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No Sex in Narnia? How Hans Christian Andersen's "Snow Queen" Problematizes C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*

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Abstract

Author speculates that echoes of Andersen's "Snow Queen" inevitably (for readers familiar with the tale) bring a tinge of sexuality to encounters with the White Witch of Narnia. In this way, Lewis's deliberately sexless tales become, for some characters, an exploration of dealing with the pull toward maturity. Touches on responses to Narnia by Pullman and Gaiman.

Additional Keywords

Andersen, Hans Christian. "The Snow Queen"; Gaiman, Neil. "The Problem of Susan"; Lewis, C.S. *Chronicles of Narnia—Sex*; Novalis. "Hyacinth and Rosebud"; Pullman, Philip. *His Dark Materials*; Sexuality in C.S. Lewis; Tieck, Ludwig. "Fair-Haired Eckbert"



SEX IN NARNIA?
HOW HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN'S
"SNOW QUEEN" PROBLEMATIZES
C.S. LEWIS'S
The Chronicles of Narnia

JENNIFER L. MILLER

C.S. LEWIS'S *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956) are remembered by many adults as favorite books from their childhood. The excitement of finding a hidden world in a wardrobe, the possibility of being a king or queen in a fantasyland, the existence of fauns, dryads, and unicorns – all of these create a sense of magic and wonder that is nearly impossible to resist. The recent successes of the movie adaptations of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005) and *Prince Caspian* (2008) show that these stories continue to appeal to readers and viewers today. When the *Chronicles* are read with a more critical eye, however, the reader will notice a marked lack of sexuality and treatment of sexual desire in all the stories, particularly when compared with some of Lewis's other writings such as *Perelandra*, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, and *Surprised by Joy*. Although this lack of sexuality and erotic love is consistent with Lewis's desire to create a world of innocence for children, it is also problematic in that it allows others to write the themes of sexuality and desire into the story in ways that Lewis cannot control. One of the most obvious ways this happens is through Lewis's use of characters and imagery from other authors, most notably Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen." These outside influences not only bring sexuality into Lewis's narratives, but the desire they portray takes on several non-traditional forms as well, including desire by a boy for an older woman. Even for those who are not familiar with stories such as "The Snow Queen," the language that Lewis uses to talk about joy and desire, as well as his inclusion of familiar mythological creatures such as satyrs and incubuses, introduces the possibility of deviant sexuality into his world of innocence. Recent movie adaptations of Lewis's *Chronicles*, as well as works by contemporary fantasy authors Philip Pullman and Neil Gaiman, further compound the question of sexuality introduced by such imagery, revising the image of Narnia or writing other fantasy worlds as places in which sexuality, sometimes joyful, but sometimes unnatural and disturbing, can exist. All of these images—both those used by Lewis as well as those created by others—work together to bring

sexuality and desire into *The Chronicles of Narnia*, calling into question the innocent world that Lewis worked hard to create and valued so highly.

From the very beginning of C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the major relationships between males and females are defined by friendship or by family, rather than through sexual desire. The most obvious example of this is the four Pevensie children from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, who are all siblings. As Shasta realizes in *The Horse and His Boy* [HHB], "Although they're king and queen, they're brother and sister, not married to one another" (61). Significantly, however, this is not the only male/female relationship in Lewis' *Chronicles* that is defined through friendship or familial ties; these ties are the rule, rather than the exception. Polly and Digory in *The Magician's Nephew* are neighbors, not brother and sister, but there is no sexual relationship between them: "Polly and Digory were always great friends and she came nearly every holiday to stay with them at their beautiful house in the country" (184). Similarly, Jill and Eustace in *The Silver Chair* and *The Last Battle* are classmates, but not sexually linked: they "were always good friends" (*Silver Chair* 216). Therefore, while all of the pairings of children visiting Narnia include both a boy and a girl, these relationships are either familial or amiable—never sexual.

Occasionally, marriage or the possibility of marriage is mentioned, but even then, desire itself is distant, if it exists at all. When Susan and Lucy become Queen Susan the Gentle and Queen Lucy the Valiant, "the Kings of the countries beyond the sea began to send ambassadors asking for [Susan's] hand in marriage," and "all Princes in those parts desired [Lucy] to be their Queen" (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* [LWW] 181). These marriages, however, never take place, and, most noticeably in the description of Susan, the desire for her is "beyond the sea," rather than having actual romantic love or sexual desire exist in Narnia. This same trend can even be seen in non-human male/female relationships; the horses Bree and Hwin from *The Horse and His Boy* "lived happily to a great age in Narnia and both got married but not to one another" (216-17). When marriage occurs, it happens offstage, to non-central characters, further reinforcing the idea that sexual desire has no place in Narnia.

