

Lost Girls:
Gender Stereotyping in the Children's Literary Fantasy of
C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and Elizabeth Goudge

Marcia Vermeij 1197118

MA Thesis Literary Studies: English Literature and Culture, Leiden University

Supervisor: Dr. E.J. van Leeuwen

Second Reader: Dr. M.S. Newton

15 September 2014

Table of Contents

Abbreviations	3
Introduction	4
Chapter 1: Children’s Literary Fantasy	12
Chapter 2: Female protagonists in <i>The Chronicles of Narnia</i> , <i>The Hobbit</i> and <i>The Little White Horse</i>	24
Chapter 3: Female Antagonists in <i>The Chronicles of Narnia</i> , <i>The Hobbit</i> and <i>The Little White Horse</i>	43
Works Cited.....	56

Abbreviations

Because *The Chronicles of Narnia* consist of seven books with lengthy titles, it is customary amongst Lewis scholars to abbreviate the works in question as follows:

<i>MN</i>	<i>The Magician's Nephew</i>
<i>LWW</i>	<i>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</i>
<i>HHB</i>	<i>The Horse and His Boy</i>
<i>PC</i>	<i>Prince Caspian</i>
<i>VDT</i>	<i>The Voyage of the Dawn Treader</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>The Silver Chair</i>
<i>LB</i>	<i>The Last Battle</i>

Introduction

“It’s an extraordinary thing about girls that they never know the points of the compass” (SC 552)

Like all Western cultures, England has long adhered to an ideological gender divide between men and women. Englishness has been mediated by identities of gender. Especially during the Victorian age, it manifested itself through separate ideologically prescribed identities for men and women that were aligned to separate socio-cultural environments (P. Ward 39). Langland explains that even within the home, “spaces were coded as masculine or feminine” (295). These “separate spheres,” as they were named by contemporaries, provided men and women with clear socially constructed gender identities. Men’s roles were performed in the public sphere of “work, politics and ultimately, war” (P. Ward 39). Spaces coded as masculine were “smoking rooms, billiard rooms, and bachelor suites” (Langland 295). Women’s “proper sphere” was private. Their place was in the home (P. Ward 39); more specifically even “the drawing room...the sitting rooms and boudoirs” (Langland 295).

In the twentieth century, feminist scholars protested against this Victorian legacy, and criticized many works of literature from that period for being affirmative of the dominant ideology of separate spheres. Despite feminist protests and revisionist literary scholarship in the course of the twentieth century, the Victorian gender legacy persisted in various forms of culture. One form of culture in which the Victorian gender legacy seemed strong was mid-century children’s fantasy. C.S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia*, for instance, contains many phrases such as in the epigraph. In response to such phrases, scholars have often described Lewis as sexist, even misogynist (Hilder 1). Lewis’s representation of Susan from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, for example, has garnered much criticism. One

scholar accuses Lewis of giving the impression that “puberty ends the freedom of girls to assume non-traditional roles” (Graham 32). Karin Fry declares: “While many of the heroic characters have flaws, Susan is the only one who is not forgiven or given the opportunity to work out her problems” (164). Various scholars are disappointed in Lewis’s representation of female characters because, given the opportunity within the fantasy genre to create an entirely new world, the authors decided to sustain the gender hierarchy and bifurcated gender roles of a traditional patriarchal society, a Victorian legacy Lewis apparently desired to hold onto.

Despite the ongoing controversy surrounding the books, they are both much loved and very popular, and have sold over 100 million copies. They have never been out of print and have been adapted many times into series, movies and graphic novels. Thus, the influence they have on children is still ongoing. Since gender roles and standards of masculinity and femininity have changed much since Lewis’s day, it is important to examine more closely the impressions that Lewis’s characterisation of male and specifically female characters can leave on contemporary young readers of his work.

In order to find out whether Lewis really did perpetuate an outmoded model of gender identity in his work, or whether he managed to free himself, in part, from this Victorian legacy, this thesis will analyse the gender scholarship on and the representation of gender roles in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In order to come to an accurate and balanced conclusion about the conservative and/or potential progressive representation of gender roles in the *Narnia Chronicles*, Lewis’s work will be compared with two other works of children’s fantasy from the same period, namely, J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* (1937) and Elizabeth Goudge’s *The Little White Horse* (1947). *The Hobbit* has received much criticism for marginalising female characters and placing them only in traditional female roles. Elizabeth Goudge is criticized for similar gender issues in *The Little White Horse*. Megan Lynn Isaac

points out, for instance, that, despite being a female author, Elizabeth Goudge is unable to “escape the sexism of her period” (101).

An important critical insight that will underscore this thesis is that feminist revisions of the literary construction of female identity often contain idealistic conceptions about femininity. Many critics of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, such as Kath Filmer, Karin Fry and Jean E. Graham discuss the work along the feminist framework that intrinsically rejects as acceptable any kind of traditional domestic feminine identity. Kath Filmer even posits that “what is disturbing in the Narnian Chronicles...is the way in which ultimate good is depicted as ultimate masculinity, while evil, the corruption of good, is depicted as femininity” (155). Such an essentialist approach to the gender divide has led to a limited analysis of the representation of gender identity in Lewis’s work. To break away from the essentialist notion of masculinity and femininity, I will introduce a different framework to discuss the representation of female roles in the *Narnia Chronicles*, namely a combination of Judith Butler’s fluidity of identity and performativity alongside Monika Hilder’s feminine ethos. Such an analysis will show that the author’s portrayal of female gender identity and gender roles is more nuanced than has been argued by the aforementioned scholars.

Feminist gender theory allows critics to examine representations of women characters in literary works, and to challenge traditional representations of women in (especially) influential literature and examine power relations between the two genders (Barry 128). The current dominant theory concerning gender identity is represented by Judith Butler’s constructivist theory, which posits a nuanced view on gender that foregrounds social and cultural factors, rather than innate qualities. Butler argues that all identities, including gender identities, are “a kind of impersonation and approximation...a kind of imitation for which there is no original” (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 21). This initiates the notion of fluidity of identity and points out that “identity categories” are either “normalising categories of

oppressive structures or ... the rallying points for liberatory contestations of that very oppression” (*Undoing Gender* 14-15). Moreover, she poses that every act and gesture is performative, that everything we do is a performance of a social construct and is subject to change depending on the setting (*Gender Trouble* 136). Butler questions the entire notion of “a female” identity on which many critics of Lewis, Tolkien and Goudge base their arguments, implying that there is no intrinsic gender identity.

In line with Butler’s influential theory, many new feminist approaches to literature have appeared. *The Chronicles of Narnia* are often analysed from a Christian perspective, considering Lewis’ own involvement in Christian apologetics and his personal faith. Monika Hilder is a Christian literary scholar who puts forward a different theory called Theological feminism. Theological feminism poses that particular characteristics are often gendered but should actually be applicable to all humans (Hilder 163). Though the Christian Church has often been criticised as one of the key patriarchal institutions that has perpetuated the subjection of women to men, revisions of traditional hermeneutics from a feminist perspective challenge the patriarchal paradigm.¹ Building on this notion, Hilder frames her main argument around what she describes as the two root metaphors of Western heroic models, classical heroism and spiritual heroism. She states that in classic heroism traits such as reason and autonomy, aggression and conquest are “culturally privileged” above those stereotypical traits of femininity such as imagination and interdependence, care and humility (7-8). The notion that one trait is superior to another, or that one person is inferior to another, stems from the masculine ethos. But in spiritual heroism, Christ-like qualities of self-sacrifice, forgiveness, meekness and servant-leadership are favoured; characteristics which would generally be gendered as feminine today (4). Lewis, according to Hilder, subscribes to the feminine ethos

¹ See Rosemary Ruether’s *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*.

in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, favouring those who exhibit traditionally feminine traits through their triumph over evil.

Though Monika Hilder's theory is impressive, she is not the first to think along such lines. In 1997 Roberta S. Trites published a compelling work titled *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels*, wherein she states that a feminist children's novel "is a novel in which the main character is empowered regardless of gender" (4). She insists that feminism "relies on a belief in the worth of all individuals...the premise that all people should be treated equally" and that everyone should have choices (2). Not only is the goal of feminism to create equality among the sexes but also to "foster societal respect for those choices" regardless of whether those choices encompass behaviours traditionally gendered as feminine or masculine (2). In this sense, Trites tries to liberate both genders of the limiting nature of the stereotypes surrounding essentialist gender ideology. Though Trites mainly analyses books with female main characters, she does not examine any of the books I will be examining in my work. Her feminist readings of children's books, however, help contextualise books like *Narnia* and *The Hobbit* showing that in some aspects the authors are unable to overcome the sexist tendencies within their society. Though the feminine ethos is prevalent in their writings, there are instances which reflect the contextual sexism of their time.

In *Portals of Power*, Lori Campbell explores the female "power" in both children's and adult's fantasy fiction. She highlights the importance of fairy tales in the history of the genres of fantasy and children's literature and stresses the importance of the female role in those genres. Women are the traditional propagators of the genre as the original tale-tellers and mothers and as librarians and teachers, which are traditionally female dominated professions (Campbell 46). Not only that, but most fictional females are "liberated" and "credited with ingenuity and resilience" (47). On the other hand, Waelti-Walters discusses the

classic female princess role as “a powerless prisoner” (1). Indeed, Vladimir Propp’s theory displays her function in a fairy-tale: a) she is not an individual for she always exists in relation to her father and b) she is a prize to be won by the hero, a (valuable) possession her father can give away (79).

In the nineteenth century, a few female authors created princess characters that were supposed to transcend the “classical and somewhat slippery stereotype of the totally powerless prisoner” (46). As a consequence, the fairy-tale princess started to change, taking on more conventionally masculine traits and undergoing challenges usually associated with *bildungsroman* protagonists, who were generally masculine at this time. This paved the way for female characters in twentieth-century fantasy books to be more assertive and strong. As a consequence of the female protagonist’s development in the nineteenth century, by the time that Lewis was writing his Narnia series, it was accepted for female characters to be like Lucy in *LWW*, who is generally considered to be a strong female character.

Many critics of *Narnia*, *The Hobbit* and *The Little White Horse* have taken a similar stance to Hilder, focussing on the feminine ethos within the novels. Positive critics of *The Chronicles of Narnia* concerning gender are Devin Brown and Michael Ward. These scholars converge on specifically rebutting the critique by author Philip Pullman. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* is defended by William H. Green and Nancy Enright. While Green concentrates on finding the feminine ethos within *The Hobbit*, Nancy Enright focuses on *The Lord of the Rings*, though many of her arguments apply to *The Hobbit* as well, as will be shown in this thesis. Though there is very little scholarship surrounding the works of Elizabeth Goudge, Michelle Warry poses a well-founded argument in her Master’s thesis which aligns with the feminine ethos theory I will be employing in this thesis. She claims that Maria, the main character in *The Little White Horse*, is able to surpass female stereotypes by embracing and celebrating certain characteristics traditionally gendered as feminine (58).

Not only do the works in question address issues of gender representations in fiction, but due to their nature as fantasy novels, they create a platform for challenging established hierarchical systems. Being attentive of the specific type of fantasy world is significant to gaining insight into the representation of gender roles. This thesis will analyse the specific type of fantasy worlds in the novels. By exploring Propp's schema for the fairy tale and examining structural forms and traditions within the fantasy genre, I will render how the authors incorporated their own morals and values into their imagined worlds, which gives a deeper understanding of the representation of gender within this setting.

The novels which will be discussed are set in a secondary world or a "secret garden," as is the case in *The Little White Horse* by Goudge, and are written for children. Therefore, they belong to children's fantasy literature and will be discussed within this theoretical framework. It is the intention of this thesis to explore the complex relationship between the representations of gender roles, the children's fantasy genre and the personal views on gender identity expressed by the authors.

