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## “What happened to battles are ugly affairs?": Fighting Girls in the Films *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Chapters 1, 2 and 3

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### **“What happened to battles are ugly affairs?”: Fighting Girls in the Films *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Chapters 1, 2 and 3**

#### **Abstract**

Although C.S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956) are still hugely popular today, some critics have accused the books of representing masculinity and femininity in an outmoded way. The three Walden Media films, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005), *Prince Caspian* (2008) and *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (2010), appear to adopt a more contemporary perspective, especially as far as the representation of fighting girls is concerned. While Lewis seemed slightly reluctant to show women playing an active role on the battlefield, Andrew Adamson, who directed the first two films, lets Susan, the female protagonist, fight alongside the boys and even gives her a leading role in the battle scenes of the 2008 film. However, the presence of fighting girls remains largely symbolic, because they are artificially put forward in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and because their actions are presented in a stereotypical fashion in *Prince Caspian*. As for the director of the third film Michael Apted, he treats Lucy, the female protagonist who replaces her older sister Susan, in a much more egalitarian way.

#### **Additional Keywords**

Narnia films; fighting girls



HAT HAPPENED TO BATTLES ARE UGLY AFFAIRS?": FIGHTING GIRLS IN THE FILMS *The Chronicles of Narnia*, CHAPTERS 1, 2 AND 3

ANNE-FRÉDÉRIQUE MOCHEL-CABALLERO

C. S. Lewis, whose *Chronicles of Narnia* were written in the nineteen-fifties, has often been accused of portraying his female and male characters in a conventional, dated way.<sup>1</sup> Three films, made in 2005, 2008 and 2010 and based on the first three novels, appear to adopt a bolder and more contemporary perspective. However, this first impression may be called into question. The first two films, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*, directed by Andrew Adamson, should indeed be distinguished from the third, *The Voyage of The Dawn Treader*, by Michael Apted, especially when it comes to the representation of fighting girls. Lewis seemed slightly reluctant to portray women playing an active role on the battlefield, according to some of his critics.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, Susan and her bow are given pride of place in the posters for the first two films. However, I will demonstrate that, in the films themselves, the claims of the director that he wanted to empower female characters are contradicted by the actual time and roles girls are given on the screen. In the first film, women are rarely seen fighting and when they are, their role remains largely symbolic. Using Linda Hutcheon and Siobhan O'Flynn's *Theory of Adaptation* as a theoretical framework, I will show that Adamson was torn between his desire to pay homage to the book and his urge to challenge some of its contents. In the second film, Susan fights a great deal but she is not treated equally to men and is presented in a sexualized way, following a trend which became popular in action films in the noughties. The changes Adamson made in the process of adaptation were partly due to a desire to reach a wider audience. Yet the third film, which is equally destined to a wider audience and also produced by Walden Media—but in association with Twentieth Century Fox rather than Walt Disney Pictures—proves that the choices made were not the only possible option, since Lucy, the female protagonist who replaces Susan, is treated in a very different way from her older sister in the first two films.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer, for example, to Fredrick and McBride, *Women Among the Inklings*.

<sup>2</sup> For further information, refer to Fredrick and McBride, "Battling the Woman Warrior."

### THE FIRST FILM’S COMPROMISE: WOMEN CAN FIGHT, BUT ONLY A LITTLE

C. S. Lewis is sometimes viewed as an essentialist to whom the world was a place of hierarchy and order in which every being had a given position and role, a place where war, for instance, would be considered a primarily masculine activity. This premise may be questioned and should be nuanced<sup>3</sup> but for now, let us just concede that in the first three *Chronicles*, it is mainly the boys who take part in active combat: the girls are absent both during the battle against the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and the fight against the Telmarine army in *Prince Caspian*. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, there are no wars as such because Narnia is at peace with all its neighbors. Nonetheless, a few fights take place, to which I will come back later.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the girls are not totally forbidden from taking part in wars since Father Christmas gives both Susan and Lucy weapons, a bow and arrows to the elder sister and a little dagger to the younger one. All the same, the old man accompanies his presents with a highly significant remark. He recommends that Lucy should only use her weapon in case of absolute necessity and when the little girl reacts in surprise, he retorts: “battles are ugly when women fight” (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* [LWW] 10.101).