Prince Caspian's marriage to Ramandu's daughter, which is mentioned at the end of *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* and again at the beginning of *The Silver Chair*, is an example of a marriage between main characters that *does* take place. Certainly, it would seem, this marriage would imply some sort of hetero-normative sexuality. However, as with the descriptions of the weddings and marriages of Hwin and Bree, all of this takes place outside of the space and time of the books themselves. Caspian's wedding to Ramandu's daughter receives only a brief mention at the end of *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"*: "Caspian married Ramandu's daughter and they all reached Narnia in the end, and she became a great queen and the mother and grandmother of great kings" (216).

Nor do we get to see their marriage, as she is dead before *The Silver Chair* begins and the above passage pays more attention to her as a mother than to her as a wife. Perhaps even more significantly, Caspian's romance with and marriage to Ramandu's daughter take place far outside of Narnia, on a sea voyage to the End of the World. Romantic love and desire can exist in exotic, strange locations far from Narnia, but in Narnia itself, the land of innocence and wonder, no such portrayals are possible.

The other instance in which the main characters do marry one another is Shasta/Cor and Aravis in *The Horse and His Boy*. This marriage actually occurs within the book and takes place in Archenland, a country on the border of Narnia. When the description of their reasons for marrying is read, however, we again see that the existence of any sexuality is lacking: "Aravis also had many quarrels (and, I'm afraid even fights) with Cor, but they always made it up again: so that years later, when they were grown up they were so used to quarrelling and making it up again that they got married so as to go on doing it more conveniently" (HHB 216). The reasons for their marriage focus around quarrelling and arguing, rather than love, desire, and sex. The tension between the two could easily be read as latent sexual desire, but in the absence of any other indications of love or desire, this reading would be placing romance and sexual desire into Narnia that simply is not there.

The absence of sexuality and sexual desire in Narnia, a land created for and about children, raises the question of Lewis's overall views on sex and desire. Lewis's essay "On Science Fiction" gives a simple explanation to this question: he simply does not like love stories between children. He writes, "I have long since discovered my own private *phobia*: the thing I can't bear in literature, the thing which makes me profoundly uncomfortable, is the representation of anything like a quasi love affair between two children. It embarrasses and nauseates me" ("On Science Fiction" 67). As a result, when writing *The Chronicles of Narnia*, he deliberately chose the fairy tale form because it "seemed to demand no love interest" ("Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to Be Said" 46). These statements are reinforced by what Lewis wrote in a letter to James Higgins; "Writing 'juveniles' certainly modified my habits of composition" in that it "excluded erotic love" (Higgins 534). Therefore, the absence of sexuality and romantic love in *The Chronicles of Narnia* certainly seems to be a conscious choice on Lewis's part, a choice that influenced the form and function of these narratives.

A look at Lewis's biography, however, suggests that there is more to the absence of sex in Narnia than simply personal preference. In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy* [SJ], Lewis writes of his school clothes, noting, "I have read of boys in the same predicament who welcomed such things as signs of growing up; I had no such feeling. Nothing in my experience has ever suggested to me

that it was nicer to be a schoolboy than a child or nicer to be a man than a schoolboy" (22-23). As David Downing explains in his book *Into the Wardrobe*, "Throughout the years, Lewis always associated his childhood with a happy and secure home, the simple goodness of a beloved nurse, and the freedom to roam through empires of imagination with his brother Warren. And in Lewis's books the words *child* and *childhood*, sometimes even *childish*, tend to carry the same connotations—simplicity, self-forgetfulness, imagination, and wonder" (6). Later he notes that when Lewis converted to Christianity, "he decided that since his early teens, he had been moving in the wrong direction; his boyhood at English schools had been a kind of 'fall' from childhood. If that were true, becoming a grown-up would be a further step in the wrong direction" (20). Given this idealization of his own childhood and his decision that his adolescence should be viewed as a fall, it should come as no surprise that Lewis left more "adult" themes, including sexuality, out of Narnia and instead based it on the time of his life where he found the most imagination and wonder—his childhood.

This idea of childhood being equated with innocence and a lack of sexuality can be seen in some of Lewis's other writings, most notably the second book in his *Space Trilogy—Perelandra [P]* (1943). The Lady's continual use of the word "young" (60) to describe her understanding (or lack thereof) of Ransom and Weston associates Perelandra and its inhabitants with childhood. More important, however, are several key scenes that establish Perelandra as a world of innocence where sexual desire is not even relevant. When Ransom encounters the Lady on Perelandra, even though they are both naked, there is never a question of sexual desire between them. When Weston first encounters Ransom and the Lady, he asks, "You ask me to believe that you have been living here with that woman under these conditions in a state of sexless innocence?" (87). