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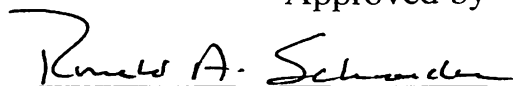
AMERICAN MEDIA AND LITERATURE: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF C. S.  
LEWIS'S *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* AND THE 2005 WALT  
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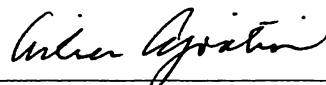
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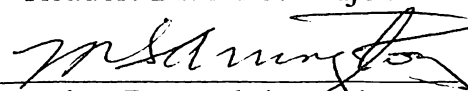
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*For Mom and Dad*

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ABSTRACT

LAURA B. RIGBY

American Media and Literature: Critical Analysis of C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and the 2005 Walt Disney Productions Adaptation  
(Under the direction of Dr. Ron Schroeder)

This thesis analyzes the characters and Christian spiritual themes in C. S. Lewis's work *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and examines the disparity between Lewis's original work and the 2005 Walt Disney Productions film adaptation of the text. Through the examination of the differences between the two works, this study assesses the degree of theme shift and provides possible explanations for the changes.

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## Spirituality in Narnia: Lewis's Opinion

During his lifetime, C. S. Lewis not only acknowledged the biblical and spiritual themes and references in his 1950 book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, but also said he put them in the work on purpose. In response to readers' inquiries, Lewis wrote letters in which he revealed much of the depth and significance of Narnia's events and characters. He describes Edmund's role as that of Judas Iscariot, Aslan's role as that of Christ, and Aslan's death at the Stone Table as the crucifixion of Christ. Yet also in these letters, Lewis frequently addresses the question of allegory and describes how it differs from the structure and purpose of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Lewis disagreed with readers who referred to his work as an allegory. Lewis admits the deliberate inclusion of spiritual themes—often characteristic of allegory—yet denies that “allegory” is a term applicable to his work. His seemingly paradoxical point merits further examination.

As defined, allegory is “a story or visual image with a second distinct meaning partially hidden behind its literal or visible meaning. The principle technique of allegory is personification, whereby abstract qualities are given human shape—as in public statues of Liberty or Justice” (Baldick 5). As this definition suggests, allegory is a tool for expressing themes in an indirect manner; the author communicates a story and incorporates ideas that are left to be discerned by the reader. Lewis explains this principle the following way:

By allegory I mean a composition (whether pictorial or literary) in wh[ich] immaterial realities are represented by feigned physical objects; e.g. a pictured Cupid allegorically represents erotic love (which in reality is an experience, not

an object occupying a given area of space) or, in Bunyan, a giant represents  
Despair. (Lewis, W. H. 283)

According to these two definitions, Lewis's objection to applying the term "allegory" to *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* appears misguided. Knowledge of biblical events, characters, and principles is necessary to identify Lewis's parallels, and Lewis himself admits to differences between parts of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and the Bible, a fact that indicates that his parallels are at times only loosely based on biblical facts. He says that "Edmund is like Judas a sneak and traitor. But unlike Judas he repents and is forgiven" (Dorsett 93). Because the reader must first recognize similarities, then sort through differences between Narnia's characters and the sources of their allusion, it seems *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is, in fact, allegory. However, Lewis continues to explain his assertion of dissimilarity between his literary structure and allegory this way:

If Aslan represented the immaterial Deity in the same way in which Giant Despair represents Despair, he would be an allegorical figure. In reality, however, he is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, "What might Christ become like if there really were a world like Narnia and He chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in that world as He actually has done in ours?" This is not allegory at all. (Lewis, W. H. 283)

Lewis points out an important difference between two ways to include spiritual ideas in a literary work—one of which, he maintains, is not allegorical. Lewis uses the Bible as a source of ideas rather than a place to which his ideas point. Essentially, this differentiation highlights the importance of authorial intent and how it affects the manner

in which a writer presents spiritual themes. In another letter, he clarifies this distinction even further:

I'm not exactly "representing" the real (Christian) story in symbols. I'm more saying, "Suppose there were a world like Narnia and it needed rescuing and the Son of God (or the 'Great Emperor oversea') went to redeem *it*, as He came to redeem ours, what might it, in that world, all have been like?" (Dorsett 92)

In contrast to allegory and its relatively passive manner of conveying a deliberate theme, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is a deliberate exploration of what the stories of the Bible look like when translated to another world. Lewis neither defends nor disputes the historical reality or validity of the events of the Bible; he merely represents them through an alternative universe.

### **Into the Wardrobes**

For the purposes of this analysis, it is important to remember that Lewis intentionally based *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* on biblical characters and events because his intention bears directly on the accuracy of the 2005 film adaptation of the book and its fidelity to Lewis's original work. During his lifetime, Lewis was hesitant about taking his Narnian tales off their pages. In fact, none of the Narnian books were adapted to any other form of media while Lewis was alive. Since Lewis's death in 1963, Narnia has been recreated through radio broadcast series, television series, movies, plays, and musicals. In 2005 Walt Disney Studios produced its own version of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and grossed over \$65.5 million in the United States in its opening weekend alone (Internet Movie Database). Regardless of its success in the

American market, the film departs from Lewis's original text in ways that change Lewis's story and incorporate ideas foreign to his original work. The implications of these changes to Lewis's characters and scenes drastically alter his original themes and integrate contemporary American ideas. The changes to Lewis's original work show themselves most clearly in scores of minor plot modifications that accumulate to create major theme shifts. Changes to the Pevensie children's characters, to key thematic scenes, and to the conflict between Good and Evil are a few of the film's alterations to the plot of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. In some cases Lewis's original and intended spiritual themes have been minimized to the point of disappearance, while in others they have been replaced with contemporary thematic ideas and cinematic trends. In the end, the disparity between the 2005 Walt Disney film of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and Lewis's original text is dramatic and is tied to American contemporary media trends.

### *The Pevensie Children*

One of the most significant areas of change between *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and the 2005 film involves the four Pevensie children, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy. These changes chiefly occur through the elimination or alteration of character development that directly affects the characters' personalities and the intended spiritual themes Lewis conveys through them. As Lewis wrote them, each of the children represents unique spiritual ideas, character traits, or specific biblical characters: Peter represents Saint Peter and is the leader of the group; Susan possesses gentle, maternal characteristics and represents one of the Marys at the tomb of Christ; Edmund is Narnia's

Judas Iscariot and undergoes intense spiritual transitions; Lucy embodies human virtue and innocence and represents the other Mary at the tomb of Christ with Susan. Together the four children represent a smaller version of Christ's Twelve Disciples. The film mostly strips the children of their biblical significance, and they become generic actors in an adventure story, rather than strong, deeply developed and symbolically significant literary characters.

In order to create depth of characterization in each of the children, Lewis properly lays a strong base for them through narration and dialogue; then he builds on the foundation with plot details, action, and additional dialogue, and finally unifies the characterizations of the children in the coronation scene at the end of the book. Peter is introduced as the leader of the group from the start. Not only is he the oldest, but he is also the first of the children to speak in the book. In dialogue among the children, his statements direct the moods and reactions of the others. For example, he turns the children toward pleasant expectations of the country estate to which they have been sent by commenting, "This is going to be perfectly splendid," and "a wonderful place for birds" (Lewis 2). The children respond enthusiastically to his contagious excitement, and their reaction indicates the role of leadership and strength Peter plays among his siblings. Lewis consistently builds on this early characterization of Peter as a leader and assigns him a paternal role. When Edmund and Lucy return from Narnia, Peter asks, "What's all this about, Ed?" (47), as an authority or father figure would; and when Peter discovers that Edmund has lied about going to Narnia, Peter is the only one of the four children to chastise Edmund. These instances secure for Peter a paternal leadership role among his siblings.

