force to suppress Polly's objections (53). Jadis assumes she has been freed because Digory's uncle the magician "by his art . . . has seen the shadow of my face, in some magic mirror or some enchanted pool; and for the love of my beauty he has made a potent spell which shook your world to its foundations and sent you across the vast gulf between world and world to ask my favor and to bring me to him" (70-71). Indeed, to the end of his life, Uncle Andrew admires this "dem fine woman" (83, 121, 202); at one point, he "was actually beginning to imagine the Witch would fall in love with him" (83).

As the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Jadis plots to kill the four human children from England, tempting the younger boy, Edmund, to betray his siblings. She makes Narnia sterile through perpetual winter, fearing and hating any hint of spring or growth. In these ways, she resembles Lilith. Like Circe, her temptation is

through the mouth: it is candy that captivates Edmund, for "this was enchanted Turkish Delight and . . . 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" (38).

Moreover, the Witch has a wand that turns people to stone, reminiscent of Circe's wand which transforms men into swine. The Witch is defeated when Edmund knocks the wand from her hand, as Milton's attendant Spirit expected the two brothers to do with Comus's wand. Lewis also addresses (and redresses) the woman-on-top issue, as Aslan leaps on the Witch: "Lucy saw her face lifted toward him for one second with an expression of terror and amazement. Then Lion and Witch had rolled over together but with the Witch underneath" (177).⁹

Prior to this last battle, the Witch has killed Aslan, who has risen from the dead. Thus the White Witch is once more an obvious satanic figure: she opposes the Christ-figure Aslan, usurps a throne from its rightful owner, tempts and threatens humans. She has apparently been given an official connection with betrayal and death by Aslan's father, the Emperor. The Witch says to Aslan: "You know that every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have a right to kill" (142). Her castle is hell, from which Aslan frees and restores to life all the captives turned to stone, in "a scene suggestive of the harrowing of hell" (Ford 102). This incorporation of a female character with the death and resurrection of Christ introduces a specifically female evil into the Christian story, for in the gospels the crucifixion is the fault of male authority figures: the chief priests and scribes, King Herod, and Pontius Pilate. In contrast, the female characters featured in the gospels are positive: the women who weep at the cross

and become the first witnesses of Christ's empty tomb; and Pilate's unnamed wife, who warns him against permitting the execution. Pilate's wife and her role are missing from the Narnian version, while the women mourners become the girls Susan and Lucy, who witness the crucifixion and resurrection of Aslan.

Peter Schakel asserts that the White Witch cannot be allegorized as the Devil because she "is of human ancestry--a descendant of Adam's first wife, Lilith," and because "she is mortal: the story says definitely that she dies at the end of the battle" (9). Both of these assertions are problematic. First, the mythological Lilith is not precisely of human ancestry. Although created with Adam, she is also a demon, the consort of a demon, and the mother of demons. Second, in some variations of the myth, Lilith is mortal, and will be destroyed after the coming of the Messiah (Patai 251). Moreover, there is disagreement within the Narnian Chronicles concerning the Witch's death, as Schakel himself acknowledges (140): the Hag in *Prince Caspian* asks: "who ever heard of a witch that really died? You can always get them back" (170). Nor, since her last sighting in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is as a terrified face under Aslan's body, is her death more than implied.

Even if the White Witch is literally dead, she has left progeny: the Emerald Witch in *The Silver Chair* is probably her descendent, according to the good owls who advise the children (61; cf. 226). Moreover, like her ancestor, the Emerald Witch combines characteristics of Circe, Lilith, and Satan. She is a seductress whose true form is serpentine, and who killed Prince Rilian's mother with a venomous bite while the Queen was asleep (57-58).¹⁰ The Emerald Witch's hold over Rilian is sexual: she is his lady, he

is her knight. He forgets his revenge on the serpent--and, soon after, his identity--when he sees her in human form, "the most beautiful thing that was ever made," but wearing a gown "as green as poison" (59-60). He boasts that she has promised him "her own most gracious hand in marriage" (155). Also known as the Lady of the Green Kirtle and the Queen of Underland, the Emerald Witch is associated with the ruined city of the giants, living in a dark realm below it with Rilian as her "toy and lap-dog" (165). She uses an enchanted chair to hold him whenever his mind is clear, as Comus binds the Lady (Huttar 131). When the children, Jill and Eustace, and Puddleglum the Marshwiggle search for Rilian to rescue him, the Witch acts against their lives by sending them to be eaten by the giants of Harfang (*Silver* 89, 131). Her ultimate goal is to overthrow Narnia and rule through Rilian, keeping him unaware that he is the rightful king: "In ruling that land, I shall do all by the counsel of my Lady, who will then be my Queen too," he tells his rescuers. "Her word shall be my law, even as my word will be law to the people we have conquered" (158). It is the girl Jill who supports male authority in reply: "Where I come from, they don't think much of men who are bossed about by their wives" (158-59). Above all, the Emerald Witch opposes Aslan, asking the children and Puddleglum to deny his very existence: "There is no Narnia, no Overworld, no sky, no sun, no Aslan" (180). When Rilian finally kills the Witch, the scene closely resembles the Redcrosse knight's destruction of Error in *The Faerie Queene*.

For Lewis's Circe/Lilith figures, the sexual danger so clearly posed by previous versions, versions intended for adults, is subordinated to the will to power. Lewis wrote to Arthur Greeves that Lilith "is not primarily a sex symbol, but includes the

characteristic female abuse of sex, which is love of Power" (Blasdell 4). The witches know they are beautiful, and use their beauty not to bring pleasure to men, but to put others under their control.