In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Hutcheon and O’Flynn make the point that “adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication,” observing that “there are manifestly many different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation: the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question is as likely as the desire to pay tribute by copying” (7). They also note that, according to the dictionary, “‘to adapt’ is to adjust, to alter, to make suitable” (7) and that “the act of adaptation always involves both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation” (8). They mention author Priscilla Galloway, who adapts mythic and historical narratives for children and young adults, and state that “she is motivated by a desire to preserve stories that are worth knowing but will not necessarily speak to a new audience without creative ‘reanimation’” (8). Hutcheon and O’Flynn liken cultural adaptation to genetic adaptation, “the biological process by which something is fitted to a given environment” (31): “Stories also evolve by adaptation and are not immutable over time. Sometimes, like biological adaptation, cultural adaptation involves migration to favorable conditions: stories travel to different cultures and different media. In short, stories adapt just as they are adapted” (31).

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<sup>3</sup> Some critics, like Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, contend that Lewis changed towards the end of his life. Paul Ford notices a difference between the earlier chronicles of Narnia and the later ones (entry for “Sexism,” 368-9). Others, like Monika B. Hilder and myself, believe that the changes started earlier and that his Christian perspective led him to subvert the notion of hierarchy itself, thus empowering what he viewed as the “feminine.”

When Andrew Adamson adapted C.S. Lewis's novel into a film in 2005, he tried to make the story "evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places" (Hutcheon and O'Flynn 176). He repeated the Father Christmas episode without replicating it by deciding to change the phrasing of the old man's piece of advice, which he considered sexist.

Adamson actually states in several interviews that he collaborated very closely with Lewis's stepson, Douglas Gresham, in order to be as faithful as possible to the book. The director reveals that the two men agreed on most things and that the only point they debated at any length was precisely that remark by Father Christmas. It thus appears that, if Adamson was motivated by the desire to pay tribute to the book, he also felt the urge to call it into question. In the end, Gresham gave in when Adamson pointed out that Lewis had changed his position on women once he had met his wife-to-be, Joy, who would become Gresham's mother. The two men apparently reached a compromise by dropping the subordinate clause (Fischer). Thus, in the film, the sentence simply becomes: "battles are ugly affairs." However, this change leads to an ambiguity and makes the whole scene unclear: indeed, why does Father Christmas not give the same warning to Peter, to whom he has just offered a sword? The way in which Andrew Adamson chooses to have the scene continue suggests that he must have realized the problem. Father Christmas next gives Susan her bow and says: "Susan, trust in this bow and it will not easily miss." Susan immediately gives him this mischievous answer: "What happened to 'battles are ugly affairs'?"

Later, Susan follows Father Christmas's recommendation and frequently uses her bow and arrows. She is shown in the various posters advertising the first two films armed with her bow, ready to shoot. In those posters, the four children are usually depicted in the same manner: a boy and girl are represented without a weapon, and the other two children are equipped respectively with a sword and a bow. Thus, the overall visual effect creates an impression of equality between male and female characters.

In the film, Susan is the first to stand up in order to start training once the decision to stay in Narnia and take part in the fight is made. Nevertheless, this training is in great danger of remaining useless because in the film, as in the novel, the girls are not present during the last battle against the White Witch. Again, Adamson was aware of the problem: as he states in an interview, Father Christmas might as well have given Susan a knife and plate and asked her to prepare sandwiches if he did not intend the girls to use their weapons (Seabrook). So, after the killing of the White Witch by the Lion Aslan, indicating that the battle has been won and the war is over, the director decided to add a scene which allows Susan to put her training to good use. He makes a dwarf sneak towards dying Edmund with the aim of finishing him off, and Susan,

seeing this, kills him by shooting him straight through the heart. Yet this scene almost comes as a sort of aftermath, as if the director had suddenly realized victory had been achieved without Susan being involved and he wanted to make up for it.

In the book, Susan is rescued by Peter when she is attacked by Maugrim the wolf: she is described as totally helpless, only able to blow her horn to ask for assistance and ready “to faint” (LWW 12, 120). In the film, the scene is presented in the same light. Since Adamson wanted to follow the book as closely as possible, he could not avoid including this incident, which leads to the elder Pevensie boy being knighted by Aslan and named “Sir Peter Wolfsbane.” It represents a crucial incident in Peter’s progress to becoming the High King but it could likewise be interpreted as a sign of Susan’s lesser status on the battlefield. In this instance, the director’s “(re-)interpretation” and “(re-)creation” of the adapted text was limited by his desire to pay homage to it (Hutcheon and O’Flynn 8). It could be argued that such a major change in the narrative would also have alienated film viewers who loved the books. As Hutcheon and O’Flynn write concerning “unfaithful” adaptations, “[t]he more popular and beloved the novel, the more likely the discontent” (127).