Lewis continues to build Peter's character on this foundation of firm leadership throughout the plot. Traits that serve Peter well as a leader are selflessness and dedication to the pursuit of Good. While at Mr. and Mrs. Beaver's home, Peter says of Tumnus, "This Faun saved my sister at his own risk, Mr. Beaver. We can't just leave him to be—to be—to have that done to him" (84). Peter behaves in this selfless manner consistently in the book. One of the few times that the narrator tells the audience Peter's thoughts occurs just before Peter slays Maugrim in his first battle. The narrator says, "Peter did not feel very brave; indeed, he felt he was going to be sick. But that made no difference to what he had to do" (144). Peter discards his fear in order to fulfill his responsibility to fight Maugrim, who fights for the White Witch and the side of Evil. And though Peter "was feeling uncomfortable too at the idea of fighting the battle on his own," he leads Aslan's army despite the fact that before the battle "the news that Aslan might not be there had come as a great shock to him" (161). Because Lewis regularly characterizes Peter as more faithful to his duties as a leader than to his own personal desires, he assigns him a strong leadership role from the start of the book.

In many ways, Peter Pevensie parallels Saint Peter of the Bible. According to biblical account, Peter was the leader of the Twelve Disciples, just as Peter Pevensie is the leader of his siblings. Peter's conversation with Aslan on the hilltop overlooking Cair Paravel resembles significantly a conversation between Christ and Peter in the book of Matthew. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Aslan shows Peter the castle and says, "That, O Man...is Cair Paravel of the four thrones, in one of which you must sit as King. I show it to you because you are the firstborn and you will be High King over all the rest" (Lewis 142). In the book of Matthew, Christ says to Peter, who was then named

Simon, “I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). Both Peters are given a new role or identity with new leadership responsibilities in these two instances. Up to this point, Peter Pevensie has been a boy whose leadership skills have been, for the most part, confined to his relationship with his siblings; however, in this scene, Aslan empowers him by revealing his new identity as High King in Narnia. In the Bible, the disciple named Simon is given his name “Peter” from the Greek *petra*, which means “rock.” Christ assigns a new identity to Simon by giving him a new name and the role as a “rock,” or foundation. Just as Simon Peter is the strong foundation on which Christ says He will build His church, Peter Pevensie is the strong leader who, Aslan says, will rule Narnia as its High King.

In nearly every instance in the 2005 film adaptation of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Peter’s character is edited in ways that drastically reduce both his spiritual significance in the plot and the coherence of his character. While the book characterizes him as a strong, selfless leader worthy of the symbolic role of Saint Peter, the movie limits the development of his character enough to eliminate any value beyond that of a generic child in an adventure story. In fact, not only does the film remove much of Peter’s symbolic value, but it does so in a manner that reassigns to him certain traits of weakness. In contrast to his assertion to Mr. Beaver that the children must stay in Narnia to help rescue Tumnus, the Peter of the film says, “I think you’ve made a mistake—we’re not heroes,” and, “I think it’s time we were going” (all movie quotations are from the 2005 Walt Disney Studios film). He turns to Lucy and comments, “It’s out of our hands.” Though he remains the leader among his siblings, his remarks here completely

devalue the overall strength of character that Lewis wrote for Peter in this scene. In the film his age is the sole basis for his role as leader. Because these comments of Peter's occur early in the film, they lay a foundation of weakness and cowardice for Peter that later events build upon. This trend continuously widens the gap between his character in the book and in the film.

Without a strong *base* for Peter's character, strong subsequent actions are both improbable and impossible, so Peter continues to be characterized weakly in the film. For example, a theme of selfishness accompanies the theme of cowardly abandonment in reference to Peter in this scene. After Edmund runs away to the White Witch's castle, the group goes to search for him. Peter and Susan begin to argue, and then the following exchange takes place:

Lucy: Stop, this fighting isn't going to help Edmund.

Mr. Beaver: She's right. Only Aslan can save him now.

Peter: Then take us to him.

Peter's previous statement about leaving Narnia suddenly changes when someone who, in a sense, "belongs" to him disappears. While this act is based on helping another, it cannot be considered entirely selfless because it finds root in Mrs. Pevensie's statement to Peter in the opening scene of the movie to "look after the others." In going to meet Aslan, Peter is fulfilling a responsibility of his own, not exhibiting concern for the well-being of Narnia or Edmund. Another scene is added later to the film that reinforces this theme of Peter's selfishness. After the children and the Beavers escape Maugrim and the other wolves, they all talk with a fox. When the fox alludes to the prophecy that the children will fight for Narnia, Peter is hesitant and responds, "We just want our brother



back.” Peter’s interest in meeting Aslan merely serves his personal interest of rescuing his brother. Peter’s lack of personal concern for Edmund in this instance is supported by his previous condescension and jeering. In the opening scene of the film, Peter calls Edmund an “idiot” and tells him that he is selfish. When the children first arrive in Narnia, Peter calls Edmund a “little liar” and threateningly forces him to apologize to Lucy. Then when passing out coats from the wardrobe, Peter gives Edmund a woman’s coat to wear and when Edmund points this fact out, Peter replies smugly, “I know.” Peter’s repeated offenses against Edmund make him appear less mature than he is at the start of the book and undermine the selfless concern for others that Lewis illustrates through him throughout the plot. Finally, without his strength of leadership and selfless pursuit of Good, Peter no longer parallels Peter of the Bible.

These initial changes to Peter’s character in the film affect his development through the rest of the plot. Because Lewis builds Peter as such a strong leader in the beginning of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, he does not need to add major character development in subsequent scenes. Lewis builds other characters by considerable attention from and characterization through the narrative voice, but Peter is rarely the subject of in-depth narration. Lewis has deliberately constructed Peter in such a way that future explanatory narration is unnecessary; his actions and speech characterize him. The film’s initial changes to Peter’s actions and statements remove the very foundation Lewis creates that makes narration unnecessary; therefore, later in the film, narration or extensive character development becomes necessary to rebuild the character as Lewis created him. It is because Peter begins as such a strong character in the book that Lewis is able to develop him less than the other characters, and because

Peter begins weak in the film and is not reassigned scenes to illustrate development, he ends weak as well. Although the narrator says he is known in Narnian history as “King Peter the Magnificent,” the movie does not adequately characterize him to show that he deserves such a title (201).

Peter is not the only Pevensie whose character suffers significantly in the film of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. While the spiritual significance and purpose of Susan’s character during the entire seven-book series has been the subject of much debate, her role in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* specifically is typically straight-forward and is that of a graceful, gentle maternal figure. As a Queen, she earns in Narnian history the title “Susan the Gentle” (Lewis 201). The film, however, transforms Susan into a disrespectful, “logical” character who is a stark contrast to the young woman whom Lewis creates. While she leads tenderly and maternally in the book, Susan and her outspoken and harsh nature in the film cause leadership conflicts between Peter and her, a contrast that may be interpreted as a commentary on Susan’s original character by the filmmakers.

From the start of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Susan’s maternal role among the Pevensie children is obvious, especially to Edmund. During the first scene, she tells Edmund, “it’s time you were in bed” (2). Edmund notices her maternal tendencies, tells her not to talk “like Mother,” and then remarks, “And who are you to say when I’m to go to bed? Go to bed yourself” (2). In the very next scene, Susan mothers Edmund again. When Edmund complains about the rainy weather, Susan says, “Do stop grumbling, Ed....Ten to one it’ll clear up in an hour or so. And in the meantime we’re pretty well off” (4). This statement shows not only her maternal leadership role, but also

that she maintains the same positive attitude as Peter with regard to leadership of the youngest two Pevensies. A scene that displays her maternal role with Lucy occurs when the two girls follow Aslan on the night of his death. While she and Lucy are talking about Aslan, Lucy says, “let’s go outside and have a look round. We might see him” (162). Lucy looks to Susan for a final response, as she would look to a mother, and with Susan’s permission, the girls walk outside to look for Aslan.