The chosen novels share a theme of reflection on gender roles. C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956) is set in a secondary world, Narnia, to which children from the primary world are teleported. Once there, they go on adventures, most often to save the world. Though one novel stands out as it is set in Calormen, a country next to Narnia and follows children who already live there and not children who are sent from the primary world. The novels always contain both male and female child protagonists but vary in the way in which they present male and female antagonists. The seven novels have many different kinds of female characters, each different to another, and each with their own flaws to distinguish them from one another.

Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) by contrast, has no major female characters. In the story, a child-like creature called a hobbit goes on an adventure with thirteen dwarves and a wizard

in order to reclaim the dwarves' treasure and property from a marauding dragon. Though there are only female characters on the periphery of the story, a feminine ethos prevails in the story through characters like Bilbo, a character who does not rely on a stereotypically masculine kind of power like the dwarves do, yet still always succeeds where they fail.

Goudge's *The Little White Horse* (1946) is set in 1842 and features a recently orphaned girl who is sent to the countryside to live with her cousin, an older man. *The Little White Horse* is a story about a girl named Maria Merryweather. After her parents' death, she is sent to her uncle's estate out in the country. Here she discovers that the property and the village are idyllic except for the Black Men who control the Bay area and poach in the forests. While trying to turn them from their wicked ways, she uncovers some mysteries about her ancestors' and lays bare her family secrets. Luckily, she is able to overcome all these difficulties thanks to her various animal helpers. In this story, the main female character is often chastised for her open curiosity by male characters, though, in the end, she converts the evil Black Men to good. As opposed to the previous two novels, this novel does not contain adventure in the sense of travel but unravels more like a mystery novel which is based in one location. Another difference – and perhaps this is due to its target audience: females – the novel ends in uncovering the mystery but then there is a slew of marriages and happily-ever-afters. Though this is not an issue of the portrayal of gender, it does show that in the time these novels were written, the different genders were catered to differently, which displays the Victorian legacy in English culture of “separate spheres” quite accurately.

Chapter 1: Children's Literary Fantasy

And soon after that a very strange person stepped out from among the trees into the light of the lamp-post...From the waist upwards he was like a man, but his legs were shaped like a goat's and instead of feet he had a goat's hoofs...out of [his] hair stuck two horns, one on each side of his forehead. (*LWW* 114)

Lewis, Tolkien and Goudge had many sources to draw from. Tolkien, especially, revolutionised the fantasy genre and Lewis inspired many more children's authors to write fantasy novels. But they were following in a tradition for which other writers had laid the groundwork; namely William Morris who had revived Norse and Icelandic mythology in a medieval setting (Fimi 43). While this is the reason creatures like witches and elves feature in the stories, it is a lingering Victorian ideology which restricts the way the different sexes are represented. Yet each of their novels is very different, showing the different facets of children's fantasy literature. This chapter will analyse the children's fantasy genre, showing its history leading up to the 1950s, examining the criteria of the genre and showing how scholars generally approach their criticism of children's fantasy.

Firstly, it must be made clear that the emergence of children's literature was a slow process, which had much to do with how children were perceived in society and how important books were. Secondly, it is difficult to define children's literature. Scholars who have researched this subject are divided. Accordingly, this chapter will first define what children's literature is and then focus on the history of children's literature. Lastly, it will explore the scholarly definitions of the fantasy genre, those elements which distinguish it as a separate category of (children's) fiction.

The most pressing issue when trying to define children's literature does not lie in separating the two words and defining them in order to come to a conclusion about them. This has proven to be impossible as Peter Hunt illustrates in the Introduction to his book *Understanding Children's Literature*. In short, he concludes that "'literature' is only a useful concept if we want to educate children in a particular kind of culture" and that the word "children" cannot be defined accurately as the concept of childhood changes depending on time and place (Hunt 4). In fact, the actuality of childhood is irrelevant to criticism as it is only the way in which critics (and writers) perceive childhood themselves that is of importance (Lesnik-Oberstein 18). It is difficult to distinguish what children's literature is as adults may enjoy books intended for children as well, just as children often enjoy books intended for adults. Nonetheless, a distinction must be made for the purposes of criticism. "Children's literature and children's literary criticism define themselves as existing because of, and for, 'children', and it is these 'children' who remain the passion of—and therefore the source of conflict for—children's authors and critics" (Lesnik-Oberstein 27). In short, a children's book is a book that is generally considered to be a children's book by its readers and critics. None of this is as pressing a matter when defining children's literature as is the continuous conundrum scholars are faced with in children's literature: the question of how far children are likely to be influenced by what they may or may not perceive in the texts (Hunt 7).

In their study "Gender Stereotypes in Children's Books: their prevalence and influence on cognitive and affective development," Sharyl Bender Paterson and Mary Alyce Lach conclude that:

major influences on gender role development and socialization of young children occur through picture-books. Illustrated books play a significant and pervasive part in early gender development because books are the primary vehicle for the presentation

of societal values to the young child...Readers learn from a good story what is expected of children and come to realize the accepted standards of right and wrong within the complexity of their gender. (Paterson and Lach)

However, even though children are greatly influenced by what they read, the outside world, namely their parents, care-givers and teachers, mostly help shape this gender role (Paterson and Lach). Later, when children read story-books, gender stereotypes can have an effect on cognition. A reader does not simply extract meaning from a text when reading but different readers with different backgrounds take different meanings from the same text (Paterson and Lach). This is called a constructive process. One model for understanding this process is the schemata model (Paterson and Lach). Paterson and Lach use the Snow White fairy-tale to illustrate their point. They argue:

Just as children's understanding of the fairy-tale Snow White is influenced by their schemes for other concepts, it is also influenced by their understanding of femaleness and maleness. For example, the child's schema for 'make-believe' affects the child's understanding and interpretation of several events in the story, such as the fact that the *evil witch is only pretend*, as are the seven dwarves who live in a humble cottage in the forest, while spending their days mining rich jewels. Children's schema for gender also affects the interpretation; for example, if they have accepted the stereotype that it is a female's job to do domestic chores, they are unlikely to question why Snow White so willingly agrees to become the house-maid for seven strange men. On the other hand, the child who has not incorporated that stereotype into his or her gender schema might well question (as did one young friend), 'Why didn't they just pick up after themselves? If I was her, I would only have cleaned up my own things--or maybe had people take turns picking up and cooking.' (Paterson and Lach, italics mine)

Importantly, Paterson and Lach demonstrate that reading has a big influence on children, yet the biases they already have in their minds from their surroundings will shape what they read as well.

Mostly, children's books are marginalised in our society as "childhood is a state we grow away from"; they are also the "province of that culturally marginalised species, the female" (Hunt 1). Many people deny being influenced by their childhood reading while at the same time acknowledging that childhood is an important and formative phase of life (2). This suggests that children's literature is important and yet at the same time it is not (2). Not only is the literature for children marginalised, its content also marginalises children, especially those before the 1950s (Nikolajeva 52). Think of the story of *Mary Poppins*; a woman who is arrogant and conceited repeatedly reminds the children in her care of her superiority to them, not only due to her magical abilities but first and foremost as an adult (Nikolajeva 52). This power relationship is thus imposed on young readers and they are indoctrinated early on to their status in society through books.

The hierarchical power relationship between children and adults is also evident in censorship – "Censorship tends to characterise children as impressionable and simpleminded, unable to take a balanced view of, for example, sexual or racial issues, unless the balance is explicitly stated" (Hunt 7). However, often censorship works to reinforce the ideologies of a certain group - for example, in Texas some right wing Christian groups have been able to locally ban *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900)(Hunt 7). This power adults have over children's books leads to attempts to censor stories like Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Tom Kitten* (1907) for having undressed kittens. Peter Hunt quotes Mark West to illuminate this point:

Throughout the history of children's literature, the people who have tried to censor children's books, for all their ideological differences, share a rather romantic view

about the power of books. They believe, or at least profess to believe, that books are such a major influence in the formation of children's values and attitudes that adults need to monitor nearly every word that children read. (Hunt 6)

Though it is true that children need to be shielded, as trauma which happens in the formative years is more affective to the victim, a certain balance between protection and exposure should be sought, as children who have been exposed to mild stress in their formative years are generally more resilient in coping with trauma (Wingo, Ressler, and Bradley 93-94).

Childhood was not always seen as a formative part of life. The concept was developed by John Locke in his *Issues Concerning Education* (1693). In this study, Locke questioned the way children were educated, suggesting milder forms of rearing and teaching with the notion of playful learning (12). Locke thought that children could be "cozened into a knowledge of their letters...and play themselves into what others are whipped for" (12). He also stated that a child should have an easy book to read which is "pleasant" and "suits his capacity" so that "the entertainment that he finds might draw him on and reward his pains in reading" (12). Furthermore, the book should be morally sound and should not fill a child's head with "useless trumpery" (12). In doing this, he categorised childhood as a separate stage of life, an idea which significantly changed the way society viewed their children; it changed the way they reared them and educated them and thus, books printed especially for children were needed. Interestingly, after Locke's publication, three books not initially meant for children were published and became successful as children's books. They were both entertaining and morally instructional. These were *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) by John Bunyan, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe and *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift. The popularity of these books, along with Locke's ideas sparked the beginning of a juvenile book market (13).

Children's literature first emerged in the West as a separate genre in the 1740s, alongside the emergence of the novel (Townsend 13). Unfortunately, no respectable publisher printed a fantastical or folk-story (30). Fairy-tales were only reintroduced into circulation during the Romantic Age (34). Mary Howitt translated the tales of the brothers Grimm and Hans Anderson at the beginning of the nineteenth century into English. By the middle of the nineteenth century, books like *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *The Water Babies* (1863) appeared; books which exalted and exploited the imagination once more. Though *Alice in Wonderland* has a female protagonist who goes on an adventure, she is continuously being ridiculed and humiliated by the (male) author; he makes her lose her intellect, the control of her body and makes her inferior to creatures she would normally be superior to. According to Carina Garland's study "Curious Appetites: Food, Desire, Gender and Subjectivity in Lewis Carroll's Alice Texts" this is in order to "suppress and control Alice's agency so he can desire and own her" (22). Similarly, in *The Water Babies*, the protagonist is instructed in various moral lessons that are not useful to him but are meant as lessons for the reader (Nikolajeva 51). Thus, Alice and Tom are merely pawns in an adult game, and Alice is doubly oppressed as both child and female. This shows that a struggle for power is at the centre of the children's fantasy genre at this time (51).

Unfortunately, Victorian Britain was a gender divided culture, separating boys and girls and their literature. Books for boys reflected a life of action, with adventures and heroics (Townsend 39) whereas girls' books were usually based around domestic dramas. This is understandable in the context of the hegemonic ideology of separate gender spheres. Books were expected to assist the process of a girl becoming "womanly" (52). Indeed, the system of etiquette was so complex and constantly changing that girls needed to be well informed (Langland 293). They needed to be trained, partly through books, in order to become the kind of woman who could run a household and its many servants while also upholding the family's

social status while the husband was out in his ‘public sphere’ (294) Girls undoubtedly read the adventure stories of boys as well; however, they would have been reading about young heroes and not heroines (Townsend 39). There were also fantastical stories, fairy stories and folk-tales which attempted to transcend these gender prescriptions. The stories like those by George MacDonald and E. Nesbit, whose female child characters have agency rather than the expected passivity (McGillis 86) and do not conform to the image of “angel in the house” (Richardson 84). Books like *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* were available, stories in which girls go on adventures and where witches are not only evil but also good. It should be noted, however, that even these characters that have agency always remain inferior to adults (Nikolajeva 52-53).