Contrary to the impression conveyed by the posters, in the first film, women are generally given very little space in the battle scenes. Out of two hours and seventeen minutes of film, about fifteen minutes are dedicated to battle scenes. Of these, only a few seconds show women and even fewer show them in the act of fighting. Apart from the scene of the training and the one when Susan shoots the dwarf, there are only five other scenes when women are seen equipped with weapons: in one of them, Lucy pulls out her dagger and says to Aslan: “we have to help them” to which the Lion answers “we will, dear one, but not alone” while lowering her blade with his paw. In the other four scenes, which last about one second each, Edmund is seen overlooking the battlefield with blurred figures of female centaurs in the background. Edmund is clearly in charge of the archers, a group composed mainly of centaurs and dwarfs, and the few who are female are standing just behind him, which can be seen as an act of mere tokenism. In three of the scenes, the female characters are simply watching what is happening below and only in one of them is there any action at all. Namely, Edmund says “fire” and one female centaur shoots an arrow. It is quite easy to miss those female characters unless you are specifically looking out for them.

On the whole, in the first film, the fighters on both sides are generally male, with the exception of a few female centaurs and Susan on the good side. On the evil side, there are no female fighters at all, apart from the White Witch herself.

It is impossible to omit the White Witch when dealing with the topic of females on the battlefield in Narnia. Even if she is on the side of Evil, she is still a very powerful feminine figure, feared by all but Aslan. I will not dwell on her, however, because girls watching the film are not very likely to identify with her. As van Krieken, Hoeken, and Sanders remark, “[s]everal scholars have suggested that identification with a character is evoked by the extent to which an audience member considers him or herself as similar to the character” (3). The first difference between the Witch and girl viewers is one of age: she is an adult, contrary to Susan and Lucy. A second and more important reason for which girls would probably not see her as a role model is the very fact that she is presented as being the epitome of evil, a figuration of Satan himself. According to Tal-Or and Cohen, the level of identification of a viewer is susceptible to the character being portrayed as sympathetic or unsympathetic: “When identifying with a character a person imagines him or herself to be that character, a process that involves feeling empathy and affinity towards that character (affective empathy component) and adopting the character’s goals and point of view within the narrative (cognitive empathy component)” (404). Therefore, since girls would tend not to identify with her, the sight of the White Witch on the battlefield is unlikely to make them want to fight.

So the general idea conveyed by the first film is that fighting is not something girls should do as a rule. If they get involved, it should remain exceptional. This may come as a surprise, since the director, Andrew Adamson, produced two *Shrek* films casting feisty princess Fiona before directing *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, but even though he claimed he wanted to empower women, his hands were tied in that he had to be careful not to upset Gresham on the one hand and a potentially rather traditional public on the other. Indeed, because of its underlying Christian message, Disney decided to promote this film among church-goers<sup>4</sup> in the United States, a significant percentage of them being Conservatives. During the marketing campaign, the film “was presented to niche groups of conservative Evangelical viewers as an experience which spoke to younger film goers and inculcated Christian values” (Russell 60). Walden Media, whose stated goal combines “an educational stance with a moral and religious-based one” (Dupont 82), even went as far as to offer a “17-week Narnia Bible study for children” (Toynbee) when the film was released. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is the most overtly Christian of the three films and maybe this reluctance to show women fighters was part of an attempt to please the potentially traditionalist fringe of the public.

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<sup>4</sup> Church-goers represent 40% of the American population, according to Charlotte Tudor, chief publicist for Buena Vista International’s British branch (quoted by Dupont 230).

### SUSAN, THE “BABE IN ARMS”

The fact that Lucy does not fight at all and that Susan’s fighting is not showcased in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* could be partly justified by the girls’ relatively young age.

In *Prince Caspian*, the second film, Lucy is still a child and she does not get to fight either, although she again shows how brave she is by pulling out her little dagger when faced alone with a whole army of grown men—or at least she thinks she is alone, not knowing Aslan is in fact behind her. As for Susan, she has become a young woman and she takes an active part in the fighting scenes this time. She is not treated as a mere “sidekick,” to use Yvonne Tasker’s terminology (*Spectacular Bodies* 15); she is given as much space as the other main characters, Peter, Caspian, and Edmund. She replaces Edmund as chief archer, and several times she is seen giving orders to shoot. During the attack on Miraz’s castle, she takes part in the decision-making when Caspian wants to change the original plan to rescue his former professor. She convinces Peter that they can deal with Miraz together without Caspian’s help. There are a certain number of parallel scenes when we see a shot of a male character fighting and the following shot is of Susan, fighting just as bravely and successfully. She proves to be an exceptionally valiant fighter who does not hesitate to face a dozen soldiers on her own and who manages to shoot down four of them before finally getting knocked down herself.