Susan’s role as a maternal leader completes a patriarchal familial microcosm among the four Pevensie children. Peter’s age, gender, and leadership ability assign him the paternal role, while the same traits in Susan assign her a subordinate maternal role. Her actions support this role. She submits her opinions and decisions to Peter for final decision-making. When Peter and Susan decide to go to speak to the Professor about Lucy’s stories about Narnia, Peter makes the final decision to do so, saying, “it’s getting beyond us” (50). Though Susan and Peter discuss together what they should do in regard to Lucy, Peter makes the final decision. A similar process occurs when the children are in Narnia and deciding whether they should follow the robin that seems to be calling them. Susan asks, “What do you think, Peter?” (66). Susan’s inquiry indicates her submission to Peter’s authority in the family, and the fact that his decision is followed by the other three serves to support the patriarchal structure in their familial relationship. This female role of submission to the male familial leader ties to the biblical instruction, “wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife” (Ephesians 5:22-23).

Susan’s strongest biblical parallel occurs when she and Lucy stay at the Stone Table after Aslan has been killed. Together, the pair represents the two Marys at the

tomb of Christ after the crucifixion. The Bible states that “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb” when Christ’s body was entombed (Matthew 27:61). The women appear again three days later at Christ’s tomb. At this time, “there was a violent earthquake” and an angel rolls the stone away from the tomb to reveal that Christ is no longer there (Matthew 28:1-2). The events at the Stone Table in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* are a clear parallel to this biblical event, with Susan and Lucy filling the roles of the two Marys and the breaking of the Stone Table representing the earthquake and the stone being rolled away from the tomb.

For the most part, the changes to Susan’s character in the film modernize her female role and eliminate traces of the conventional, maternal and biblical roles that Lewis assigned to her. These changes provide a commentary on the part of the filmmakers and screenwriters that appears to be a judgment on Lewis’s choice to characterize Susan in such a way. The departure from Lewis’s original text vastly transforms his intended familial structure and affects Susan’s relationships with the other children. While she and Peter maintain their structural roles of figurative mother and father, respectively, their leadership styles have each been changed in ways that cause conflict among the Pevensies, rather than harmony. Major changes include alterations in her attitude and the incorporation of an outspoken, disrespectful tone of speech. The strong, positive leadership methods Susan and Peter use in the book are almost completely removed from the film, and conflict between a newly cowardly Peter and aggressive Susan consistently follows. In response to Peter, who has just insultingly reprimanded Edmund, Susan sarcastically retorts, “Well, that was nicely handled.” Because Lewis set up the Pevensie children in a patriarchal microcosm, the film’s

changes to Peter's character inevitably affect Susan's character as the maternal figure; however, the filmmakers have taken the changes a step further by also changing Susan's character and turning the Pevensies into a dysfunctional family in which the paternal and maternal figures argue constantly. When Lucy enthusiastically returns from her second trip to Narnia with Edmund, Susan says condescendingly, "Oh, Lucy, you've been dreaming." She tells the professor that Lucy "thinks she's found a magical land in the upstairs wardrobe" and says that talking to Lucy about it was "like talking to a lunatic." Susan's negative attitude here does not appear in the book. In Susan, the movie also creates an attachment to intellect and logic in this scene with the Professor. The incorporation of this theme in the film appears as an attack on the conventional association between females and emotion. Though the filmmakers find this theme important enough to include, the film serves more to create confusion of gender roles rather than to state decisively a coherent idea. For example, when the children attempt to cross an icy river that has begun to melt, the following conversation transpires between Susan and Peter:

Susan: Wait, maybe we should think about this.

Peter: We don't have time.

Susan: I was just trying to be realistic.

Peter: No, you're trying to be smart—as usual!

The conflict between Susan and Peter points out the film's transformation of Susan into a character who thinks rationally, to a fault. Some confusion exists in this scene as to what the film's message is about Susan's intellect. Though the filmmakers have changed Susan's character to incorporate this idea of highly logical thought, they have

undermined the importance of this message through Peter's response. Peter attacks Susan's "usual" tendency to stop to think about conflicts and creates ambiguity as to whether the filmmakers support Susan as an intellectual. When Lucy is missing after the children get out of the river, Susan turns accusingly to Peter and says, "What have you done?" When paired with the film's ambiguity about whether Susan is a strong intellect, Susan's angry attitude strips her of all the pleasant, gentle, lovingly maternal characteristics Lewis gives her in the book. The film's attempts at constructing Susan as a more contemporary, powerful female fall flat due to inconsistencies, but successfully remove the traits that make her title from the book as "Susan the Gentle" at all fitting.

In contrast to the modifications to Peter and Susan's characters, the film's changes to Edmund's character have been less to his personality and role in the film than to his spiritual and emotional journey as a character. Edmund secures his role as the Pevensie antagonist early in the book; his first words are, "Oh, come off it!" (2). His statements in this scene in the film have been changed, but they convey the same negative attitude; he responds to Susan with a sarcastic, "Yes, mum!" in the film. The film maintains Edmund's antagonistic role throughout the plot, but minimizes the conflicts between Edmund and other characters in such a way that they seem to arise from a difference of personality type, rather than Edmund's propensity toward Evil or wrongdoing, as Lewis's spiritual theme would suggest. Lewis's original characterization of Edmund portrays his transformation from a mean boy to a follower of the White Witch, then to a follower of Aslan. Though Edmund's disagreements with others may begin with personality conflict, Lewis develops the conflict more deeply to illustrate a spiritual theme. For the most part, this spiritual theme is omitted in the film.

Though Edmund is the antagonist in the Pevensie family, Lewis makes a point to humanize him and to evoke sympathy for him from the audience. By developing a relationship between the audience and Edmund, Lewis draws attention to Edmund in a way that he does not for the other characters. Lewis sets Edmund apart by utilizing the narrative voice to comment on his character more than on any other character in the book. The narrator reveals Edmund's internal dialogue and conflict, and this is the major way Lewis tracks Edmund's emotional and spiritual transitions. When Edmund first arrives in Narnia, he remembers "how unpleasant he had been to [Lucy] about her 'imaginary country' which now turned out not to have been imaginary at all" (31). Though Edmund's previous actions have already secured him a negative role in the story, the narrator allows the audience into Edmund's thoughts and personalizes his experience and plight as a person. This detail universalizes Edmund's struggle and enables the audience to sympathize with a boy whose mean actions and attitude do not evoke sympathy. This foundation permits Lewis also to develop through Edmund a universal spiritual theme of sin, conviction, and redemption.

Edmund's spiritual transitions are clearly defined by major catalyzing events. His transformation from a mere disagreeable boy to a follower of the White Witch begins during his first trip to Narnia. When Edmund initially meets the White Witch, the narrator points out that "he did not like the way she looked at him" (34), and when he sits on the sledge with the Witch, the narrator comments that "Edmund did not like this arrangement at all but he dared not disobey" (36). Edmund's initial attitude of hesitance changes after the Witch gives him Turkish Delight to eat. The Turkish Delight is the first catalyst in Edmund's transition to supporting the White Witch, and from this point forth,

the use of the narrative voice becomes essential to document his changes. As he eats the Turkish Delight, the narrator notes that, "At first Edmund tried to remember that it is rude to speak with one's mouth full, but soon he forgot about this and thought only of trying to shovel down as much Turkish Delight as he could, and the more he ate the more he wanted to eat" (38). While Edmund began with some politeness, the food the White Witch gives him overpowers any previous traces of goodness. The narrator reveals the fact that 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" (39). After eating the Turkish Delight, Edmund is ensnared by the White Witch's enchantment and continuously becomes more supportive of her and the Evil that she represents. When Lucy finds Edmund, she tells him what she has learned about the White Witch from Tumnus, and the narrator states that Edmund is "already more than half on the side of the Witch" (44). Through Edmund's differences from his siblings and growing allegiance to the White Witch, Lewis introduces a spiritual element to the conflict.