Between the World Wars *The Hobbit* was published. It is the most famous children’s fantasy novel of that time, though there are many others which are also still popular today like A.A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) series and the *Doctor Dolittle* (1920) series by Hugh Lofting. From reading John Townsend’s study *Written For Children* it has become clear that no books he discusses from this period have substantial female characters in them. In fact, *The Hobbit* does not even contain *children* as characters, which, up until the point, had been a prerequisite for a children’s book. It is interesting, then, that it became so popular amongst children.

After World War II and the publication of both *The Lord of the Rings* by Tolkien and *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, the fantasy genre “exploded” (James 62). According to Edward James, these two fantasy authors stand at the head of modern fantasy as mediators between the fantasies that came before and shaping modern fantasy, the books that came after (63). The main reason James provides for this is that because of their popularity, publishers “began to realise the potential of fantasy” (72). And especially due to Lewis many more authors started publishing children’s fantasy.

After 1977, when many popular fantasy titles were debuting as bestsellers, it became clear that many readers of fantasy were female (James 75). Fantasy was an “obvious venue for working out ideas about feminism and utopian feminist possibilities” (75). Similarly, in children’s literature, a “campaign against sexism in children’s books” was changing the genre considerably (Townsend 158). In fact, Lori Campbell points out that literary fantasy was always “a powerful vehicle for confronting real-world problems and expressing a sense of dislocation and the search for order in the midst of rapid change” (9). For example, *The Hobbit*’s Shire reflects on the past as idyllic, a time before industrialisation, which in turn is a critique on the primary world’s obsession with industry and destruction of the natural world.

Tolkien’s work, as well as being a turning point for fantasy, also acts as a foundation for the characteristics of the fantasy genre, as James point out:

LOTR establishes many of the characteristics of genre fantasy, some of which can be indicated by terms that John Clute has introduced into fantasy criticism. (I capitalize certain words below, following the conventions of Clute and Grant’s *Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, to indicate that these are entries in the *Encyclopedia*.) Middle-earth is subject to THINNING, a decline from its former state, partly due to the actions of Sauron, *the Dark Lord*. The sense of WRONGNESS in the world demands *Healing*, and that is the purpose of the QUEST on which our heroes embark... In the course of this quest, the characters reach RECOGNITION, an awareness of their own role in the story of the world, and finally achieve EUCATASTROPHE, a term which Tolkien himself invented to describe the uplifting characteristics of fairy tale. It is the final turn in the plot. (James 64)

Dimitra Fimi applies this outline to *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, where initially, Lucy steps into the world of Narnia and finds the world in perpetual winter. The THINNING is shown through The White Witch’s successful attempt to take over the land (sometimes

THINNING is shown through the threat of success by the antagonist, usually a dark lord of either gender). The QUEST is the journey from Mr. Tumnus' house to the Beaver's house until Aslan is slain by the White Witch. The RECOGNITION is when Lucy, Susan, Peter and Edmund decide to fight on the side of Aslan, and the EUCATASTROPHE is when the White Witch is defeated (Fimi 48).

Fantasy favours traditional forms of storytelling, unlike modernist and postmodernist texts that play with narrative voice, confusing the reader (Fimi 41). "It has its own rules, traditions and structural and formal expectations...[which are] taken seriously as true and occur within a clearly defined framework" (41). This entails that the story has protagonists, antagonists and foils just like any other novel. And, just like normal novels, an author sometimes chooses to write merely for a reader's pleasure, or includes deeper meaning, such as a critique on the society it originated in. "Like any other text, a literary fantasy is produced within, and determined by, its social context...it cannot be understood in isolation form it"(Jackson 3). This is particularly relevant to the rest of this thesis as I will explore the extent to which namely Victorian societal ideals, influenced the behaviour of the characters in the three novels.

Because there is often a medieval setting for fantasy, many literary critics dismiss the genre as nostalgic, conservative, and escapist, claiming that it merely reproduces dominant ideology (Fimi 55). Many were horrified "when *The Lord of the Rings* topped several polls and surveys as the best book of the twentieth century" (55). Even Rosemary Jackson is critical of the genre, recognising its power to challenge established hierarchical systems (17) but further arguing that the subcategory of fantasy requires "passive" readers who do not take action and that the books do not initiate change in reality (Fimi 55-56). However, Fimi demonstrates that this is not the case, saying of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* that it "engaged with twentieth-century concerns of world war and the origins of evil, akin to the

imaginative responses of William Golding and George Orwell” (56). In this sense, fantasy becomes a platform for public debate, including the discussion centring on gender roles, as gender issues are also represented and, increasingly more often, contested within the genre.

Though the misconceptions about the fantasy genre make it seem clichéd, there are many different subcategories within it, making it very diverse. The subcategories within fantasy are high fantasy and low fantasy. In low fantasy there are supernatural intrusions in our world such as the tiny people that live under our floorboards in Mary Norton’s *The Borrowers* (“Low Fantasy” Clute and Grant). High fantasy is set in an otherworld, an entirely invented universe (“High Fantasy” Clute and Grant). Here, what takes place in the otherworld is generally impossible in our world but within the fantasy world it is possible and consistent (Fimi 43). Within High Fantasy there are further subdivisions. The first is where there is no reference to the Primary World (our world) sometimes called immersive fantasy (43). Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* is an example of this. The second is when a portal is used to enter the otherworld from our world, such as in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and C.S. Lewis’ *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The third is a world-within-a-world marked off by physical boundaries such as the *Harry Potter* series (1997) or Goudge’s *The Little White Horse*. This is the “secret garden” world Clute and Grant mention as a subsection of children’s fantasy fiction.

Children’s fantasy fiction boasts its own canon. Though many books are widely read by adults as well, they are usually considered children’s fiction such as the *Narnia Chronicles* by Lewis or the novels by E. Nesbit. While critics widely disagree on how to categorise modern children’s fantasy fiction, Townsend distinguishes three categories: 1) anthropomorphic fantasy: in which animals or inanimate objects are endowed with human qualities; 2) otherworld fantasy: fantasies that create imaginary worlds or countries; 3)

fantasies that inhabit the world we know but require some disturbance of the natural order of things. The Encyclopaedia of Fantasy distinguishes a few more categories:

- 1) Worlds in miniature: Dolls that come to life, little people like Lilliputians, Stuart Little and Moomins.
- 2) Secret gardens: Elizabeth Goudge falls under this category, where a valley is a manifestation of Earthly Paradise
- 3) Time fantasies: Where children switch with children from another time, travel in time or are transported backwards or forwards in time.
- 4) Otherworlds: C.S. Lewis and Tolkien fall under this category.
- 5) Wish Fulfilment: Wherein children discover a magical item, the unleashing of whose properties results in a series of adventures – usually, but not necessarily, in our world and time.
- 6) Animal Stories: Wherein animals either interact with humans or are anthropomorphically endowed.

Doubtlessly other critics or encyclopaedias have yet another range of categories, though it is the Encyclopaedia of Fantasy categories I will be adhering to in this thesis. The reason I chose this view is because it is more specific than Townsend's grouping. There is not a prescribed method for writing a fantasy novel, as can be seen by the sheer amount of different categories and subcategories within children's fantasy fiction alone. However, in fantasy the presence of some sort of magic or fantastical creature is required.

Not only do the three books in question have a fantastical element, the main theme is adventure. In all three novels the main characters go somewhere new and experience terrible, amazing and wonderful things. Another theme which all three books share is friendship. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo becomes friends with the dwarves, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* various friendships are built, though one of note is the friendship between Jill and Eustace in *The*

Silver Chair, and Maria becomes friends with everyone, even her enemy in *The Little White Horse*. Another important theme is heroism. All the children and Bilbo are frightened or apprehensive at the start of the adventure yet they do courageous things and end up “saving the day.” It is also interesting to note, as children’s literature and fantasy literature are wont to do, the three novels incorporate aspects of modern life into their idyllic worlds. In Narnia this is the most obvious, as modern children are transported to a medieval like world. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo is a quintessential 1930s country gentleman and especially his common sense is not very medievalist. In *The Little White Horse* it is Maria’s sense of economic justice, as Megan Lynn Isaac points out, which is a very modern concept. This point will be elaborated on later in this thesis.

In conclusion, children’s literature is a complicated genre. There are many questions surrounding the concept of children’s literature which cannot be answered in one way. The genre includes many different forms of books, including picture books and poetry books but also fantasy books and mystery books. The authors of the three novels that will be analysed in the coming chapters also drew inspiration from tales told before the children’s book was born. The fantasy genre in itself is also complicated; however, it is a structural form with its own rules, traditions and expectations, which the three examined novels adhere to. They also share some themes and incorporate notions and morals from their own societies.

Chapter 2: Female protagonists in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Hobbit* and *The Little White Horse*

According to many feminist critics, the early modern fantasy novels contain much sexism. Arguably, it could be said that it is anachronistic to analyse these novels in terms of sexism as this is a concept born after they were published (M. Ward *Pullman* 5).

Of course, misogyny existed in the 1950s as at all times, but “sexism” as a popular category of thought did not. It was not then the touchstone that it has since become and to subject Lewis to a litmus test that is the concern of our own generation rather than his is to reveal a historical naïveté that is out of place in literary criticism intended to be taken seriously. (M. Ward *Pullman* 5)

However, disregarding the apparent sexism in the books as anachronistic would raise the question of why the books should even be read.

Indeed, if we concur with the sexist charge, the question ought to arise quickly as to how and why we should read his books. Uncritically praised products of chauvinistic ‘dead white male poets’ ought to raise eyebrows. Do we therefore read him as artifact? Irrelevant? Dangerous? Candice Fredrick and Sam McBride, for example, challenge Lewis’s ‘Christian sexism’ and ‘disturbing misogyny’ (xivxv). They declare, ‘Lewis’s apologetic work continues to influence Christian men and women toward restricted gender roles, which one day Christian churches will come to regret and then transform, much as they regret and have moved beyond past defences of slavery’ (Hilder 1-2).

The popularity of the books, even now, shows that the sexism is either something readers can overlook, or that many readers prescribe to the same bifurcated male and female gender

stereotypes. Simply looking at Hollywood films, advertisements and television will illustrate that such gender stereotyping persists to this day.

Hilder poses a theory called theological feminism, which was discussed in the Introduction to this thesis. Hilder beckons the reader to reconsider the ideal of heroism. Elizabeth Hardy, in her preface to Hilder's book, summarizes Hilder's argument: "rather than endorsing the more traditional model of the pagan or classical hero, Lewis brings us male and female characters, even settings, which embody a different sort of heroism; this is a heroism that is more closely aligned with Christianity than with the ideals represented in figures like Odysseus and Achilles" (Hardy ix). Thus a heroic ethos which is associated with traditionally "feminine" characteristics such as compassion and self-sacrifice prevails (Hardy ix). "Lewis presents women who embody a whole range of human, and heroic, possibilities. Nor are male characters considered to be weak or less important when they exhibit the qualities of the female heroic" (Hardy x). In Greek hierarchical thinking there was superiority of traits – reason over passion, soul over body, male over female – yet Hilder argues that for Lewis the argument over superiority is obsolete (3-4). In this sense, Lewis praises that which is usually considered weak. Often that which is considered weak is also gendered as feminine. Therefore, Lewis actually celebrates the feminine.

Hilder refers to John P. Bowen who "calls Lewis's celebration of weakness as greater strength Narnia's "little-known spiritual secret" [85]" (4). Similarly, Nancy Enright asserts that Tolkien often undercuts traditional masculine power and imbues those characters which would generally be considered weak with a deeper kind of power, which she calls non-traditional heroism. Thus, Enright's argument is similar to that of Bowen, on whose arguments Hilder based her theory. This chapter will consider Enright's argument as similar to Hilder's and thus analyse *The Hobbit* according to Hilder's theological feminism.