This aspect is even exaggerated to the point of becoming improbable. Twice in the film, Susan finds herself on a battlefield fighting hand-to-hand, the only woman amongst a group of men, and the only one not equipped with a sword. Yet, in both cases, she manages to make use of her bow and arrows to defend herself and strike a man down, the first time by piercing him with an arrow she has in her hands and the second time by hitting a man in the face with her bow. In both instances, the fully-armored soldier falls down and she carries on fighting with the others. Because the film belongs to the fantasy genre, it could be argued that realism is not what is sought after. Indeed, none of the battle scenes are believable, since we are faced with a group of children and fantastic creatures fighting against a much larger army of heavily armed grown men. This “David versus Goliath” motif is a trope frequently found in both the Bible and in fantasy literature. However, the exaggeration is not as marked where male characters are concerned, since they are at least fighting with the same weapons (swords) and wearing the same type of clothes. It is as if the director wanted to make sure that viewers did not miss the way he empowered the elder Pevensie girl.

Even if Susan is presented as an exceptional combatant, the film does not encourage women fighters in general. Admittedly, Susan takes part in all of the fights in the second film; however, she is the only female character who does



so. The female centaurs of the first film have disappeared from the fighting scenes and are relegated to the background of the story. When Susan gives her orders to the other archers, she is surrounded with dwarfs and male centaurs, and during the attack on Miraz's castle, the female centaurs stay behind with Lucy and are only seen mourning the dead after the defeat.

Once again, despite Susan's important role—much more so than in Lewis' book—the presence of women on the battlefield seems somehow artificial, as if the director wanted to make a point.

The other problem is the way in which Susan is presented on screen. She represents the stereotype of the “conventionally glamorous [action woman]” (Tasker, *Working Girls* [WG] 68). She is the typical “babe in arms” who became popular in Hollywood cinema in the noughties and replaced the “tough women” of the eighties and the nineties, described by Raphaëlle Moine as “achieving the improbable synthesis of traditional hyperfemininity and masculine violence.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, though she is a very active fighter, she is always shown dressed in a long skirt, even when it is not convenient at all, she often wears her long hair loose and the upper part of her body is covered in a very figure-hugging coat of mail. Whereas in the book, she and Caspian are both still children, in the film, the two actors playing Susan and Caspian, Anna Popplewell and Ben Barnes were respectively 20 and 27 when the second Narnia film came out and the director claimed their looks inspired him to add an element of romance between the two, which shocked a certain number of book fans (Adler). So Susan is allowed to fight, but she must also be an object of desire. She may be described in Tasker's words, as a “feisty heroine [...] characterized within movie discourse as a woman with a strength and spirit that is defined as atypical” (WG 82) and who “moves between modes in a non-linear fashion, functioning simultaneously or alternately as romantic interest, sexual object and active protagonist within the narrative” (WG 83).

Even though Susan manages to fight off several men singlehandedly whilst escaping with Lucy on horseback in search of Aslan, she is finally defeated by one of the Telmarine soldiers who strikes her down, intending to run her through with his sword. Luckily, Caspian turns up just in time to rescue the damsel in distress. The way in which the scene is shot accentuates this aspect: we can see Susan on the ground, in a high-angle shot, and then a low-angle shot shows Caspian holding out his hand to her from his horse, smiling at her and asking “Are you sure you don't need that horn?”, a reference to an earlier scene

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<sup>5</sup> My translation for: “Aux *tough women* des années 1980 et 1990, des femmes fortes, parfois musclées et athlétiques, toujours adultes, ont en effet succédé dès le début des années 2000 les *babes in arms*, des femmes au physique souvent adolescent, qui combinent la prouesse physique et le glamour et réalisent l'improbable synthèse de l'hyperféminité traditionnelle et de la violence masculine” (Moine 25-26).

when Susan had claimed she did not need help. So Caspian saves her life, but the reverse does not happen. When he is in danger later in the film, Susan watches, helpless, from afar, and he is saved by the intervention of a walking tree which uses its roots to grab his enemy and carry him away. In these instances, Susan is portrayed in a stereotypical manner as a passive female, awaiting help from outside.