Edmund continues to change after he and Lucy return from Narnia. The clear line that Lewis draws between Edmund and his other three siblings develops into a growing rift. The narrator says that Edmund "was becoming a nastier person every minute," signifying his spiritual transition toward the side of Evil. After the four Pevensies arrive in Narnia, Edmund receives more attention from the narrator than any of the other children. Peter reprimands Edmund for lying about having been to Narnia, and the narrator states, "Edmund was saying to himself, 'I'll pay you all out for this, you pack of stuck-up, self-satisfied prigs'" (62). While previous disagreement between the Pevensies



has been chiefly because of personality conflict, Edmund's internal dialogue supports the spiritual struggle Lewis introduces during Edmund's first trip to Narnia. Lewis uses this stage in Edmund's transformation to foreshadow later conflict. The spiritual conflict between Edmund on the side of Evil and the other three Pevensies on the side of Good further polarizes the children and creates a firm foundation for the conflict between the White Witch and Aslan. Though at this point Aslan has not yet been introduced in the book, Lewis uses Edmund's allegiance to the Witch and his conflict with the other three children to foreshadow the introduction of a larger conflict between Good and Evil. The incorporation of a hero is imminent because of the plot's need for a foil to the White Witch.

Edmund's spiritual transformation continues when he betrays the children and goes to the White Witch's castle. Mr. Beaver tells Peter, Susan, and Lucy the following about Edmund:

I didn't like to mention it before (he being your brother and all) but the moment I set eyes on that brother of yours I said to myself, 'Tracherous.' He had the look of one who has been with the Witch and eaten her food. You can always tell them if you've lived long in Narnia; something about their eyes. (92)

Mr. Beaver identifies Edmund's growing allegiance to Evil early through his physical characteristics. In the chapter after this conversation between Mr. Beaver and the children, Edmund walks to the Witch's castle. The narrator admits the audience intimately into Edmund's internal dialogue, and it is important to note that Lewis is careful to continue to characterize Edmund's human side during this scene. The narrator offers this extensive description of Edmund's internal struggle:

You mustn't think that even now Edmund was quite so bad that he actually wanted his brother and sisters to be turned into stone [by the White Witch]. He did want Turkish Delight and to be a Prince (and later a King) and to pay Peter out for calling him a beast. As for what the Witch would do with the others, he didn't want her to be particularly nice to them—certainly not to put them on the same level as himself; but he managed to believe, or to pretend he believed, that she wouldn't do anything very bad to them, "Because," he said to himself, "all these people who say nasty things about her are her enemies and probably half of it isn't true. She was jolly nice to me, anyway, much nicer than they are. I expect she is the rightful Queen really. Anyway, she'll be better than that awful Aslan!" At least that was the excuse he made in his own mind for what he was doing. It wasn't a very good excuse, however, for deep down inside him he really knew that the White Witch was bad and cruel. (96-97)

Though Edmund does want to "pay out" his siblings for the wrongs he feels he has suffered because of them, his allegiance to Evil does not outweigh his natural human concern for them. Edmund has to convince himself and make excuses to justify his actions. Though Edmund's role is undergoing a change from mere antagonist to evil villain, Lewis is careful to point out that Edmund's conscience, though overpowered by his desire for power and Turkish Delight, still exists. This detail is important to Lewis's spiritual theme. Edmund indulges his self-concern enough to betray his siblings and go to the White Witch, but Lewis asserts that Edmund still has a choice about whether to become wholly evil. Through the rest of this scene with Edmund, Lewis adds details that indicate that Edmund chooses to stay on the course to the White Witch's castle; however,

Lewis also includes small details that remind the audience that Edmund still has a conscience, despite how much he chooses to ignore it. Though “Edmund began to be afraid of the [White Witch’s] house,” as the narrator states, “it was too late to think of turning back now” (100). Even as he walks toward the Witch’s house, Edmund shows hesitation about embracing the evil within it.

Edmund’s hesitation to capitulate completely to the Witch and her evil plans makes his later redemption more pronounced and personal. Edmund begins to suspect that he has made the wrong decision shortly after he arrives at the Witch’s castle. After he tells her that his siblings are nearby in the Beavers’ home, Edmund begins “having a most disappointing time” because “he expected that the Witch would start being nice to him, as she had been at their last meeting,” but she does not (121). When Edmund asks for Turkish Delight, the Witch angrily responds, “Silence fool!” (121). His personal, inward transition from Evil to Good starts at this point, and continues while he travels with the Witch on her sledge. The narrative voice expresses Edmund’s thoughts:

It didn’t look now as if the Witch intended to make him a King. All the things he had said to make himself believe that she was good and kind and that her side was really the right side sounded to him silly now. He would have given anything to meet the others at this moment—even Peter! The only way to comfort himself now was to try to believe that the whole thing was a dream and that he might wake up at any moment. And as they went on, hour after hour, it did come to seem like a dream. (124-125)

Edmund’s misery signifies feelings of guilt and conviction and the beginning of his shift from the Witch’s side to the side of Good. Immediately following this passage, the

Witch turns a group of animals having breakfast into stone, and Edmund's reaction is a pivotal moment in his journey as a character. The narrator says, "Edmund for the first time in this story felt sorry for someone besides himself" (128). At this moment, it is clear that Edmund no longer bears allegiance to the Witch. The final scene of redemption for Edmund occurs when he is rescued from the Witch's camp and the children wake to see him and Aslan walking together. Lewis chooses to highlight the personal nature of the conversation between Aslan and Edmund by refraining from including it. After Edmund speaks with Aslan, he is reunited with his siblings, who "wanted very hard to say something which would make it quite clear that they were all friends with him again" (153). Edmund's reconciliation with Aslan and his siblings completes his spiritual journey through betrayal and sin, then to guilt and misery, and finally to redemption and forgiveness.

As was openly acknowledged by C. S. Lewis, Edmund's biblical role in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* parallels that of Judas Iscariot. In the Bible Judas Iscariot's betrayal directly leads to Christ's crucifixion. Judas provides an opportunity for Christ to be captured for "thirty silver coins" (Matthew 26:14). Because he was a disciple and friend of Christ, Judas's betrayal is serious. Judas admits his treachery later and says, "I have sinned...for I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4). Similarly, Edmund's betrayal of his siblings and the side of Good and Aslan is motivated by a greedy desire for Turkish Delight, and Edmund's betrayal is the reason Aslan makes an agreement with the White Witch to die on the Stone Table. In this sense, Edmund "is like Judas a sneak and a traitor," as Lewis himself said (Dorsett 93). However, Edmund also parallels the biblical criminal, Barabbas. In the Bible, Barabbas was released under the custom that

the public could choose one criminal to be released at the Passover Feast. Because Christ also stood accused, the crowd could choose to free Him. The crowd chooses Barabbas, and Christ, who has committed no crime, is crucified. Similarly Aslan is killed on the Stone Table as the White Witch explains that the law says Edmund should be because of his betrayal. Both of these parallels are straight-forward in the book and contribute to the spiritual depth Lewis maintains.

The film's modifications to Edmund's character minimize the theme of sin, conviction, and redemption that Lewis masterfully portrays through Edmund. As previously stated, the film is true to Edmund's antagonistic personality and role among his siblings, but the most significant source of problems in relation to Edmund's transition is the absence of a narrative voice in the film. Without narration to explain Edmund, the film needs another method of characterization to draw from Edmund the meaning Lewis does in the book. However, the film fails to provide this element, as well. Without the narrative voice, the film's portrayal of Edmund is insufficient to carry him through the plot as the deeply significant character Lewis writes him to be. In the end of the book, Edmund's title as "King Edmund the Just" finds root in the spiritual journey he has undergone from a bully who treats others unjustly to a king who understands the importance of justice and fairness.

Lucy is the Pevensie child whose character is changed the least in the film. While Lucy has suffered the same type of dialogue and narration changes as her siblings, the film preserves, as with Edmund, her essential personality. In the book, Lucy embodies human virtue, innocence, and kindness, and with Susan at the Stone Table, she is part of the representation of the women at the tomb after the death of Christ. Lucy is a very

straight-forward character, a detail that inevitably contributes to the ease with which she translates to the film.