Precious little scholarship has been produced on *The Little White Horse* that explores the novel's representation of gender roles. In her Master's thesis Michelle Warry contends that Goudge's novel is feminist. She claims that "readers can glean from Goudge's children's novels a feminine value system that embraces forgiveness and tolerance instead of vengeance, and that celebrates community and cooperation instead of a ruthless pursuit of individualism" (Warry 55-56). Indeed, the feminine ethos prevails in Goudge's *The Little White Horse*.

The Chronicles of Narnia

In the last twenty years, the *Narnia* series has been criticized by fantasy authors and scholars alike for being sexist and misogynistic (Hilder 1). Philip Pullman, for example, stated that Susan went to Hell for liking lipstick and nylons. Three notable scholars are Karin Fry, Jean E. Graham and Kath Filmer. These critics highlight various points about the female protagonists and antagonists that support their claim of sexism in the novels.

Filmer accuses C.S. Lewis of depicting "ultimate good as masculinity, while evil, the corruption of good, is depicted as femininity" (155). Though her argument covers most of the female characters briefly, it is very accusatory towards Lewis and there is a lot of intentional fallacy in her argument, saying that through the text she can tell that Lewis is misogynistic.

Fry takes the stance that Narnia is "unfriendly to femininity", asserting that "the feminine is removed [from Narnia] because corruption and evil have a feminine face" (107). She contends that Susan is excluded from Heaven for having the stereotypical feminine traits such as caution, gentleness and a motherly nature, but above all she is excluded for being beautiful (104). Considering that the only women who are more beautiful than Susan in the *Chronicles* are the evil Witches, she makes the connection between beauty and evil easily (105). She explains that the "most admired girls are those who challenge the typical gender roles associated with their sex...girls have the freedom to go beyond traditional gender

roles...however the problem is that many of the positive qualities of the female characters seem to be those by which they can rise above their femininity” (103). In conclusion, Fry contends that traditional femininity is shown as corrupting and this is what removes Susan from the spiritual path to Heaven (107).

Graham focuses mainly on the witches in Narnia - her main argument will be summarised in the next chapter of this thesis - but has a little to say about the protagonists as well. She argues that “puberty is that which ends the freedom of girls to assume non-traditional roles” (32). She is slightly more forgiving towards the *Chronicles* than Fry or Filmer, saying that his novels contain “ambivalence about female power” (32). She takes the same stance as Fry, though, saying that *The Chronicles of Narnia* leaves the impression on the reader that “puberty ends the freedom of girls to assume non-traditional roles” (32).

It is the contention of this section that, though *The Chronicles of Narnia* does retain some sexist overtones, a feminine ethos prevails through many characters of both genders. In this chapter, I will summarise the arguments made about certain female characters or situations which critics have deemed sexist and then pose a different reading of said characters or situations. This reading will posit that the feminine ethos prevails in the novel, despite biological sex, based on Butler’s gender performativity theory and Hilder’s feminine ethos explanation. From this point on, the terms “feminine traits” and “masculine traits” will denote traits which are traditionally gendered either female or male. For instance, pride, arrogance and independence are typically gendered as masculine.

In the *Chronicles of Narnia*, Lucy is a spiritual leader, both honest and sweet, kind and valiant. She is the one who finds Narnia, believes in Aslan more vehemently than the other children and she does no wrong. However, in *VDT* she is tempted to cast a spell which will make her the most beautiful woman “beyond the lot of mortals” (*VDT* 495). Graham argues that her need to resist casting this spell is a sign that Lewis does not want her to enter

adolescence (41). She claims that Lucy “learns to distrust female beauty” (41). Cathy McSporran classifies this as a narcissistic temptation (201-202). Hilder, on the other hand, analyses the passage as Lucy resisting the temptation “of achieving personal power through manipulation” (64). Lucy wishes for supremacy just as Edmund wished for it in *LWW*. That is what she must resist, just as Edmund had to repent after giving in to temptation. The quest for power is a masculine trait; therefore the feminine ethos prevails in this case.

Similarly, Peter exhibits both masculine and feminine traits in *LWW*. He has to kill Maugrim, arguably a masculine feat; however, he is afraid – yet acts in spite of his fear. Hilder explains that

although he feels more sick than brave, this does not influence his will, and he chooses to assail the monster. Lewis emphasizes that this sort of ‘masculine’ bravery is combined with ‘feminine’ emotion, first fear, then joyous kissing and weeping... the ideal of the chivalric hero as being both courageous and meek, valiant and loving— ‘not a compromise or happy mean between ferocity and meekness’ but ‘fierce to the *nth* and meek to the *nth*.’ (34-35)

In this sense, Lewis refrains from gendering the traits and rather opposes the classic heroism paradigm.

In *SC*, Jill is so overwhelmed with the battle between Prince Rillian and the snake and she mutters to herself “I do hope I don’t faint – or blub – or do anything idiotic” (*SC* 634). Jill’s propensity to tears is a common theme for the character and yet another point showing sexism on Lewis’ behalf according to John Goldwaithe (227). In classic heroism emotions and tears are considered a weakness. However, as Hilder proves, association of tears with weakness is a recent development in Western History (177). Lewis, in his letters, also points out that the heroes of medieval times and before “blubbered like schoolgirls” and he suspected that men do not cry enough (177). Thus, portraying Jill in this way is not

“patronising” or a “betrayal” to her character as John Goldwaithe suggests, but a celebration of feminine emotion (Goldwaithe 227). Lewis emphasises this point in *LB* as well when Prince Rillian says “The ladies do well to weep. See, I do so myself...it were no virtue, but great discourtesy, if we did not mourn” (*LB* 753).

Similarly to Jill, Aslan weeps when Caspian dies. His “feminine” tears represent his deep love for humanity according to Hilder, as love is greater than hate (34). However, his tears are divine, “each one more precious than the Earth would be if it was a single solid diamond” (*SC* 661). Aslan is depicted as a Christ-like god character that embodies the “feminine” ethos. Though Jill portrays both “masculine” and “feminine” in both bad and good ways, Aslan is portrayed as perfectly good, whether showing either of the gendered traits. In *SC* especially he is the driving force which restores all the characters (Hilder 96). For example, because of Aslan’s name, Prince Rillian is freed from the curse and finds his true identity (*SC* 625). Hilder attests that Aslan’s “feminine” traits of self-sacrifice, humility and love make him the ultimate “feminine” hero. Indeed, he embodies both “good and terrible”, and the children become “all trembly” in his presence (*LWW* 168-169). This echoes the Bible, where the people of Israel encounter God on the mountain and they tremble in his sight, claiming they will die if He speaks further (NIV, Exodus 20:18). Lewis depicts Aslan in this way because, as Erik J. Wielenberg shows, most people envision God as a grandfatherly deity who wishes only to make us feel good and content, however God is not this way. Nor is Aslan. Through him the characters of Narnia discover their true natures and find their true happiness despite their pain and suffering. Therefore, Aslan (and God) are not merely good, but also terrible at the same time. Aslan is not merely “feminine” but also “masculine” and embodies all the good aspects of all traits.

Another character from *LWW* is criticised by Filmer as a negative female stereotype: Mrs. Beaver. Filmer claims she is not intelligent, is fussy and bullies Mr. Beaver (107). On

the surface, Mrs. Beaver is a typical housewife. However, in the spirit of exposing a false either/or binary of gender stereotyping, Lewis has endowed Mrs. Beaver with “shrewd logic and practical application” (Hilder 34). Hilder explains that

when the group discover Edmund is gone, Mrs. Beaver is the one to lay out the situation for the children who do not know what to do, she shrewdly When Edmund is missed and Mr. Beaver waxes eloquently over the boy’s treachery, she proves instead to be an excellent defensive military strategist, calmly asking a series of shrewd questions as to when he left to determine what information he could bring the Witch, and assessing the Witch’s likely action and therefore how much time they would have to make their escape. (33)

Mrs. Beaver is wise and capable. She packs provisions for them, without which they would not have survived and she advises them to “stay undercover and go by ways [the White Witch] won’t expect (*LWW* 157). Yet Filmer calls her unintelligent because she wants to take her sewing machine on their hasty flight through the snow. However, Hilder counters this argument, saying that her wish is a longing for her possession not to be destroyed. When Mr. Beaver says “It is ...a great deal too heavy. And you don’t think you’ll be able to use it while were on the run, I suppose?”, Mrs. Beaver retorts “I can’t abide the thought of that Witch fiddling with it and breaking it or stealing it” (*LWW* 157). This is a “half-wish” which she knows is unrealistic, as can be seen from the formulation of the wish as a question (Hilder 34). Thus, she is not unintelligent but her motivation lies in practicality – a sewing machine is an expensive and vital tool to her.

And finally, I will address the issue of Susan. Many scholars have already pointed out the flaws in the accusations made by author Philip Pullman. Firstly, Susan does not go to Hell because she does not die, as her family does. Therefore, she cannot go to Hell for liking lipstick and nylons (Fry 107; Devin Brown). Secondly, she is not left out of the new Narnia

for liking lipstick and nylons and invitations. She is left out because she let those things replace “more lasting and more rewarding aspects of existence, such as fellowship in the spiritual realm and relationship with the divine” (M. Ward *Pullman* 5). Fry argues that Susan’s feminine traits, such as gentleness, motherliness and caution are continuously portrayed in a negative light (105). Fry’s argument is that her siblings reproach her or call her a “wet blanket” or her advice to go slower is ignored (105). However, her argument is based in focalisation. Of course nine-year-old Edmund does not want to be told to go to bed by his eleven-year-old sister Susan, who has no motherly authority over him. The narrator does not reprimand Susan in this way. Nor is it implied in any other fashion that Susan’s behaviour is bad. In fact, her caution and insight are very helpful for the children on many occasions, such as when she suggests that they put on the fur coats upon entering the cold Narnia (*LWW* 135).

But, above all, Susan is condemned because she is beautiful, according to Fry (105). Fry says that only the Witches surpass Susan in beauty, yet Lucy and Ramandu’s daughter are also beautiful, as is shown in *VDT*; and they are not condemned. “Then her face lit up til, for a moment (but of course she didn’t know it) she looked almost as beautiful as that other Lucy in the picture” (498). This shows that it is not her beauty which holds her back. Lewis himself wrote that “nothing is more characteristically juvenile than contempt for juvenility....youth’s characteristic chronological snobbery” (qtd. in Hilder 144). Her vanity due to her conforming to “normal” societal standards – which “reduce female value to appearance and social engagement, all designed to limit women to be the mere object of male desire” – is what is being condemned. This is in alignment with the Bible, where it is stated “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of jewellery or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” (NIV, 1 Peter 3:3-4). She has become self-

reliant and proud – characteristics of the masculine ethos. Hence, her behaviour turns her away from Narnia.

Another point to be made about Susan is her interest in clothing and appearance. There are several occasions when the other female protagonists show their interest in clothes and parties; namely when Jill does not get rid of her Narnian clothes, like Eustace does, on their return to England but wears them at fancy dress balls (*SC* 663). There are also many feasts and coronations and weddings, celebrations where clothing is generally deemed important². This challenges the contention that Susan is sent to hell for exhibiting normal female adolescent behaviour. Just as vanity keeps Susan from entering Aslan's country, so too does vanity keep Uncle Andrew from entering. He is "as vain as a peacock" (*MN* 49) and is not mentioned as a "friend of Narnia" at the end of *LB* despite having been there.

Even though Hilder proves that the feminine ethos prevails in the *Narnian Chronicles*, there are some points that are not discussed. For example, in *LWW*, when the children arrive at the Beavers' house, the boys are tasked with catching fish and the girls help in the kitchen. This event is a reflection of societal expectations. Lewis is unable to mask the influence from our world and the society he lived in, in Narnia. By Lewis' own admission, he considered himself old-fashioned; adhering to strict rules he had been taught and thought to be correct. Indeed, *MN*, the first Narnian novel, starts with the narrator describing the late nineteenth century; the awful "stiff" clothing, the "nasty" schools and the food, which apparently was better (*MN* 11). In this introduction the issue of crying as a feminine trait already arises: "like a boy who was so miserable that he didn't care who knew he had been crying" (12). Through such statements, the author interjects these unconscious cultural values – clearly at that time men, and boys aspiring to be men, were not supposed to cry.