Interestingly there are two parallel scenes when a character falls from a wall: the first involves Edmund during the attack on the castle and the second Susan during the fighting at Aslan’s Mound. At first sight, it seems to be an example of perfect parity since both characters fall and are caught by a third party. Yet there is a difference in the way the two scenes are shot. Edmund’s fall is viewed from the point of view of the enemy: falling over the parapet, he disappears and seems to be lost, only to reappear a second later rescued by a griffin much to the spectator’s relief and to the enemy’s dismay. Although Edmund did not do anything to save himself, the whole scene gives the impression that a clever stunt has been performed. In the case of Susan, we see her fall, which changes the atmosphere: the spectator is obviously expected to feel pathos. She is hanging, defenseless, and for the second time, is helped by a male character, this time the dwarf Trumpkin. The fact that she is a strong character is not called into question since she then continues fighting with the others as if nothing had happened, with seemingly no need to recover. Still, it shows again a subtle gender-induced disparity in the way characters are treated.

The end of the film features a scene typical of a romantic comedy when Susan kisses Caspian in front of the whole crowd of Narnians, thus revealing her attraction to him to the world. The film veers towards a high school romance, although the potentially syrupy atmosphere is saved by the humorous remarks of her two siblings, Lucy and Edmund, who seem to forestall the critics of the purists and the younger spectators: “I’m sure when I’m older I’ll understand”, Lucy says, and her brother answers: “I’m older and I’m not sure I want to understand.” This scene shows that, although the director chose to add a romantic aspect which is designed to attract teenage girls and which presents Susan in the clichéd role of a love-smitten adolescent, he also hoped to appeal to a wider public.

It appears that the audience for this film was intended to be as large as possible. With its mixture of action scenes and romance, it was meant to please both sexes, teenagers but also younger children and adults. Susan is portrayed as a sexy girl *and* a fighter, which is supposed to appeal to both boys and girls. According to Jessica Andrade, “male viewers tend to be drawn to [programs featuring female action heroes] by the sexual attractiveness of the female lead, while female viewers watch these programs to see complex female characters in powerful roles” (Andrade). As an action woman, Susan is—in the words of

Raphaëlle Moine— “a vessel of fantasies, projections, desires and worries of all kinds.”<sup>6</sup> She satisfies a male fantasy in that she is a woman presented as both strong and vulnerable, thus triggering masochistic impulses while at the same time presenting reassuring traditional feminine qualities.<sup>7</sup> As it happens, girls’ tastes have evolved and they also enjoy watching more active heroines than in the past. Passive princesses in Disney films are not popular anymore, and they have been replaced by strong female characters who take their destinies into their own hands like Tiana in *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), Rapunzel in *Tangled* (2010), or Elsa in *Frozen* (2012), to mention but a few.<sup>8</sup>

So it seems Andrew Adamson chose to present Susan in a way which would attract a large audience. However, it should be noted that he did not create his filmic character out of thin air but drew inspiration from Lewis’s text itself. In the books, Susan is deemed to be “an excellent archer” (*The Horse and His Boy* 13.144) and she is presented as having some experience of romance at the end of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* when she “grew into a tall and gracious woman with black hair that fell almost to her feet and the Kings of the countries beyond the sea began to send ambassadors asking for her hand in marriage” (17.166-7). In *The Horse and His Boy*, Prince Rabadash is said to be madly in love with her (8.89) and it almost provokes a war between Narnia and the southern country of Calormene. In the oft-quoted passage of *The Last Battle* which has caused a great deal of controversy, Susan is described as being “no longer a friend of Narnia” and “interested in nothing nowadays except nylons and lipstick and invitations” (12.128).<sup>9</sup> Numerous readers and critics have considered this treatment of her unfair,<sup>10</sup> and it may have inspired Adamson to

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<sup>6</sup> My translation for: “un réceptacle de fantasmes, de projections, de désirs ou d’inquiétudes de toutes sortes” (Moine 6).

<sup>7</sup> “[...] les images de la puissance féminine sont contrebalancées par l’évocation de la vulnérabilité féminine. Cette motivation de la violence féminine n’est pas nécessairement contradictoire avec les investissements masochistes qu’elle peut susciter chez les spectateurs masculins : l’inquiétude et l’excitation sont en effet contenues et rendues supportables par le rappel de qualités féminines conventionnelles” (Moine 49, 51).

<sup>8</sup> In the latest animation films, even traditional fairy tales like *The Sleeping Beauty* have been transformed to give a more active role to women: thus, in *Maleficent* (2014), the princess is not saved by the kiss of a prince but by that of a mother figure who then fights the evil character to save everyone else, the prince included.