In the book, Lucy's first line identifies her as a peacemaker. When Edmund tries to start an argument with Susan about whether she should tell him when to go to bed, Lucy contributes, "Hadn't we all better go to bed?" (2). Lucy's attempt at keeping peace among her siblings quickly characterizes her as virtuous and good. Her innocent curiosity carries her away to Narnia. Lucy is the first of the Pevensies to make it there, and this detail follows the passage from the Bible in which Christ says, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:2-3). Christ is referring to the innocent faith and trust that children have before the evils of the world taint them. Lucy's innocence and trust make her an appropriate portal between her world and Narnia. In fact, this same trust is the trait that prevents Lucy from sensing Tumnus's intent to kidnap her. In this instance, Lucy is innocent to a fault. Even while Tumnus explains that he is a kidnapper for the White Witch, Lucy does not understand that he is explaining that he is kidnapping her. The following is the conversation between the two:

"But what does [the White Witch] pay *you* for?"

"That's the worst of it," said Mr. Tumnus with a deep groan. "I'm a kidnapper for her, that's what I am. Look at me, Daughter of Eve. Would you believe that I'm the sort of Faun to meet a poor innocent child in the wood, one that had never done me any harm, and pretend to be friendly with it, and invite it home to my cave, all for the sake of lulling it asleep and then handing it over to the White Witch?"

“No,” said Lucy. “I’m sure you wouldn’t do anything of the sort.”

“But I have,” said the Faun.

“Well...well, that was pretty bad. But you’re so sorry for it that I’m sure you will never do it again.”

“Daughter of Eve, don’t you understand?...It isn’t something I have done. I’m doing it now, this very moment.”

“What do you mean?” cried Lucy, turning very white.

“You are the child....” (20-21)

Though this characterization is extreme in that Lucy seems almost daft, it serves the purpose of assigning Lucy a role of complete innocence. The beauty of her innocent virtue convinces Tumnus to risk his life by releasing her. For a moment, he debates whether to save himself or Lucy, and finally decides, “Of course I will [let you go]...of course I’ve got to. I see that now. I hadn’t known what humans were like before I met you” (22). Because Tumnus is overly-generous in thinking that all humans are as kind as Lucy, his generalization secures her the role as the universal representation of human virtue.

C. S. Lewis relies a great deal on the narrator to establish the depth of Lucy’s personality. After she tells her siblings about Narnia and they do not believe her, Lucy “was very miserable” (27), and the narrator states that “she could have made it up with the others quite easily at any moment if she could have brought herself to say that the whole thing was only a story made up for fun. But Lucy was a very truthful girl and she knew that she was really in the right, and she could not bring herself to say this” (28). Through the narrator’s contribution, the audience finds that Lucy’s honesty outweighs her

desire for acceptance and approval among her older siblings, a fact that further supports her pure character. Lucy possesses a conviction of and dedication to truth throughout the book that enables her to behave bravely when she knows she is fighting for Good. She refuses to retaliate when Edmund betrays her and denies the existence of Narnia.

Because she knows she is right, Lucy is hurt, but simply “gave Edmund one look and rushed out of the room” (48). Then, when the others go to find her, she maintains her allegiance to what she knows to be true; as the narrator says, “she stuck to her story,” and Lucy says, “I don’t care what you think, and I don’t care what you say. You can tell the professor or you can write to mother or you can do anything you like. I know I’ve met a Faun in there and—I wish I’d stayed there and you are all beasts, beasts” (49-50).

Although Lucy’s youth expresses itself when she calls her siblings “beasts,” her reaction is not immature. Her anger is righteous because it is based on her personal knowledge that she is telling the truth and that Edmund is lying. Because Lucy bravely stands for what she knows to be right regardless of the criticism she faces, she rightly earns the title “Lucy the Valiant” in Narnian history.

The film does not depart greatly from the book in its account and characterization of Lucy Pevensie. Essentially, she maintains her kind, innocent nature because it is so purely straight-forward. Though the narration that Lewis includes in the book is not included in the film, its absence does not drastically change her role. However, changes to other characters—Aslan and the White Witch, specifically—reduce the weight of the spiritual conflict, and Lucy’s relevance as the personification of human virtue and innocence is lost. Because there is no over-arching theme to which Lucy’s character



attaches, she appears to be a good-natured child, rather than the actual embodiment of Goodness.

### *Aslan*

While Edmund and Lucy are the two Pevensie children who are most affected by the elimination of the narrative voice in the film, there is one character outside of the Pevensie family whose character development suffers more than theirs: Aslan. Between the omission of the narrative voice and key passages of dialogue, the film drastically reduces Aslan's significance as a character, both literally and figuratively. The first character mentioned in the title, the Great Lion Aslan is arguably the focal point of the book, but the film's alterations to the plot reduce him to an icon in an adventure tale. To preserve Aslan's role as the Christ figure, the film should develop him as completely as Lewis has in the book, but the film fails to do so.

By introducing and characterizing the White Witch in several scenes before Aslan's name is even mentioned, Lewis builds a sense of suspense regarding who (or what) will be the foil to the Witch. Because the Witch has already undergone significant development in the plot and has gained the allegiance of one of the four characters to whom the audience has been thoroughly introduced, the expectation arises that a solid protagonist will appear to balance, and win, the conflict against Evil. Lewis's giving this much attention to building a foundation for Aslan's character indicates the lion's importance to the plot. Lewis introduces Aslan through Mr. Beaver at an opportune moment; because Mr. Beaver insists to the children that there is no time for thorough discussion while walking through the woods, Lewis creates an opportunity for the

narrator to expound on Aslan's significance. The first mention of the identity of the grand protagonist of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* occurs when Mr. Beaver says, "They say Aslan is on the move—perhaps has already landed" (Lewis 74).

Although Aslan receives no majestic introduction here, the narrator contributes a great deal to readers' first impression of Aslan by describing the children's reactions to the mention of his name:

And now a very curious thing happened. None of the children knew who Aslan was any more than you do; but the moment the Beaver had spoken these words everyone felt quite different. Perhaps it has sometimes happened to you in a dream that someone says something which you don't understand but in the dream it feels as if it had some enormous meaning—either a terrifying one which turns the whole dream into a nightmare or else a lovely meaning too lovely to put into words, which makes the dream so beautiful that you remember it all your life and are always wishing you could get into that dream again. It was like that now. At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in its inside. Edmund felt a sensation of mysterious horror. Peter felt suddenly brave and adventurous. Susan felt as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music had just floated by her. And Lucy got the feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realize that it's the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer. (74)

There are three very important elements of this passage to consider: length, placement, and type of description. First, this passage is long in comparison to the information provided about Aslan. If Lewis had not built a solid, suspenseful foundation for Aslan's

introduction, this description of the effect of his name would be disproportionate to the small amount of information Mr. Beaver gives about Aslan. The placement of this static passage amidst a moving plot commands that the reader pause and take note. Since the children arrived in Narnia, they have not ceased exploring, talking, and developing the plot through their discoveries. However, at the mention of Aslan—someone about whom they know nothing—all action momentarily stops. Just as the narrator points out, neither the children nor the audience knows who Aslan is, and the inclusion of the reader with a personal pronoun in this passage draws the reader more intimately into the children's experiences. The narrator continues this method of description by repeatedly using the pronoun "you" and by using familiar examples to illustrate the phenomenon that the children experience. After drawing the audience into the story, the narrator petitions the audience to broaden the way in which they use imagination by describing the children's reactions with the senses of smell and hearing. The inclusion of these senses adds weight to Aslan's power as a dynamic character because he evokes such experiences from the Pevensies, even when they know nothing more than his name. Also, the horror that Edmund feels in reaction to Aslan's name contributes to the theme of conflict between Good and Evil and aids in clarifying the sides of conflict.

Aslan's actual development as the major protagonist and Christ figure of the book begins in the scene in Mr. and Mrs. Beaver's home. When Mr. Beaver mentions Aslan's name for the second time in the book, "once again that strange feeling—like the first signs of spring, like good news, had come over [the children]" (85). With this statement, the narrator brings the audience back to the mystical experience the children had in the woods and prepares the audience for the characterization of Aslan that follows. Mr.