² Interestingly, Lewis does not describe Narnian clothing much. Goudge, however, avidly describes almost every one of Maria's and many of the other characters' outfits. Tolkien similarly describes the clothing many characters wear as part of the depiction of a race.

The narrator, later in the book also alludes to Victorian ideology as better: “Then she dropped a little half curtsy, as some country girls still knew how to do in those days” (MN 81). The woman who drops the half curtsy will be Queen Helen the first of Narnia. Through her and the Cabby, whose accent changes from the harsh London dialect to his natural country dialect very quickly, the author shows a pastoral nature to his novels. Ironically, Langland proves that the historical portrait of Victorian women as “passive, dependent, and idle creatures” is incorrect, because women actually controlled the household and were the ones who upheld the social status of the family (291). “In gendered politics of power, middle-class Victorian women were subservient to men; but in a class politics of power they cooperated and participated in achieving middle-class control through the management of the lower classes” (294). Sharon Yang proves that Victorians associated the pastoral and domestic spheres (27). The Victorian man would return to work spiritually and ethically refreshed because his home is his sanctuary, a new Paradise, upheld by the woman (27). This proves that the author’s adherence to Victorian ideology is an idyllic or nostalgic memory. Because the narrator favours the country over the urban, the manners of those from Victorian times, it is clear that the author adhered to an ideology which has passed; a nostalgic Victorian ideology.

The Hobbit

In Tolkien’s children’s fantasy, Hobbits are not prone to adventures and so it is unusual that Bilbo, the main character, should set out on a journey with thirteen dwarves and a wizard, Gandalf, as their guide in order to recover the dwarves’ stolen lands and treasure from a dragon. Though a popular book amongst children and adults alike, it has absolutely no notable female characters. Fredrick and McBride, critique Tolkien and C.S. Lewis for being blatantly sexist. When specifically critiquing *The Hobbit*, they come to the conclusion that

those women of whom the reader catches a glimpse perform only the roles of traditional stereotypes (110-111). They play the roles of “serving their husbands, children, or male political leaders” (110). Indeed, when looking at the text, all women are mentioned only briefly in relation to the men. For example, the women of Esgaroth are mentioned as being huddled into boats (Tolkien 230).

However, there are also some women who have important ancestral roles, such as Belladonna Took, who is Bilbo’s mother and is mentioned as being the ancestor who gave him his unhobbit-like sense of adventure (Tolkien 4). This “sense” is what drives him to go with Gandalf and the dwarves in the first place, the starting point for the story. Another important ancestral woman is Bard of Dale’s ancestor – who fled when Smaug first took over the mountain – giving him life indirectly. Also, Fili and Kili die defending Thorin because he is their mother’s elder brother (Tolkien 268). Though she is not given a name here, it is interesting that the narrator does not simply say “uncle,” but specifically mentions the mother. This shows that at the heart of every man, there is a mother. This is also William H. Green’s central argument, he claims “the buried mother is the dynamic half of Bilbo’s personality” (Green 188). Interestingly, however, all these women are dead, just as Tolkien’s own mother died when he was only twelve.

Though *The Hobbit* is a male-only tale, the feminine ethos is the prevailing ethos. Nancy Enright examines the defining power in *The Lord of the Rings*. Though her study is focused on *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, many of the same conclusions can be drawn for its prequel. For example, she says that Tolkien’s characters “epitomize his critique of traditional, masculine and worldly power, offering an alternative that can be summed up as the choice of love over pride, reflective Christ-like inversion of power rooted in Scripture, and ultimately more powerful than any domination used by use of force” (93). She cites Jane Chance who says that Tolkien, like C.S. Lewis “questioned the validity of the human sciences to represent

the rationality of the age” and argued that “true power emerges from wise and healing service to the community” (93). Enright claims that power which is portrayed in the traditional male ethos is often undercut in Tolkien’s novels (93). Characters like Boromir, who displays “stereotypical and a purely masculine kind of power”, are “shown to be weaker morally and spiritually than its non-traditional counterparts” (93). This notion underscores my argument that the feminine ethos prevails in *The Hobbit*.

William H. Green argues that the feminine is rooted in the mother, taking a Jungian approach to the subject (188). According to Green, Tolkien is not sexist, but afraid of sexuality, and he brings Tolkien’s background as a Catholic into evidence (191). However, as a “Tolkien apologist,” he feels he must account for the absence of women in *The Hobbit*. He claims “There is certainly a bias here, an emotional charge pushing the women to margins of stories or deep into their symbolic cores, and if it is not “contempt and hostility,” however subtle, then what is it?” (190). Tolkien claimed that sex brings out the worst in a man and, as a deeply devout Catholic, believed that the Devil used sexuality against man. It is against man’s “Fallen” nature to be monogamous and the Devil plays with that weakness all the time (191). However, Tolkien believed this is man’s failing, not women’s:

The womanless world of *The Hobbit*--like a manless world by a female author--may be seen as a Utopian construction, an Edenic world without sexual tension and guilt, a world consonant with pre-Freudian ideas of childhood innocence... it seems likely that Tolkien excludes women from his children's stories, not because they deserve contempt, but because men behave contemptibly around them. (191)

Thus, Green claims, Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* was created without women because an adventure story traditionally must have males and he wanted no sexual tension in his story. It is Tolkien’s attempt to create an asexual world, inhabited only by male figures. However, the female presence is in the book.

Green mentions three places where the feminine can be found. Firstly, she is present in Mother Earth. Here his Jungian approach becomes clear – he claims that tunnels are akin to the womb – they have merit in that Mother Earth is very important and she is described beautifully and extensively in the book (192). Secondly, the female is embodied in figures that have many stereotypically feminine characteristics. Most notable is Gandalf the wizard. According to Green he fulfils the classic role of the female fairy godmother, leading Bilbo into the world just as Athena leads Telemachus in *The Odyssey* (193).

Other characters who exhibit traditionally feminine traits are Elrond who is “fair in face” and “kind as summer” (Tolkien 49). In fact, all male wood-elves are described “in terms conventionally applied to ladies in medieval romance” (Green 193) and the “elves are not known for their physical prowess” (Enright 93). However, they possess an alternative kind of power which is revered by other characters – especially Aragorn (93). Nancy Enright emphasizes this point of power, explaining that the “real” power – the prevailing power – often lies in those more traditionally “feminine” traits (93). Indeed Green emphasises that lastly, “‘mother’ is implicit in the glorification of ‘feminine’ versus ‘masculine’ values” (194).

Bilbo, likewise, has more traditionally feminine impulses than the dwarves, who rely solely on their strength of arms (Green 194). The dwarves are humiliated because they lack what Bilbo (and Gandalf, Beorn and Elrond) has: an impulse to nurture, a gift for domesticity and humble self-sacrifice (194). Thorin, a traditionally masculine character, is destroyed by his “testosterone-driven ambition” and “is saved only by self-sacrifice and a deathbed confession praising domesticity” (194). “If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world” (Tolkien 266). Green argues, in essence, that the gender binary is irrelevant to Tolkien and, by extension that the feminine ethos prevails in *The Hobbit*.

Furthermore, for Tolkien the favouring of the feminine stems from Victorian ideology (Green 194). Green demonstrates that “women’s lack of power was presented as a moral advantage” by citing Claudia Nelson (194). Langland explains that the angel in the house is a Victorian ideal “built explicitly on a class system in which political and economic differences were rewritten as differences of nature” (295). Thus, the lower classes were seen as more physical and capable of strenuous labour but also morally inferior (295). Because the men were away at work, the woman was left to manage the house and its servants. Thus, in order to keep middle-class control, the woman is depicted as morally superior. Boys were imbued with “feminine” morality in order to keep class distinctions in tact. Furthermore, as a devout Catholic, Tolkien would have been inadvertently taught that “feminine” characteristics are Christ-like, thus superior. Clearly, a Victorian ideology lies behind the favouring of the feminine.

The Little White Horse

The Little White Horse is a novel set in a different fantastical realm than either *The Hobbit* or *The Narnia Chronicles*. While Tolkien’s novel is based entirely in a secondary world with no reference to the real world, *The Narnia Chronicles* are based in a secondary world which is accessed through a portal in the real world. Goudge’s world, however, is more of a world within a world, a secret garden. The world is marked off by physical boundaries. The entire novel is set in a valley which seems to be completely closed off from the outside world other than through one entry point – a portal in itself.

Goudge’s most famous children’s work demonstrates a desire for a return to values that seemed to “create order and structure in the past, including the central role of the Church in social life, the rights and responsibilities of the landed gentry, and the unquestioning acceptance by all people of their place in society” (Rosenberg 77). Combined with those

conservative elements, however, is an idea important in post-Second World War British society and politics: the sharing of whatever wealth exists. This idea is defined by Isaac as “economic justice” (98). While the novel may initially seem nostalgic, it actually speaks of and to its time and the concerns of that time, suggesting a remedy to the chaos and upheaval, economic and social, of British society during and immediately after the Second World War (Rosenburg 77).

The novel combines nostalgia and politics in order to achieve an idyllic world which speaks volumes about the world in which the author and original readers lived. Isaac critiques her novels, however, because they address political stances such as class distinctions and economic justice, but do not manage to escape the sexism of the period (100).

It is my contention that this is not so. In *The Little White Horse*, the character Maria stands out as she is determined, curious and she shows moral courage, facing the criticism of society on convictions which she knows to be right. However, she is often chastised for being too curious which is apparently “not to be commended” in a woman (Goudge 63). Megan Lynn Isaac sees this as a comedic effect. She points out that Maria does not deserve the reproaches she so often receives and is mostly chastised for being forward about her curiosity:

Marmaduke Scarlet unwittingly reveals that it is not curiosity which is offensive; instead it is, apparently, the verbal expression of inquisitiveness favoured by women. Spying and eavesdropping are seemingly lauded as more worthy methods of gathering information than posing questions. With this sly wink to her audience at Marmaduke Scarlet's expense, Goudge is not so much retracting the argument that girls should refrain from expressing their curiosity as pointing out that few people are able to practice their principles as well as they preach them. (Isaac 102)

Though Maria is often scolded for her curious nature – which is considered unfeminine – she, at the same time, ignores the admonishments in defiance of the male patriarchy. She ends up

saving the town practically all by herself due to her assertiveness and determination and, therefore, her disobedience of male authority. This makes her a strong female role-model for children, in the classic heroism paradigm. I say this because curiosity is generally gendered as masculine, especially in Victorian times when the dominant gender ideology prescribed women to be compliant and passive.

Isaac also claims that “Goudge respects the courage and intelligence of her female protagonists as much as that of her male protagonists, but she routinely fails to imagine as broad a range of possible futures for her girls as her boys” (101). This is not true for *The Little White Horse*, however, as Maria’s fate is that of inheriting the Merryweather title, Moonacre Manor and ruling “with her husband Robin” (Goudge 237). Even though she does fulfil the stereotypical female role of being a mother and having many children (ten to be exact), she is allowed to rule her barony as head of the house.

Maria also exemplifies self-control. She is able to hold her tongue even though there are a thousand questions burning on the tip of it (Goudge 117) knowing when the situation requires feminine decorum or tact (Warry 67). Similarly, she curbs her curiosity when it will impede her success (Warry 67). Goudge attributes her control to “sense” (Goudge 162).