The "vanity of Lilith" and Circe (in Ransom's phrase), and the submissiveness of Eve, have their parallel on the human level, among the children of Narnia—the characters with whom young readers are most likely to identify. Susan and Lasaraleen are beautiful, vain, and superficial, in contrast with Susan's sister Lucy and Lasaraleen's friend Aravis. Susan is apparently prevented from entering heaven (the true Narnia, "the beginning of the real story") with her parents and three siblings because on entering adolescence she has allowed stereotypically feminine interests to displace her spiritual life (*Last* 210). She remembers Narnia only as a childhood game, and is "interested in nothing nowadays except nylons and lipstick and invitations," while her younger sister Lucy has a special relationship with Narnia and Aslan (154). Lucy is the first of her generation to discover a way to Narnia, and she sees Aslan more often than the other children (*Voyage* 111). She learns to distrust female beauty when she discovers a magic spell that will give her beauty "beyond the lot of mortals" and potentially destroy the entire Narnian world as its leaders fight over her (153-54). Her love for Aslan gives her the strength to resist the temptation to use this spell—or is it the temptation to enter adolescence?

The contrast between a vain adolescent girl and a younger, more adventurous girl is also apparent in the Calormene girls Lasaraleen and Aravis: "Lasaraleen had always been . . . interested in clothes and parties and gossip. Aravis had always been more interested in bows and arrows and horses and dogs and swimming" (*Horse* 99). Like

Lucy, Aravis is "Amazonian, with her interest in the weapons of hunting and warfare" (Filmer 108). She helps the peasant boy Shasta save Narnia and Archenland from invasion from Calormen, and eventually marries Shasta, who turns out to be heir to the throne of Archenland. Meanwhile, Lasaraleen is wed to a minor official several times her age.

With the irredeemably evil descendents of Lilith and Circe who haunt Narnia, Lewis joins Charles Williams in reversing the sympathetic twist the nineteenth century had given the Lilith myth (McGillis, "George" 10). To characterize Lewis's writing as sexist is an obvious temptation when examining his use of the Circe and Lilith myths, with which he inherited centuries of stereotypes that feminists have begun to undo (with the Lilith Fair, for instance) only well after Lewis's 1963 death. To do so would be an oversimplification, since he also portrayed women positively, including the girls in the Narnia stories. However, he suggests that normal adolescent behavior can result in damnation for girls, whereas the approved adult women who occasionally appear on the periphery are highly domesticated (e.g., Queen Helen with soapsuds up to her elbows, in *The Magician's Nephew*). These disturbing glimpses of what it means for a girl to grow up, along with the peculiarly misogynistic theology resulting from combining Circe and Lilith with Satan, threatens to undo the positive representations of gender in the Narnian Chronicles.

Lewis turns Satan into Circe and Lilith, the temptation story of Genesis into a message about the dangers of female power and sexuality. As long as girls are tomboys—that is, like boys, only slightly inferior in strength and courage—the world is

paradisical. As a girl enters adolescence, in order to remain in Eden, she must relinquish her ambitions of having “one's own life to live,” as Jane Studdock did in Lewis’s adult fantasy series. The true king is always male, always Peter, Rilian, Shasta, or Aslan, rather than Susan, Jill, Aravis, or Jadis. The successful woman also buries her sexuality, represented in the children’s series by lipstick and nylons, gossip and enchanted toffee. She retains her interest in manly things, which makes her a better companion for the men around her: unlike Susan and Lasaraleen, Lucy and Aravis will not bore Peter or Shasta with talk of clothes and parties. Although Lucy and Jill are permanently girls, killed by a train wreck in *The Last Battle*, Aravis’s example is instructive: the true destiny of an adult woman in Narnia is to marry and bear the heir to the throne, to give up dreams and (as Mr. Fisher-King commanded Jane Studdock) “[h]ave children instead.”

Notes

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¹ In his personal life, Lewis's attitudes toward women were similarly inconsistent, and have been much debated. For instance, David C. Downing argues that Lewis supported the higher education and the independence of women (151).

² Neither Yarnall nor Patai makes the connection between Circe and Lilith.

³ Cf. Koltuv, who is heavily indebted to Patai.

⁴ In *The Allegory of Love*, Lewis twice makes reference to Errour and her vomiting of books (80, 316).

⁵ Lilith was quite popular in the nineteenth century, and Circe was featured in art, but Yarnall was unable to locate any literary references to Circe in the nineteenth century, and I have located only one: "For 'The Wine of Circe' by Edward Burne Jones," from Rossetti's series of sonnets in response to paintings (280).

⁶ In *The Great Divorce*, MacDonald is also Lewis's guide through heaven, as Felicia Jean Steele reminds me.

⁷ That "Lilith" possessed positive connotations for MacDonald is suggested by his use of the name for characters that were even more attractive. MacDonald's short story "The Cruel Painter" (1864) has an innocent Lilith as the daughter of the cruel painter of the

title. In 1872, MacDonald gave the name Lilith to a white mare in *Wilfred Cumbermede*, but the real Lilith of the story is Clara, a femme fatale who causes a lover to commit suicide (cf. McGillis, "George" 6; Raeper 366).

⁸ Lily Sammile may also be portrayed as evil because of her association with Jewish mythology; despite Williams' interest in the Kabala, Andrea Freud Loewenstein charges Williams with anti-Semitism as well as misogyny (240).

⁹ I would like to thank Deborah Salvaggio for this idea.

¹⁰ If this death resembles that of Hamlet's father, according to Claudius's account, the similarity is not accidental: when the children find Rilian, he is "dressed in black and altogether looked a little like Hamlet" (151).

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