Beaver provides information about Aslan that reveals the history behind the current state of Narnia and is surprised that the children have never heard of Aslan because of the integral part he has played in the lives of Narnians. Beaver says, “Aslan?...Why, don’t you know? He’s the King. He’s the Lord of the whole wood, but not often here, you understand. Never in my time or my father’s time” (85). After expressing his incredulity, Beaver deepens the element of suspense related to Aslan’s arrival in Narnia and character in general because he documents the length of time these events have been unfolding. More gravity and power are added to Aslan’s character because Beaver explains that he has been long-awaited. Mr. Beaver continues to develop the history of Narnia and Aslan by reciting a prophecy about Aslan. In the prophecy, Aslan is described as able to put wrongs to right and end sorrow and winter. Beaver offers no major explanation of the prophecy; he simply adds more suspense to the plot by stating, “You’ll understand when you see him” (86). Beaver’s cryptic account suggests that Aslan’s majesty is both inexplicable and visibly obvious.

After Mr. Beaver begins to explain Aslan’s identity to the children, Lucy asks, “Is—is [Aslan] a man?” (86). Lewis introduces a particularly spiritual and important element to Aslan’s character here that he extends throughout the book and ties to a specific part of the Old Testament. Beaver explains that Aslan is a lion, and Lucy responds, “Ooh!...I’d thought he was man. Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion” (86). Mr. and Mrs. Beaver comment:

“That you will, dearie, and no mistake,” said Mrs. Beaver; “if there’s anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they’re either braver than most or else just silly.”

“Then he isn’t safe?” said Lucy.

“Safe?” said Mr. Beaver; “don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you?

Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.” (86)

The Beavers’ description of Aslan as good but not safe implies a mystery of the Good that Aslan personifies. Aslan is so universally good that he is terrifying. Lewis pointedly returns to this idea later when Aslan actually appears. The narrator explains:

But as for Aslan himself, the Beavers and the children didn’t know what to do or say when they saw him. People 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 they just caught a glimpse of the golden mane and the great, royal, solemn, overwhelming eyes; and then they found they couldn’t look at him and went all trembly. (140)

In this return to the idea of Aslan’s terrible goodness, Lewis links this trait to the other characters’ inability to look him in the eyes. When the White Witch talks to Aslan later, Mrs. Beaver notices that she never “looked Aslan exactly in the eyes” (154). Aslan’s majestic power and goodness strike fear in those who come face to face with him to the point that they cannot look at him. This parallels the biblical account of God’s appearing to Moses. When Moses goes to see why a burning bush does not burn up, God appears to him from within the bush. God says, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” to identify himself to Moses (Exodus 3:6). In the same verse, the Bible says that “at this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look

at God.” The parallel between Aslan and Christ, or in this case God, contributes to the biblical depth in the story.

While Aslan’s characterization as the Christ figure begins with the details the Beavers offer about him, the chief portion of the plot through which Aslan most directly parallels Christ begins when Aslan makes the agreement with the Witch to die in Edmund’s stead. Just as Edmund takes on the role of the freed prisoner Barabbas in this scene, Aslan takes on the role of Christ as the innocent one who receives punishment that he does not deserve. In the Bible, Christ is “sorrowful and troubled” on the evening that he knew he would be taken to be killed (Matthew 26:37). Similarly, “Aslan’s mood affected everyone that evening” after he agrees to take Edmund’s place in death: “everyone felt how different it had been last night or even that morning. It was as if the good times, having just begun, were already drawing to their end” (161). Aslan’s mood, as Christ’s, is sorrowful, and affects all of his followers. Aslan’s role as Christ continues as he walks alone after everyone else has gone to sleep, a parallel to Christ’s praying alone in the Garden of Gethsemane. Christ says to his disciples, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me” (Matthew 26:38). Aslan also requests companionship on the eve of his death. After Susan and Lucy ask if they may walk with him, he tells them, “I should be glad of company tonight,” and says later, “I am sad and lonely. Lay your hands on my mane so that I can feel you are there and let us walk like that” (164). Though Aslan is the one who agreed to die in Edmund’s place, his sorrow indicates reluctance to do so, just as Christ shows reluctance in being crucified when he says, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me” (Matthew 26:39).

Lewis draws direct parallels between Aslan and Christ through the remainder of the book, chiefly in the process of Aslan's death and resurrection. On the way to his death, Aslan does not fight or retaliate, though Lewis has characterized him as powerful enough to do so. He calmly submits to the agreement he has made with the Witch and is bound and killed. In the Bible, Christ has the same attitude of submission to being bound to a cross and crucified. Both Aslan and Christ ignore crowd members who mock them, die in a form of execution, and arise from their deaths after some amount of time has passed.

The film changes Aslan's spiritual significance and strength as a character drastically. Initially, the film omits much of the dialogue, narration, and description of Aslan from the scene at Mr. and Mrs. Beaver's house and, thus, eliminates the depth of foundation that Lewis builds deliberately for the dynamic character he intends Aslan to be. In addition to removing much of the foundation for Aslan's character, the changes in this scene shift the focus of the plot from Aslan and the conflict between him and the White Witch to the Pevensie children and their journey to rescue their brother. A major change that signifies this shift involves the prophecies. As noted earlier, Mr. Beaver tells the children about three prophecies, one of which paints a grand portrait of Aslan:

Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,  
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,  
When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,  
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again. (85)

The other two prophecies describe events involving the children:

When Adam's flesh and Adam's bone

Sits at Cair Paravel in throne,

The evil time will be over and done. (87) ...

...down at Cair Paravel there are four thrones and it's a saying in Narnia time out of mind that when two Sons of Adam and two Daughters of Eve sit in those four thrones, then it will be the end not only of the White Witch's reign but of her life... (89)

The only two of these prophecies included in the film are those that describe the children. As a consequence, the children, not Aslan, become the focal point of the action that transpires in Narnia. These prophecies attribute the end of "the evil time" to the arrival of the children, and do not acknowledge Aslan's role in the struggle. Lewis's original intentions are clearer when one of these prophecies specifically is examined in its context in the book. The complete dialogue occurs the following way:

"The quickest way you can help [Edmund] is by going to meet Aslan," said Mr. Beaver, "once he's with us, then we can begin doing things. Not that we don't need you too. For that's another of the old rhymes:

*When Adam's flesh and Adam's bone*

*Sits at Cair Paravel in throne,*

*The evil time will be over and done.*

So things must be drawing near their end now he's come and you've come." (87)

In context, Mr. Beaver is careful to point out the importance of the children's role in the resolution of the conflict because his previous statements have stressed how powerful and essential Aslan is. However, when the film takes this dialogue out of the book's original context, the focal point of this passage shifts entirely to the children. The prophecy about



the children is included, while the prophecy about Aslan is omitted; this alteration stresses the importance of the children's role more than Aslan's. Though the filmmakers do not *add* information to this particular scene, they alter its focus significantly by what they choose to omit.

Later the film adds an entirely new scene to the story that continues to implicate the children as the focal point of the plot. When the children and the Beavers are talking to the Fox after they escape Maugrim and the other wolves, an exchange occurs that implies several ideas that are not in the book:

Fox: ...I have been asked by Aslan himself to gather more troops.

Mr. Beaver: You've seen Aslan?

Mrs. Beaver: What is he like?

Fox: Like everything we have ever heard. He'll be a good help fighting the White Witch.

Susan: We are not planning [on] fighting any witch.

Fox: Surely King Peter...

Peter: We just want to get our brother back.