Interestingly, the adult men and women (and the reason that everyone is arguing with each other) is portrayed as “silly” by Maria. For example, Loveday Minette and Sir Benjamin were to be married, but Loveday made some bad decorating choices (filling the house with pink geraniums, which Sir Benjamin’s deceased mother hated) and they broke off their engagement. In this sense, the author seems to be suggesting that children are rather more sensible than adults. Loveday Minette even admits to portraying all the typical “masculine” traits such as jealousy, pride and anger (Goudge 166). Goudge is not addressing outright anger about women’s secondary status; she is expressing an outrage at *children’s* secondary status. This point was illuminated in Chapter One of this thesis, showing how many children’s

books reinforced children's hierarchical inferiority to adults. However, it seems that most characters portray mostly typically "masculine" traits, which brings both genders on an equal standing.

Goudge also exhibits humour concerning gender and gender stereotypes. For example, Sir Benjamin remarks upon meeting Maria and Miss Heliotrope that they "are the very first members of the fair sex to set foot in this house for twenty years" because he does not like females as a general rule (Goudge 28). Of course "there is always something particularly delightful about exceptions to a rule" (28). Another humorous allusion to fluidity of gender identity is imbedded in the character of Marmaduke Scarlet, who is male dwarf and the house attendant. He cooks and cleans the house. To Miss Heliotrope's distress, he enters her room while she is asleep to open the curtains and give her a jug of hot water to wash with. "It was a shock" she says as no man besides her father had ever entered her bedchamber (125). To this Sir Benjamin says "Marmaduke Scarlet is scarcely a man...he is – well – Marmaduke Scarlet. And his revealing himself to you is an enormous compliment, for as a general rule his dislike of the female sex causes him to avoid women like the plague" (125). Marmaduke Scarlet is quite misogynistic by his own admission (86) yet he does all the tasks generally allotted to women. In this sense his gender identity is confused, yet he chooses to perform the part of a man ideologically speaking, by performing as a misogynist.

Goudge's understanding of Victorian ideology comes to the fore in one remarkable passage:

At first Miss Heliotrope's love for Maria had been somewhat forced...however naughty she was had applied the cane only very sparingly, being more concerned with winning the child's affection than with the welfare of her immortal soul. But gradually all that had changed. Her tenderness, when Maria was in any way afflicted, had become eager;...and she herself had been whipped for her peccadilloes within an inch

of her life, Miss Heliotrope caring now not two hoots whether Maria liked her or not, if only she could make of the child a fine and noble woman. This is true love and Maria had known it; and even when her behind had been so sore that she could scarcely sit upon it, her affection for Miss Heliotrope had been no whit abated. (11)

In this passage, several important ideas about gender and childhood emerge. Though Miss Heliotrope is extreme for beating Maria near to death, an underlying ideology does surface; namely that whipping a child would make them a better person. Conversely, Maria's "sinful" attributes, such as vanity and inquisitiveness (13) go unchanged despite her being whipped for them. Goudge is subtly hinting that actually she does not condone the whipping of children.

A second aspect of Victorian educational theory in the novel is the emphasis that every individual needs to become a certain type of person as an adult. "A fine and noble woman" is not described in itself, however, all the female characters (it is beyond the scope of this essay to examine the male characters) fulfil a prescribed mould – Miss Heliotrope is loving and patient (13) though extremely strict. She does not allow for imagination – a remnant of the rational age – when Maria claims to have played with a boy named Robin and saw the little white horse for the first time (30). However, the children show that performing in these strict ways is harmful to the community, as it was keeping lovers apart and keeping the poor in poverty. In the end, the "imaginary" beings help to bring peace to the valley through defeating the Black Men, also proving that a child's imagination should not be restricted because of societal rules. Miss Heliotrope also develops into a less highly strung person at Moonacre, further proving that her strict adherence to societal codes is unproductive.

This information reveals that, though she is portraying a Victorian society, it seems that Goudge does not approve of many of its constricting practices.

All three books, through close scrutiny, show that they are not inherently sexist. It has been demonstrated that a feminine ethos prevails in all three novels, though in Goudge's

novel it is less prevalent than in Tolkien's and Lewis's. Nonetheless, each novel does reveal that the authors prescribed to certain elements of Victorian gender ideology. For example, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* the children are split up to tasks when arriving at the house of the Beavers. Boys are sent to do fishing and the girls stay inside and set the table. In this thesis, this "clue" has been analysed as a remnant of the author's ideology, something which is impossible to disguise completely. As Jackson mentions: "Like any other text, a literary fantasy is produced within, and determined by, its social context...it cannot be understood in isolation from it" (Jackson 3). Barring Tolkien's lack of female protagonists in *The Hobbit*, the books all show that females and feminine characters do have power and can be given opportunities to exert that power. Some individual remarks about females made in the books can be construed as sexist, but upon closer analysis it is revealed that the author does not condone these remarks, but is generally using that statement for a different purpose such as producing comedic effect, like in Goudge's *The Little White Horse*, or condemning the behaviour by attributing it to a character who is 'evil' such as Lewis does.

Chapter 3: Female Antagonists in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Hobbit* and *The Little White Horse*

The two witches who feature in *The Chronicles of Narnia* are portrayed as evil characters. There are many other antagonistic characters in the novels, such as the Headmistress of Experiment House, Shift the Ape and Prince Rabadash. However, because the witches are the only antagonists endowed with supernatural powers in the series, and are the only ones that are killed, many critics believe that the women are being depicted as ultimate evil.

Of course, it will be difficult to discuss female antagonists from both *The Hobbit* and *The Little White Horse* as there are none. However, there are characters who exemplify a masculine ethos and those who emanate a feminine ethos. As the previous chapters have shown, both J.R.R. Tolkien and Elizabeth Goudge prefer the feminine ethos, undercutting characters who exhibit traditionally masculine traits. It is my intention to portray that the villains perform a masculine ethos in this chapter. Also, the fact that the authors do not see women as fitting antagonists communicates an underlying ideology which shows females to be morally superior, the angel of the house, one which stems from Victorian times. This point will be discussed after providing a discussion on the Witches in Narnia and the Headmistress of Experiment House.

In order to better interpret the function of the witches in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, it is the prerogative of this chapter to first research how witches are most often interpreted by literary critics. It is, perhaps, fitting to state that actual belief in witches amongst “elite” society has been uncommon for the last two hundred years (Lawless). This is because scientific and philosophical developments during the Age of Enlightenment caused a “desire for human affairs to be guided by rationality rather than by faith, superstition, or revelation”

(Outram 3). As rationality became more and more common, the witch became less real. She is, nonetheless, still heavily featured in children's literature for fun and as the symbol of a credulous superstitious past (Lawless).

According to Vladimir Propp, the role of a witch in a traditional fairy tale is that of the villain (27). This role is to “disturb the peace” and “cause misfortune, damage or harm” to the hero (27). The reason many scholars give for the presence of witches in literature is that she embodies what is feared in reality. In a patriarchal society, powerful women are called eccentric or mad by men in order to “diminish her sphere of influence” (Waelti-Walters 81). They live in the periphery of society and are not allowed to take part in normal social conduct. Kimberly B. Stratton illuminates this point in her book which explores the “background of and motivation behind the powerful and enduring stereotypes of the magician, sorceress and witch” (i). Her study focuses on the early manifestations of the Witch in Western literature:

Accusations always arise from somewhere: they draw on and reinscribe fears of the Other, ideals about the Self, and conceptions of antisocial behaviour. Accusations of magic and stereotypes of magicians or witches mirror social values and accepted notions about the way things should be among the group employing this rhetoric.

These ideas will vary from society to society. (i)

As people stopped believing in real magic, the accusations stopped, yet many women still lived in the periphery of society. As Waelti-Walters describes: a woman who is in control of her life, who is knowledgeable and makes independent choices is “almost certain to be found inconvenient by the men around her” (81).

Gilbert and Gubar show how the Victorian patriarchy viewed a female writer, a woman who tries to break free of the “domestic sphere” allocated to her:

Precisely because a woman is denied the autonomy ... that the pen represents, she is not only excluded from culture ... but she also becomes herself an embodiment of just

those extremes of mysterious and intransigent Otherness which culture confronts with worship or fear, love or loathing. (19)

Thus, the autonomous woman becomes a pariah; she has the will and the power to change her surroundings but no one will listen to her and her authority is diminished (Waelti-Walters 81).

Returning to the fairy tale, the witch is the woman not to be believed because she will lie to you or cast a spell on you (Waelti-Walters 81). The witch, thus, functions as a didactic tool: do not trust the witch. Stratton adds: “Contemporary uses of these stereotypes...draw on vilifying images and associations...thus assertive women are frequently portrayed as lustful and domineering witches” (3).

Significantly, in their psychological study into the effects of gender stereotyping in children’s books on children, Paterson and Lach argue that “the child’s schema for ‘make-believe’ affects the child’s understanding and interpretation of several events in the story, such as the fact that the evil witch is only pretend” (Paterson and Lach). This fact contrasts what Stratton and Waelti-Walters claim, because children file away witches under “make believe” and do not draw similarities between a witch in a story and an assertive woman in their environment.

Another issue which arises from saying the witch is a didactic tool is that it does not take into account the fact that not only women were accused of using magic. According to an article on Encyclopaedia Britannica by Jeffrey Burton Russell, many false ideas about witchcraft and the witch hunts persist today. The main misconception is that “not all persons accused of witchcraft were women, let alone old women; indeed, there were “witches” of all ages and sexes...the people hurt or killed in the hunts were not witches but victims forced by their persecutors into a category that in reality included no one” (Russell). Indeed, Robert Thurston indicates that 75-80% of known victims were female, however, he goes on to say that misogyny, or a “profound distrust of women’s abilities and morals by men” existed long

before and long after the witch hunts, therefore this alone would not explain the existence of the witch hunts (Thurston 65-66). The accusation posed by modern feminists such as Jennifer Waelti-Walters of men wanting to limit women is thus, speculation. There were many contributing factors to women's decline in status throughout history, including the influence of the Church which was trying to establish its power, the influence of ancient legends concerning witchcraft and downward curve of women's economic role (103).

A problem which most literary scholars on Lewis do not mention, is that the English language is biased against the woman. For example, the words *witch* and *wizard* have remarkably different connotations. A wizard is "a man who is supposed to have magical powers" (Longman). A witch is "a woman who is supposed to have magical powers, especially to do bad things" (Longman). Words like *witchcraft* and *witchdoctor* have evil undertones, whereas words such as *wizardry* implicate impressive achievements. (Longman) The word *wizard* originates from the word *wise* whereas *witch* originates from the Old English *wicce*, which is closely connected to the modern English *wicked* (Longman). In a sociolinguistic study on gender collocations by Suzanne Romaine, it becomes evident that the descriptive adjectives paired with words denoting a female, such as *woman*, are mostly negative (Romaine 110). In the study, Romaine examined 100 million words of text from the digital British National Corpus and found that such negative descriptors as *silly* and *hysterical* are paired with the word *woman*, whereas positive descriptors such as *intelligent* and *honest* are paired with the word *man* (Romaine 109). This proves that not only the individual words like *witch* more often have negative connotations, but that the descriptors for relatively neutral terms such as *woman* also most often have negative collocations. Thus, a bias already resides within the language used to make a story. It is my contention that this is partly why Lewis used witches as antagonists rather than wizards.

Romaine also proves that language plays a crucial role “as an agent for the transmission of culture. It is often said that the vocabulary of a language is an inventory of the items a culture talks about and has categorised in order to make sense of the world” (Romaine 26). We construct a model of the social world through language, which is an ongoing activity (26-27). Thus, the language an author uses in a story will reflect the society in which they grew up and will reflect the values and ideology of their social environment. This is another way in which the Victorian ideology of the authors is reflected in their writing.