<sup>9</sup> For further details, see Gordon.

<sup>10</sup> A young reader wrote to Lewis as early as 1960 to complain about it (*Collected Letters* 3.1135). Since then, it has been denounced by critic Alison Lurie (12), biographer A.N. Wilson (228), and writers Philip Hensher, Philip Pullman, Neil Gaiman (16), and J.K. Rowling (Grossman), to quote but a few.

present a sexualized Susan in a positive light in reaction.<sup>11</sup>

In the film, Susan is an attractive character, probably more appealing to a contemporary audience than her timid namesake in the books. In a way, however, she is almost too perfect to be true. As such, she presents girls with an unattainable role model. She appears to be there more as a sort of statement from the director and as a way to attract viewers than as a genuine person girls can identify with.

On the whole, the main changes made to the film *Prince Caspian* are the addition of a battle scene—the attack on Miraz’s castle—and the omission of a very important scene in the book, starting with a mysterious night feast involving Bacchus, Silenus, Aslan and a whole group of Narnians and ending with Aslan’s quest for supporters among the Telmarines. In the book, the four children are separated at this point of the narrative: while the boys fight Miraz’s army, Susan and Lucy spend the night in the woods with Aslan and his party. The presence of Aslan causes the trees to wake up and to take part in a magical dance, while Bacchus makes vines grow everywhere and soon provides a feast of delicious juicy grapes for the whole company. Susan and Lucy spend the night laughing, dancing, eating and playing games with Maenads and Dryads in a sort of dreamy and surreal atmosphere. The next day, they accompany Aslan round the country as he calls people to join him, and most of the ones who respond favorably are female.

Of course, Andrew Adamson justified his choice of replacing these scenes with the attack of Miraz’s castle by stating that this part of the narrative was too static for a film and, more importantly, that the American public would never have agreed to have two young girls seen reveling with the god of wine.<sup>12</sup> The 1989 BBC adaptation of *Prince Caspian* does not feature that part of the novel either.<sup>13</sup> Even in Lewis’ day, this scene was controversial, although the book makes it clear that the presence of Aslan channeled Bacchus’s energy and that nothing improper happened. Nonetheless, the choice of replacing a nocturnal dance in the woods involving mostly female characters with yet another battle scene changes the story in a significant way.

When Hutcheon and O’Flynn endeavor to determine what makes a successful adaptation, after having rejected the notion of “spirit”, “tone” or

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<sup>11</sup> This is hinted at in Adler’s article: “‘Susan’s story is that it’s better to have loved and lost than to have never loved at all. And that applies to Narnia. She was the last one to accept Narnia,’ Adamson sighed. ‘It makes the goodbye even harder.’”

<sup>12</sup> “[Andrew Adamson] decided not to use the wild party that Bacchus throws in the book. Andrew rightly believed that it was not appropriate to show children drinking wine at a raucous feast” (Baehr).

<sup>13</sup> The BBC version is very short, only 56 minutes, so this scene could also have been omitted because it is not essential to the plot.

“style,” which they think too subjective, they mention the story as a “common denominator, the core of what is transposed across different media and genres” and they argue that “‘equivalences’ are sought in different sign systems for the various elements of the story: its themes, events, world, characters, motivations, points of view, consequences, contexts, symbols, imagery and so on” (10). Following this argument, it could be claimed that in the film *Prince Caspian*, the themes of dream, joy, mystery, imagination found in the nocturnal feast scene have been replaced by those of violence, death, and sadness, thus altering the story in its core.

### LUCY, BOTH “FIERCE” AND “MEEK”

The third film, *The Voyage of The Dawn Treader*, can also be described in terms of repetition without replication. The main characters are Caspian, Edmund, Lucy and their cousin Eustace, Susan and Peter being away, just as they are in the book. Lucy has become a teenager and another younger girl, who does not appear in Lewis’ narrative, is introduced to play the role of the “baby” who needs to be protected. In a way she replaces the young Lucy of the previous films and just like her, she does not fight but proves to be very brave, by refusing to stay at home and wait for her father’s return, deciding instead to stow away on the ship. As Hutcheon and O’Flynn remark, “characters are crucial to the rhetorical and aesthetic effects of both narrative and performance texts because they engage receivers’ imaginations through [...] recognition, alignment and allegiance” (11). Thus, the addition of the girl to the adaptation might allow younger children to identify with a character in the film more easily.