First, this passage is important to the shift of focus from Aslan to the children because the Fox says Aslan will be a good "help" in the battle against the White Witch. Though there is no scene in the book to which this scene can be compared, all development of the conflict between Good and Evil up to this point indicates that Aslan is not expected to be a "help" in the battle, but rather the only source of hope for Narnia. Even within the Fox's statement the discrepancy of characterization is evident. With a tone of awe, the Fox describes Aslan as "like everything we have ever heard," yet he follows this

statement with the idea that Aslan will merely be “help” in the battle. Susan remarks that the Pevensies do not intend to battle the White Witch, and the Fox’s incredulity at the proposition creates a climax in the scene which turns the attention to Peter. His final statement summarizes the focus the filmmakers have assigned to the plot; rather than Aslan, the film centers on the Pevensies and their journey to rescue Edmund. The film weakens each of the characters of the Pevensie children, and their shallow development is insufficient to support Lewis’s deep, spiritual plot. The drastic events of Aslan’s death appear unjustified when their only motivating factor is keeping a dysfunctional family together.

### *The White Witch*

The Beavers offer a similarly extensive characterization of the White Witch moments after they tell the children about Aslan. The juxtaposition of the characterization of the incarnations of both Evil and Good in the same scene establishes three important plot elements: it provides a contrast between the two characters, adds tension to the conflict between them, and links their character development to each other. This scene in the Beavers’ home defines the major conflict as being between Aslan and the White Witch, and from this point forth, the development of their characters is inextricably entwined. However, because all the characters in the plot of the film have suffered severe reductions in character development, the conflict that is supposed to be *major* loses depth, as well. Like Aslan and the Pevensie children, the White Witch, who is the personification of Evil in the book, is insufficiently developed in the film and becomes merely a shallow, slightly sinister antagonist, instead.

The first major area of disparity between the White Witch of the book and of the film appears when she meets Edmund while she is sledging through Narnia. In the book, Lewis develops the Witch through narration and dialogue that the film omits. For example, when Edmund tells her that he arrived in Narnia by walking through the wardrobe door, the Witch says to herself, "A door. A door from the world of men! I have heard of such things. This may wreck all. But he is only one, and he is easily dealt with" (36). The Witch's statement sets the stage for conflict and puts herself and the children on it. The narration that follows her comments characterizes her, as well. The narrator states, "As she spoke these words she rose from her seat and looked Edmund full in the face, her eyes flaming; at the same moment she raised her wand. Edmund felt sure that she was going to do something dreadful..." (36). This narration exposes the Evil in the Witch. Her statement that Edmund "is easily dealt with" and the narrator's observation that Edmund expected her "to do something dreadful" impart to the Witch a persona that is vile, sinister, and evil. Because the film omits her statements and the narration that follows, it reduces significantly her development in the role as the Evil figure. The film skips this brief moment of characterization and moves immediately to the time that she invites Edmund to sit on her sledge. Because the White Witch does not receive a characterization as Evil in the film, her identity as the villain of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* rests principally on the archetypal and cultural connotations of the word "witch." The film relies on the audience to characterize her through their associations with her identity as a witch, and she becomes a character that has bad tendencies or traits that depend on a subjective definition rather than one that is innately evil.

In Lewis's book, Mr. Beaver also provides background information about the White Witch as he does for Aslan. He explains the Witch's origins and adds gravity to the conflict by characterizing her as he characterizes Aslan. The following passage illustrates the Witch's history:

She'd like us to believe [that she's human]...and it's on that that she bases her claim to be Queen. But she's no Daughter of Eve. She comes of your father Adam's...first wife, her they called Lilith. And she was one of the Jinn. That's what she comes from on one side. And on the other she comes of the giants. No, no, there isn't a drop of real human blood in the Witch. (87-88)

Mr. Beaver's explanation is important in the context of the scene. Because he has previously provided information about Narnian history as it relates to Aslan, divulging similar information about the White Witch contrasts the characters of the two and develops the conflict between them more fully. Mr. Beaver's information about the Witch helps to delineate the two sides in the conflict; because the Witch is claiming a throne that is not rightfully hers by claiming an identity (i.e., human) that is not rightfully hers, she cannot be misconstrued as anyone other than the antagonist in this struggle. What's more, Mr. Beaver's description of the White Witch in this scene adds an element of grotesque wickedness to her character. Where the film depends on the audience to see her as a generic witch, Lewis explicitly assigns her a history that reveals her as the personification of Evil. Mr. Beaver continues, saying, "...in general, take my advice, when you meet anything that's going to be human and isn't yet, or used to be human once and isn't now, or ought to be human and isn't, you keep you eyes on it and feel for your hatchet" (88). Lewis develops the Witch's other-worldly, sinister identity much farther

beyond that of a generic archetype, making his character much stronger than the underdeveloped Witch of the film.

### *New Themes in Disney's Narnia*

Essentially, C. S. Lewis's classic book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* suffered drastic changes when the filmmakers translated it into a movie. Besides omitting much plot development, the film adds thematic elements that do not appear in Lewis's original Narnia. Most noticeably, in the film a war theme has been included that adds action to the adventure tale and dates it as a work created during war-time in the United States. The film significantly heightens the element of war in Narnia in two major ways. First, the World War II theme has been incorporated throughout the film's plot in ways that are never present in the book. Then to continue the war idea, the film amplifies the battle scenes and gives them more attention than Lewis gave them.

The film launches the audience immediately into its war theme by opening with planes bombing London. In his story Lewis does explain that the Pevensie children were sent away to the Professor's house to avoid the air-raids in London, but he does not include an action-packed battle scene like the one in the film. The incorporation of the combat scene when the movie opens sets the stage for a war theme that extends throughout the film. In commentary about the film, director Andrew Adamson says that the opening scene is "where Peter presumably gets the idea of having the griffins drop the rocks or bombs on the White Witch's army." As Adamson points out, the attention to war in this scene clearly ties it to the final battle in Narnia. In addition, the Pevensies make comments throughout the film about their father being at war, a circumstance that

Lewis never clarifies in the book. Mr. Pevensie is only mentioned once in the book; when Peter says the Professor may “write to Father” about Lucy (50). Writing to Mr. Pevensie about Lucy’s adventures in a seemingly imaginary country would hardly be appropriate if he were fighting in a war. Yet while readers may or may not construe from Lewis’s original text that Mr. Pevensie is fighting in World War II, there is no question about it in the film. Edmund runs back into the house that is being bombed to retrieve a picture of Mr. Pevensie in uniform. While they are preparing to board the train to the Professor’s house, Peter specifically mentions to Edmund that their father is fighting in the war. When Lucy is talking with Mr. Tumnus, she says, “My father is fighting in the war.” The specific and repeated inclusion of references to World War II in the film maintains some form of a physical conflict in the plot at all times and conditions the audience to expect its continuation. By the end of the film, viewers are mentally prepared and eager for a battle scene. Yet oddly after all this preparation for and creation of a war presence in the film, Father Christmas states—in the film, not the book—“Battles are ugly affairs.” Despite this feeble attempt at disguising the incorporation of war in the film, the majority of details in Narnia testify that the filmmakers are promoting battle as their primary theme. They convert what Lewis intended as a spiritual struggle into a physical (and bloody) contest.

The filmmakers continue to condition the audience to expect and want physical conflict in the story by amplifying the battles that Lewis does include in his text. As Lewis portrays it, the battle between the Narnian army, led by Peter, and the White Witch is of minor significance to the story. Lewis describes the entire fight in only a few sentences:

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The battle was all over a few minutes after their [Aslan, Susan, Lucy, and the Narnians who had been statues] arrival. Most of the enemy had been killed in the first charge of Aslan and his companions; and when those who were still living saw that the Witch was dead they either gave themselves up or took flight. The next thing that Lucy knew was that Peter and Aslan were shaking hands. (195)

Lewis's brief treatment of the war shows that the battle is not the most important aspect of his work. By following Aslan rather than the battle, Lewis emphasizes that Aslan, his actions, and their spiritual significance are more fitting as the focal point of this scene than the fighting. While the battle is happening, Aslan takes Susan and Lucy to the Witch's castle to rescue the Narnians that the Witch has turned to stone. Aslan breathes life back into the statues, an action that parallels the biblical creation story: "the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7). Interestingly, Lewis emphasizes the theme of resurrection and restoration of life rather than the battle theme and thus reinforces the importance of the spiritual parallel rather than the physical conflict.