The Chronicles of Narnia

According to Jean E. Graham, Lewis equates the witches with the devil, placing Jadis in the temptation role and Digory in the role of Eve from the Bible (38). Furthermore, she argues that the two witches in Narnia are based on centuries of stereotypes about women (41). Lewis, as a scholar on medieval literature, would have been very familiar with Circe and Lilith, two powerful enchantresses from ancient Greek and ancient Jewish mythology (32). These two witches feature throughout Western literary history as the embodiment of the “dangerous qualities of female sexuality and power” (32). However, according to Graham, in Lewis’ writings, “good and evil becomes polarised along gender lines: the deity remains masculine, while the two witches replace male characters in assuming responsibility for the fall of mankind” (32).

Karin Fry similarly argues that the witches are the seducers of boys and men, as in Genesis, where Eve tempts Adam (105). She says that the motivation is world domination, usually a masculine trait. “Picking up from the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is Eve who causes humanity to be expelled from Paradise, it is women who seduce others toward sin, and it is women who seek power and wish to destroy the male God (106).

First and foremost these arguments are based on the classical heroism paradigm. In this paradigm, women are seen as inferior and weak and they are oppressed by men. A powerful woman is seen as “inconvenient by the men around her” and her authority must be diminished (Waelti-Walters 81). Indeed, in Narnia, the evil witches are unconvertible to good, as is shown by the eventual killing of both witches. The other “bad guys” are not killed but always left to a humiliating fate such as Prince Rabadash, who is turned into a donkey (*HHB* 307). Rabadash is even allowed to turn back into a human, provided he remains within a ten mile radius of his god’s temple (*HHB* 308). This leads many feminist critics to respond as they do to the presence of the witches. However, when embracing Butler’s gender performativity theory, it is possible to see that the witches in Narnia display exclusively masculine qualities, despite their feminine exterior.

Hilder affirms that “biological gender, as we have seen throughout Lewis’ work, is irrelevant to the identity of the ‘masculine’ or the ‘feminine’ hero” (80). She claims that gender is not relevant because “good and evil crosses gender lines” in the *Narnia Chronicles* (22). True heroism is androgynous. Similarly, Christ is described as androgynous as Virginia Mollenkott demonstrates in her article “The Androgyny of Jesus.” When looking at the original texts of the Bible it becomes clear that in the original language of the New Testament Christ is described as *anthropos* meaning human, and not *aner* – male (Mollenkott). Moreover, Jesus had many traits which are gendered as feminine in our culture, he was gentle, he was tender towards his community, and he cooked and washed the feet of his disciples (Mollenkott). The fruits of the Spirit which Paul teaches about in Galatians 5:22 – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control – are the Christ-like characteristics which every person, not just men, are encouraged to develop. Mollenkott emphasised that “the family of God has no room for sex role stereotyping. Our activities are based on spiritual gifts, not on biology” (Mollenkott).

Unfortunately, societies do adhere to gender stereotypes, casting men and women into certain roles. When looking at the witches in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, Hilder argues that the White Witch embodies “‘masculine’ classical heroism...she is a giant in egotistical self-reliance, physique (both size and beauty), and tyranny...the White Witch's physical and psychological stature signifies classical heroic grandeur...she despises all things ‘feminine’ for example, smallness, humility and love” (Hilder 21-22). The adjectives the children who meet her use to describe her also underscore this point. Digory describes her as fierce and proud, “wonderfully brave” and “strong” (*MN* 34,39) while Polly thinks she is “terrible” (39). The narrator, through Edmund’s perspective, describes her as “proud and cold and stern” before she even speaks (*LWW* 123). These descriptors are indicative of the author’s intention to cast her as a classical hero. However, it must be stipulated that, like Bilbo, she uses her wit and the power of language to seduce Digory and Edmund. This is an example where a traditionally “feminine” trait is used for evil purposes, showing that not only “masculine” traits are evil, and also denoting the need for a balance between the gendered traits.

Similarly, the Lady of the Green Kirtle from *SC* performs as a classical hero yet also uses wit and language to seduce Prince Rillian. However, she is selfish, dominant, has an inextinguishable lust for power, and is deceitful and proud. Not only does she kill Prince Rilian’s mother in order to take her place as Queen of Narnia, she also kills her in order to kill that which she represents, which is the perfect feminine hero, full of servant-leadership, humility, obedience and interdependence (Hilder 84). Significantly, she is much more feminine in appearance than The White Witch. She is not “cold” and “stern” like her ancestor, but seductive and motherly (84). According to Hilder this is a visage, as her true appearance is that of a monstrous serpent, and is a part of her entrapment of the protagonists (84). I conclude from this that her appearance, especially her sex, is a moot point. Lewis is

portraying that evil can disguise itself in many forms by making the two witches so different from each other. The oldest Dwarf also states this at the end of *The Silver Chair*: “And the lesson of it all is...that those Northern Witches always mean the same thing, but in every age they have a different plan for getting it” (654).

Nonetheless, the Lady of the Green Kirtle has often been critiqued because critics think that through her Lewis is portraying women as evil. As Graham states “The Emerald Witch’s hold over Rillian is sexual” and “use[s] [her] beauty not to bring pleasure to men, but to put others under [her] control” (40). The problem with this argument is that her hold over him is not purely sexual. She also feigns motherliness towards him as well as to the children. As Prince Rillian says in *SC*: “No mother has taken pains more tenderly for her child, than the Queen’s grace has for me” (*SC* 622). She also feigns hospitality to the children in sending them to Harfang to be eaten by giants. Thus, her power lies in deception and not in sexuality.

The Emerald Witch’s ability to turn into a serpent mimics the Creation story in the Bible, where Eve is tempted by a snake to eat of the forbidden fruit. Graham points out that in some myths about Lilith, Adam’s first wife, is the serpent that tempts Eve (Graham 36). In comparing the witches to Lilith and Circe, Graham hopes to prove that Lewis’ writings contain “ambivalence about female power” (33). Through “turning Satan into Lilith and Circe” (41), he is showing “the dangers of female power and sexuality” (41). However, if this was the case, why are there other adult women in the novels who are not sexual predators? The main protagonist women who are not supernatural beings but are powerful are Queen Helen from *The Magician’s Nephew*, Mrs. Beaver from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Prince Rilian’s mother or Ramandu’s daughter from *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and Polly as an adult from *The Last Battle*. These women show humility in leadership, strength through meekness and power through nurturing and guiding the young.

Though the withes are the main evil antagonists – because they are the only characters who need to be killed and are not converted to good or simply humiliated – there is one other issue of contention concerning the female antagonist in *Narnia*. Kath Filmer contends that the Headmistress of Experiment House is proof that C.S. Lewis “hold[s]...intelligent women up to ridicule” (Filmer 155). She is a “symbol for devilish feminism” and he makes her “inept and incapable” in her all her jobs (156). She claims that all male characters who are “devilish” become “fearsomely powerful” while the Headmistress is rendered ineffectual (156). However, the Headmistress is complicit to classical heroic traits such as violence. The Experiment House bullies show only pride, aggression and conquest and are given free reign by the Head, who condones their behaviour. Her incompetence and removal from the position shows Lewis’ critique of the complicity with “masculine” violence (Hilder 79-80). It is probably also a critique on Lewis’ part of modernism and psychology, as Filmer suggests (Filmer 155). However, her success in Parliament offers a critique of the “masculine” bullying at the national political level in the United Kingdom of that time (Hilder 80).

The Hobbit

Compared to *Narnia*, there is little to discuss concerning female antagonists in *The Hobbit*. However, the fact that there are no female antagonists says much about an author as well. Though Lewis has chosen to portray some females as the “embodiment of evil”, as Jean Graham sees them, Tolkien has chosen not to portray females as evil. The Shire is supposed to be idyllic. It is portrayed as such, which can be read from the adjectives used to describe it (Tolkien 3). However, in an idyllic place such as the Shire, there would be no place for a character such as a witch.

It seems that Tolkien valued femininity and thought that women’s lack of power bestowed them with a higher moral virtue (Green 193). “It seems likely that Tolkien excludes

women from his children's stories, not because they deserve contempt, but because men behave contemptibly around them" (191). This refers to the Victorian ideals to which the authors related and which pervade this novel. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Many women in Britain were expected to be subordinate to men and their usefulness was bound to their ability to produce male children (P. Ward 40). In middle-class society, her main function was seen as a domestic one; though Langland proves this was a more important role than many think, it was still limiting to women (296). There was strict social conduct. Women were seen as unintelligent and "ill suited to the harsh competition of the working world"; they were expected to be "entirely self-abnegating", subservient and innocent both sexually and morally (Yang 25,27-28). The ideal woman, thus, has no place in an adventure story, because, though she is morally superior, she needs male guidance and protection (Yang 27). She would not be an antagonist because she is too virtuous to be able to be evil. In this sense, perhaps Tolkien is being either extremely generous towards women, showing that women can do no wrong; or he is being extremely diminutive in saying that women can do no wrong.

However, there are antagonist characters in *The Hobbit* who emanate a masculine ethos. Thorin Oakenshield, who was also mentioned in Chapter 2, is a classic heroic protagonist who turns antagonist, and is undercut in the story. He is converted to the feminine ethos on his deathbed. Smaug is arguably the main antagonist of the story. His traits include: pride, as is evidenced by his appeal to flattery (Tolkien 207, 211), smugness – he continuously sneers, scoffs and laughs away when he gets Bilbo to admit anything related to their business in the mountain (208); he is also quick to anger – he spouts flames at Bilbo when he says he is a burglar (211) – and prone to violence, as is shown by his ransacking of the mountain and its surrounding villages 300 years past and also that day.

Other antagonists include the trolls and the goblins, races which are apparently all evil. They are cruel (43) and quick to anger (36). The reader is not given much information about them, they are very flat characters. Similarly, the goblins are described as “cruel wicked and bad-hearted” (60). They are also named as slavers, torturers and mass murderers (60). They are evil through and through and also flat characters. They are described as clever as well, and their wish for world-domination and their cruelty make their culture clearly. Interestingly, they do have some traditionally feminine traits such as interdependence – they rely on other to make their tools (60) – and cowardice, as is evidenced by their surprise attack on the travelling party (57). However, their traditionally “masculine” traits overcome the few “feminine” ones.

The Little White Horse

There are no female antagonists in this novel either. The many featured females seem to be able to do no wrong. Though Maria is wilful, she is not obstinate. Though she is impulsive, she is not reckless. Though she is curious, she is not nosy. Though Miss Heliotrope is strict, she is not unreasonable. Though Loveday Minette holds a grudge, she is not unwilling to give it up. In comparison to Tolkien, Goudge also places women on a pedestal. The world she sets is idyllic; it is a “remedy to the chaos and upheaval, economic and social, of British society during and immediately after the Second World War” (Rosenberg 77). All three authors are known for their hatred of war, their hatred of industrialisation and technology and their strong ideological stances. This is reflected in their writings which are nostalgic for a time that actually never existed.

As was shown in the previous section, certain Victorian ideals dictate that a woman is morally superior to a man. Similarly, Goudge’s women live up to this standard and are not able to be antagonists. However, as was also shown in the introduction to this chapter,

women from the Victorian period who sought to break the mould were sometimes considered to be insane and were either marginalised within their society or diagnosed with the “feminine” diseases such as agoraphobia and bulimia (Bordo 2245). Therefore, the Victorian period of which Goudge is writing is non-existent, but merely a nostalgic representation of what she hoped it could be.

There is a close relationship between fantasy and nostalgia, as these authors bring into evidence – they write about worlds without industrialisation, either medieval-like or similar to Victorian times – yet they conveniently “forget” about the bad things from those times. For example, Loveday Minette is the picture of the ideal Victorian woman, so wonderful she is almost unreal. “[Maria] stood and gazed at Loveday Minette as those gaze who look upon a dream come true, and wonder if they sleep or wake. For when in lonely moments the motherless Maria had imagined for herself the mother she would like to have that mother had been exactly like Loveday Minette” (Goudge 111). Her beauty and grace render Maria speechless (Goudge 112). She is humble in her servitude to the Old Parson and she is a good mother to Robin. This stereotype is perhaps one that women can aspire to, yet it would work better if Goudge’s entire world adhered to the feminine ethos.