Lucy is now the film’s female fighter. Again, she is the only girl among a group of boys, but she is treated in a very different way from Susan in the previous film. While Georgie Henley, playing Lucy, may be perceived as just as good-looking as Anna Popplewell, in the role of Susan, she is not presented in a sexualized way as her older sister was. For example, Lucy wears trousers throughout the film. Admittedly the director cannot claim any merit for this cross-dressing as he is simply being faithful to the book. Indeed, the narrator explains in *The Voyage of the “Dawn Treader”* that there are no women’s clothes on board the ship and that Caspian therefore has to lend Lucy some of his own (VDT 1.17).

In the various interviews given by the two directors, Andrew Adamson frequently emphasizes his desire to empower women whereas Michael Apted seems to ignore the subject altogether. When asked what he makes of J.K. Rowling’s criticism of C.S. Lewis and the misogynist subtext of his books, he

declines to comment as if he was not interested.<sup>14</sup> Yet on screen, Apted presents Lucy in a much more egalitarian way than Adamson does with Susan.

Again, he might have been helped by the book because in *The Voyage of the “Dawn Treader,”* the desire to seduce others and to be as enticing as her sister is a temptation Lucy has to overcome. So, in the film, when she utters the spell that will make her more beautiful than anyone else on earth, she does not objectively become better-looking, but, as she turns into her sister, she appears more voluptuous. It is the only time she is shown wearing a dress, her curves are thrown into relief and she is wearing lipstick, thus making her lips appear fuller. The whole scene, however, is to be viewed in a negative light. She soon comes back to her senses and rejects what is presented as a sick fantasy, when she realizes that she does not need to envy her sister’s good looks and that she is important and unique in her own right. Indeed, once she has transformed into Susan in her dream, she has also wished herself out of existence as a consequence. Since she was the one who first discovered Narnia, she finds herself in a world where the Pevensie siblings never learn about it. In the book, Lucy foresees tournaments and then “real wars”, and countries “laid waste with the fury of the kings and dukes and great lords who fought for her favour” (VDT 10.119) This is an example of the adaptation dealing with the same overall theme as the adapted text, but the way in which it is handled makes it much closer to the fantasy-loving young spectators’ concerns and therefore more likely to engage their imaginations.

Throughout the film, Lucy is put on an equal footing with the boys. Although she is given her dagger back at the beginning of the voyage, she never uses it. She seems to prefer fighting with a proper sword, something which Susan was never allowed to do in the first two films and something which Lewis seemed to be reluctant about, at least in the Narnia stories.<sup>15</sup> She also uses her fists, exactly like the boys, and she is given the same amount of screen time.

When they arrive on Coriakin’s Island, Lucy tries to fight the monopods but is very rapidly disarmed as their invisibility turns them into tricky opponents and she appears powerless at this point. However, a little later, a group of male characters is disarmed in exactly the same way. There is no difference of treatment between female and male characters. On Ramandu’s Island, when the group comes across the three sleeping lords, the first reaction is that of Edmund who utters a cry of surprise. Just after that, a close shot shows Caspian and Lucy drawing their swords in the same motion: Caspian on the left,

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<sup>14</sup> “Well, I’m not going to speak to that. I don’t know. I think Lucy is a very sympathetic character in all the books, so I don’t see what [J. K. Rowling’s] problem is with that” (qtd. in Mellor).

<sup>15</sup> In *Till We Have Faces* (1956), the last of his published novels, Queen Orual fights with a sword.

draws his just a fraction of a second earlier than Lucy on the right. The next shot shows three male sailors closely following their example. Thus, Caspian and Lucy give the impression that they are leading the group and that they are partners in initiating the fight. During the final fighting scene against the sea serpent, everyone is allowed to participate. Edmund attacks the monster first, Caspian strikes it with his sword, Lucy pierces it with an arrow, Eustace acts from afar by adding the seventh sword to the other ones, thus allowing Edmund to strike the final and fatal blow. It represents an instance of perfect team work.