In the film, the alterations to the scene with Aslan and the statues continue the shift of focus away from Aslan that began in the scene with Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. However, this scene not only transfers the focus onto the children, but also onto the battle. The scene in the book is lengthy and portrays Aslan and the children searching frantically to save all the statues in the castle. Aslan says, "You never know where some poor prisoner may be concealed" (187). In the film, Tumnus is rescued and the attention immediately shifts back to Peter at the battle. In contrast to his compassionate statement



about the “poor prisoners” in the White Witch’s house, Aslan says, “Others may still be trapped inside and Peter will need all the help he can get.” Instead of expressing concern for all who are trapped in the castle simply because they are trapped, the film indicates that Aslan merely rescues them to help fight in the war. This change to Aslan’s statement supports the film’s shift in theme from him to the children, and, in this scene specifically, to the battle.

Even some of the changes in the characters and dialogue of the film of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* link directly to the amplification of war themes through literal conflict in the plot. The film’s changes in the Pevensie family support its battle theme. In the book, Lewis carefully orchestrates the exchanges between the Pevensie children to intensify the figurative conflict between Good and Evil. While Peter, Susan, and Lucy get along for the most part during the plot, Edmund is the source of the majority of (if not all) the conflict between the Pevensies. However, as previously illustrated in this analysis, the film eliminates much of the characters’ spiritual significance as it changes them. Without spiritual explanation (i.e., promotion of Good or Evil) for their behavior in the film, the conflicts simply appear to be common disagreements. Instead of developing the book’s specific conflict between Good and Evil, the recurrent friction between characters in the film simply creates a general atmosphere of conflict that has little figurative significance. In fact, the film adds friction between characters who never clash in the book. For example, instead of “Susan the Gentle” as in the book, the film characterizes Susan as an aggressive, argumentative girl who provokes other characters. Susan accusingly says to Peter, “What have you done?” when Edmund runs away. Father Christmas also notices her argumentative tone and says

to Susan, “you don’t seem to have trouble making yourself heard.” The existence of tension between characters in the film who never fight in the book reduces the significance of the distinction that Lewis creates between Good and Evil. Without Lewis’s spiritual parallel, the film’s incorporated friction between these characters supports a theme of conflict for conflict’s sake rather than for the purpose of illustrating a theme.

**Conclusions:** *The Contemporary Influence—Media, War, and Narnia*

Scores of minor changes create the great disparity between the 2005 film of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and the original text, and American media trends offer some explanation for this grand departure. In the past century, American media have evolved from instruments of communication to channels through which producers convey meanings and messages of their own. As Eric P. Louw states in *The Media and Cultural Production*, “The twentieth century became an era when intellectualism and meaning-making were institutionalized so that all the major communication forms—from newspapers to television—were organized in accordance with corporate industrial logic” (Louw 38). With the rise of industrialism in the United States, media began to follow a model of mass production, and “as a ‘mass’ medium, the meanings produced were necessarily designed to offend as few people as possible, so as not to drive away any potential audience segment. ...In essence, a form of market censorship emerged—meanings that offended the people advertisers were interested in would be avoided” (Louw 49). The phenomenon that inevitably followed the innovation of mass media was the homogenization of the communication companies’ messages, and, over

time, their audiences. As producers supplied self-censored themes and messages, audiences grew so accustomed to generic ideas that they eventually began demanding them. In “supply and demand,” media companies were the source of both the product demanded and the public demands.

From the evolution of mass media toward increasing control over what and how themes would be presented has emerged a system of restriction; media companies restrict what they produce, and in turn restrict what audiences demand. The delicate balance functions in mainstream media because all major companies adhere to these standards in order to maximize their profit. This system of restrictions applies to the way in which the Walt Disney Company presents its 2005 adaptation of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. C. S. Lewis deliberately included Christian spiritual themes in his book, yet by making significant changes in characters and the plot, the film transforms Lewis’s specifically Christian ideas into generic and secular all-purpose principles. Repeatedly, the film strips characters of their depth of meaning and leaves them common and underdeveloped. What’s more, the cultural setting of the movie’s production—during American wartime—provides a motive for the filmmakers’ incorporation of a war theme into the story.

The incorporation of themes related to war, battle, and general conflict ties closely to the context in which the film was produced and released. Though the filmmakers prepare the audience for the battle scenes through the incorporation of war references early in the film, war should come as no surprise to the American audience for which the film was created. Because the United States has been formally engaged in war in Iraq since March 2003, the American public is emotionally prepared for battle scenes and

warfare. However, public opinion regarding the war is sharply polarized; consequently politicians try to rally public opinion by attaching positive ideals to the American war effort. C. S. Lewis discusses this type of phenomenon in one of his other works, *The Four Loves*:

Rulers must somehow nerve their subjects to defend them or at least to prepare for their defense. Where the sentiment of patriotism has been destroyed this can be done only by presenting every international conflict in a purely ethical light. If people will spend neither sweat nor blood for "their country" they must be made to feel that they are spending them for justice, or civilization, or humanity. (29)

Ironically, the American social context of fighting a "War on Terror" for "Liberty" affects the representation of Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* in the very way he discusses in *The Four Loves*. Because this phenomenon of fighting for abstract ideas pervades the United States, it is no surprise that Lewis's specific spiritual themes should be, for the most part, replaced with generalized abstractions supporting justification for the war. As Lawrence Grossberg states in *Mediamaking: Mass Media in a Popular Culture*, "ideology is not a characteristic of texts themselves but of the ways they are located and deployed in a society" (181). In a country of waning public support for a costly, long-term war, a feel-good tale of Good triumphing over Evil through an armed battle could reasonably be an attempt to rally support for the war itself and for politicians who will seek reelection in the future.

Beyond specific cultural interpretation, evaluation of the changes that have been made to Lewis's classic Narnian tale also has implications with regard to the general purpose of the adaptation of literary works. As Grossberg again points out, "The word

*representation* literally means ‘re-presentation.’ To represent something means to take an original, mediate it, and ‘play it back.’ But again, this process almost necessarily alters the reality of the original” (Grossberg 179). Just as Grossberg suggests, the representation of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* “necessarily alters the reality of the original,” in this case to a significant degree. According to Grossberg, changes to an adapted work are inevitable, so one questions the validity of adapting literary works at all. The themes, characters, and events an author includes in a work are deliberate and sacred; had the author wanted his creation to be different in any way, he would have chosen to edit it before having it published. Therefore, modern media enter questionable territory when assuming the task of adapting a work of literature to another medium.

The tendency of American media to reduce complex themes and narratives to flat, homogenous, and typically superficial imagery and incorporate contemporary social ideas into the theme is plainly evident in what happened to *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* when Walt Disney Studios adapted it. Lucy Pevensie is essentially the same character of innocence and virtue in the movie, and is the rare exception. Peter Pevensie is changed from a strong leader and spiritual parallel of Saint Peter to a weak character who leads his siblings simply because he is the oldest. Susan’s gentle, maternal traits have been removed and replaced with “logic” and intellect that make her rude, condescending, and undeserving of her Narnian title as Queen Susan the Gentle. Edmund Pevensie’s personality remains basically the same, but he does not undergo the spiritual transition that Lewis imparts to his character. The film drastically reduces Aslan’s spiritual strength and makes him more of a hint of a Christ figure than the actual Narnian version of Christ that Lewis portrays him as. The White Witch is translated from

the incarnation of evil to a sinister character whose role as antagonist is clear only because she is identified as a “witch.” Through all these seemingly minor modifications, little more than the basic events and structure are untouched in Lewis’s plot. Disney’s version of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is not only changed in the sense that Grossberg asserted was inevitable, but it is changed in ways that make the same basic series of events have such entirely different thematic significance that they hardly resemble Lewis’s deliberate spiritual themes. In conclusion, Walt Disney Studios’ film *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* deserves to be called a revision, rather than an adaptation, of Lewis’s original work. It is an excellent example of why Lewis was hesitant about having his deeply spiritual tales adapted to other media.

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