Thus, Goudge contradicts the either/or gender binary and imbues the characters in *The Little White Horse* with a balance of masculine and feminine traits.

In conclusion, Lewis remains conflicted about gender. Though his contemporaries fail to even address female antagonism in any way, Lewis does attend to them. The question of whether this is better or worse goes unanswered, as both sides can be argued for. Lewis, however, does show that evil takes on many guises and is not always easy to identify. There is, however, no simple way of reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* as either biased against women or progressive concerning the role of women. It is both progressive and conservative at the same time. The female antagonists, namely the witches, can be construed as Lewis

showing how females are the embodiment of evil, how female sexuality is dangerous and how female power and autonomy is perilous to patriarchy. However, they can also be read as essentially “masculine” characters, exhibiting traditionally “masculine” traits, regardless of their female shell. This line of thinking critiques modern ideas about gender more than it does Lewis’ portrayal of the witches. This is where Hilder’s argument regarding spiritual heroism takes the forefront, saying that Lewis is trying to portray a more Biblical and medieval value system. Here traits like humility and meekness are favoured over traits like pride and reason. It comes down to reinterpreting these terms in a favoured light. For example, in a classic heroic paradigm, meekness is mistaken for weakness and docility, yet in the spiritual heroic paradigm, meekness is gentleness and humbleness. Either way, the witches in Narnia do not represent the “feminine” in its traditional sense, but rather emanate classically heroic traits. Similarly, the Head from *SC*, Smaug from *The Hobbit* and Monsieur Cocq de Noir from *The Little White Horse*, are the villains who motivate the heroes of the respective stories into action. Lewis’ protagonists are much more sympathetic than the antagonists, as are Tolkien’s and Goudge’s, as they are rounded characters with flaws and who make mistakes yet still redeem themselves.

Conclusion

After closely analysing how gender is represented in the three novels in terms of the feminine ethos which both male and female characters possess, it can be concluded that the novels are ambiguous about gender. The feminine ethos in the books means that traits which are traditionally gendered as feminine are favoured over traditionally “masculine” traits. Though it can be argued that C.S. Lewis, Tolkien and Goudge represent traditionally “feminine” characteristics as superior to traditionally “masculine” ones, some statements and situations seem outdated. For example, when Eustace says to Polly in *SC* “It’s an extraordinary thing about girls that they never know the points of the compass,” this sounds sexist to contemporary ears. In this sense the authors are unable to overcome the inherited cultural tendencies of a Victorian gender ideal, which prescribed separate spheres and bifurcated gender roles for men and women. However, their favouring of the feminine ethos overshadows these moments.

The way that the authors “favour” the feminine ethos is threefold. They each let the protagonists that exhibit the most feminine characteristics prevail. They also give their antagonists traditionally “masculine” traits. Lastly, each author gives at least one female an important position in their story, be it as ancestor who gives the main protagonist his characteristics – such as Bilbo and his mother – or as main protagonist, one of the leaders of the group.

Though the answer to the question of how much children will be influenced by what they read remains a complex and intricate matter, psychologists Paterson and Lach prove that they are only influenced by them in a negative sense if the schemas in their minds are already aligned with the ideology in the book. Thus, a modern child confronted with a statement about the ability of girls to find their way according to the points of the compass might think that nobody knows that. The fantasy genre works well with children’s imaginations, but this does

not mean that they cannot discern fiction from reality – most children understand that a witch is make-believe – nor does it mean they do not realise they are reading an old book which might have a different cultural background than their own.

According to feminist scholars who base their literary analysis on classical heroism, these books may not have overcome the sexism of their period. However, according to spiritual heroism as denoted in this thesis, they paved the way for many contemporary fantasy authors to be able to transcend this stereotyping. For example, Patrick Rothfuss' *Kingkiller Chronicles* trilogy of which the first volume was published in 2006, has a race of people who clearly favour the females but find a balance between “masculine” militarism and “feminine” gentleness. Similarly, the female characters of Lewis' *Narnia* and Goudge's *The Little White Horse*, though they are sometimes depicted in stereotypical ways, are able to discern the points of the compass and find their way towards a balanced gender identity.

Works Cited

- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009. Print
- Brown, Devin. "Are The Chronicles of Narnia Sexist and Racist?" The 12th Annual Conference of The C. S. Lewis and Inklings Society. Calvin College. 28 March 2009. Keynote Address.
- Bordo, Susan. "Unbearable Weight." *The Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010. 2240-2254. Print.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Web. 20 Jul. 2014.
- . *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Web. 20 Jul. 2014.
- Campbell, Lori M. *Portals of Power: magical agency and transformation in literary fantasy*. Jefferson: MacFarland and Co., Inc., 2010. Print. Critical Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy, 19.
- Fimi, Dimitra. "Tolkien and the Fantasy Tradition" *Critical Insights: The Fantastic*. Ed. Claire Whitehead. Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2013. 40-60. Print.
- Fredrick, Candice and Sam McBride. *Women among the Inklings: Gender, C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001. Print.
- Fry, Karin. "No Longer a Friend of Narnia: Gender in Narnia" *The Chronicles of Narnia and Philosophy*. Ed. Gregory Bassham & Jerry L. Walls. Chicago: Open Court, 2005. 103-109. E-book.
- Garland, Carina. "Curious Appetites: Food, Desire, Gender and Subjectivity in Lewis Carroll's Alice Texts." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 32.1 (2008): 22-39. Print.

- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2000. Web. 16 Jul. 2014. <<http://archive.org>>
- Graham, Jean E. "Women, Sex, and Power: Circe and Lilith in Narnia." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 29.1 (2004): 32-44. Web. 2 Dec. 2013.
- Green, William H. "'Where's Mama?' The Construction of the Feminine in *The Hobbit*." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 22.2 (1998): 188-195. Web. 2 Dec. 2013.
- Goldwaihthe, John. *The Natural History of Make-Believe: A Guide to the Principal Works of Britain, Europe, and America*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. Print.
- Goudge, Elizabeth. *The Little White Horse*. New York: Puffin Books, 2001. Print.
- Hardy, Elizabeth Baird. "Preface." *The Feminine Ethos in C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia*. New York: Peter Lang, 2012. ix-xi. E-book.
- Hilder, Monika. *The Feminine Ethos in C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia*. New York: Peter Lang, 2012. E-book.
- Hunt, Peter. "Introduction: The World of Children's Literature Studies." *Understanding Children's Literature: Key Essays from the International Companion*. Ed. Peter Hunt. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- Isaac, Megan Lynn. "Misplaced: The Fantasies and Fortunes of Elizabeth Goudge." *The Lion and the Unicorn* 21.1 (1997): 86-111. Print.
- Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London: Methuen, 1981. Print.
- James, Edward. "Tolkien, Lewis and the Explosion of Genre Fantasy." *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. pp. 62-78. Web. 22 Aug. 2014.
- Langland, Elizabeth. "Nobody's Angels: Domestic Ideology and Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Novel." *PMLA* 107.2 (1992): 290-304. Print.

- Lawless, Daphne. "The Changing Depiction of Witches in Literature, from Shakespeare to Science Fiction." MA Thesis at Victoria University of Wellington, 1999. Web. 12 Jul. 2014.
- Lesnik-Oberstein, Karin. "What is Children's Literature? What is Childhood?" *Understanding Children's Literature*. Ed. Peter Hunt. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- Lewis, C.S. *The Chronicles of Narnia*. New York: HarperCollins, 1950. Print.
- Nikolajeva, Maria. "The Development of Children's Fantasy." *The Cambridge Companion To Fantasy Literature*. Ed. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. 50-61. Web. 22 Aug. 2014.
- NIV Bible. Ed. Kenneth Barker. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995. Print
- McGillis, Roderick. "A Fairytale Is Just a Fairytale: George MacDonald and the Queering of Fairy." *Marvels & Tales* 17.1 (2003): 86-99. Web. 20 Aug. 2014
- McSporran, Cathy. "Daughters of Lilith: Witches and Wicked Women in *The Chronicles of Narnia*." *Revisiting Narnia: Fantasy, Myth and Religion in C.S Lewis' Chronicles*. Ed. Shanna Caughey. BenBella Books, Inc.: Dallas, 2005. 191-204. E-book.
- Mollenkott, Virginia. "The Androgyny of Jesus." *Daughters of Sarah*. 2.1 (1976): 24-28. Web. 28 Aug. 2014. <www.virginiamollenkott.com>
- Outram, Dorinda. *The Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Web. 14 Aug. 2014.
- Paterson, Sharyl Bender, and Mary Alyce Lach. "Gender Stereotypes In Children's Books: Their Prevalence." *Gender & Education* 2.2 (1990): 185. Academic Search Premier. Web. 3 Sept. 2014.
- Propp, Vladimir. *The Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968. Print.

- Rawls, Melanie. "The Feminine Principle in Tolkien." *Mythlore* 10.4 [38] (1984): 5-13. Web. 20 Aug 2014.
- Richardson, Pamela. "Boys, Girls, and Trains: Ambiguous Gender Roles in E. Nesbit's *The Railway Children*." *Postscript* 24 (2006): 84-101. Web. 27 Aug. 2014.
- Romaine, Suzanne. *Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- Rosenburg, Teya. "Genre and Ideology in Elizabeth Goudge's *The Little White Horse*" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 27.2 (2002): 77-87. Web. 3 Feb. 2014.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012. E-book.
- Russell, Jeffrey Burton. "Witchcraft". *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. n.p. n.d. Web. 9 Jul. 2014.
- Sandner, David. "The Emergence and Evolution of the Fantastic." *Critical Insights: The Fantastic*. Ed. Claire Whitehead. Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2013. Print.
- Stratton, Kimberly B. *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology, and the Stereotype in the Ancient World*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. E-book.
- Thurston, Robert. *The Witch Hunts: A History of the Witch Persecutions in Europe and Northern America*. Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007. Print.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*. London: HarperCollins, 1999. Print.
- Trites, Roberta S. *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997. Print.
- Waelti-Walters, Jennifer. *Fairy Tales and the Female Imagination*. Montreal: Eden Press, 1982. Print.
- Ward, Michael. *The Narnia Code*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2010. E-book.
- . "C.S. Lewis and Philip Pullman" *The Mars Hill Review* 21 (2003): n.p. Web. 4 Jul. 2014.

- Ward, Paul. *Britishness since 1870*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Warry, Michelle Joselin. "Vision of Community: A Feminist Re-reading of Elizabeth Goudge's Children's Novels". MA Thesis at University of British Columbia, 2004. Web. 22 Aug. 2014.
- Wielenberg, Erik J. "Aslan the Terrible: Painful Encounters with Absolute Goodness" *The Chronicles of Narnia and Philosophy*. Ed. Gregory Bassham & Jerry L. Walls. Chicago: Open Court, 2005. 138-143. E-book.
- "Witch." *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. 5th ed. 2009. Digital.
- Wingo, Aliza P., and Kerry J Ressler and Bekh Bradley. "Resilience Characteristics Mitigate Tendency for Harmful Alcohol and Illicit Drug Use in Adults with a History of Childhood Abuse: A Cross-sectional Study of 2024 Inner-city Men and Women" *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 51 (2014): 93-99. Elsevier. Web. 29 Aug. 2014.
- "Wizard." *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. 5th ed. 2009. Digital.
- Yang, Sharon. "Victorian Refashioning: Rosalind as a Paragon of Victorian Womanhood" *Text and Performance Quarterly* 22.1 (2002): 24-46. Web. 10 Sep. 2014.