In the book, Lucy is not seen fighting<sup>16</sup> but neither are the male characters. She is presented as being particularly brave, when she agrees to face a potential danger by entering the magician's house on her own, and it also makes her the savior of the whole group, since their invisible enemies claim that they will cut their throats if she does not comply (VDT 9.110). She was already known as "Queen Lucy the Valiant" in the days when she reigned in Cair Paravel with her siblings (LWW 17.167). At the same time, she is compassionate towards Eustace when all the others turn against him and she finds Reepicheep the mouse so endearing that she wants to hug him. As Fredrick and McBride remark, "[Lucy] is feisty and fun-loving, affectionate and active, willing to pursue adventure and danger as intensely as any Narnian male" ("Battling" 37). Lucy is Lewis's favorite character and he gives her a very balanced personality, combining strength and gentleness. To Lewis, being both "fierce" and "meek," like Launcelot in *Morte D'Arthur*, is an ideal to be attained.<sup>17</sup>

The film manages to convey this aspect successfully and goes even further than the book. The characters are not strictly limited by gender norms in the film. In the emotional parting scene, Eustace, the boy, cries his heart out when saying goodbye to Reepicheep while Lucy, the girl, sheds a few discreet tears when she has to part with Aslan. In the book, only Lucy's tears are mentioned (VDT 16.183, 188). Again, in Apted's film, the female and male characters seem to be treated as individuals with their own personalities rather than as types belonging to gendered categories and behaving according to stereotypes.

## CONCLUSION

In the first two films, although the director clearly stated his intention to feature more active girls, their presence is largely symbolic either because they are artificially put forward in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, or because

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<sup>16</sup> Although they do not fight in the end, Lucy is ready to use her bow against the Dufflepuds, while the boys are getting out their swords (VDT 9.107) and she is said to ride to the wars in *The Horse and His Boy* (13.144).

<sup>17</sup> For further details, refer to his essay "The Necessity of Chivalry."

their actions are exaggerated and presented in a standardized fashion as the stereotyped female action hero in the case of Susan in *Prince Caspian*.

When making the second film, *Prince Caspian*, Adamson said he wanted it to be more action oriented, and his aim was clearly to appeal to a larger public as I have shown. Nevertheless, this turned out to be counterproductive: “We made some mistakes with *Prince Caspian*, and I don’t want to make them again,” conceded Mark Johnson, a producer on all of the Narnia films. He stated that Caspian lacked some of the “wonder and magic of Narnia,” was “a little bit too rough” for families, and too much of a “boys’ action movie” (qtd. in Moring). Though *The Voyage of The Dawn Treader* also departs from the book for the same reasons as *Prince Caspian*, namely because the plot is too static, the third film seems to be adapted in a more successful way than the second. Hutcheon and O’Flynn state that “[t]he separate units of the story (or the *fabula*) can also be transmediated [...]. But they may well change—often radically—in the process of adaptation, and not only (but most obviously) in terms of their plot ordering. Pacing can be transformed, time compressed or expanded” (11).

Apted claims that the book “felt very episodic” which is “catastrophic in a movie” because “[y]ou’ve got to have a reason in a movie to go from A to B to C” (qtd. in Collett-White). The changes made provide consistency to the plot by adding one big motive for travelling: instead of just looking for lost lords, the sailors have to find and destroy a dark force whose existence they discover in the first island they visit and which they manage to defeat in the last one. This makes the plot more compelling because people’s lives are at stake, yet it does not change the voyage in a radical way. In the book, the children are not really useful to the plot since they do not come to Narnia to help (Myers 140). Reading into Aslan’s hint at the end, it seems that the reason they are called there is to learn through their adventures. Indeed, Peter Schakel views “learning” as one of the two “central themes” of the novel (60). In the film, similarly, “[p]sychological development (and thus receiver empathy) is part of the narrative and dramatic arcs” (Hutcheon and O’Flynn 11) as the characters complete an initiatory journey, from which they learn and grow.

As for the treatment of female characters in the third film, it is more in line with Lewis’ own intuitions. As a bachelor don who lived in the first part of the twentieth century in a male-dominated world, Lewis had some traditional ideas about the place of women in society and it sometimes shows in his writings. But partly thanks to his close friendships with several exceptional women and to his relationship with Joy Davidman, an American divorcee who became his wife when he was in his fifties, he changed his views and became less categorical about the division between male and female roles.<sup>18</sup> In the book

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<sup>18</sup> For other reasons, refer to Mochel-Caballero 243-288.



he wrote after her death, in which he reflected on their relationship, he confessed that he believed it was wrong to categorize human beings according to gender and that it was “arrogance” to do so.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> “It is arrogance in us to call frankness, fairness, and chivalry ‘masculine’ when we see them in a woman; it is arrogance in them to describe a man’s sensitiveness or tact or tenderness as ‘feminine.’ But also what poor, warped fragments of humanity most mere men and mere women must be to make the implications of that arrogance plausible.” (*A Grief Observed*, 3.49)

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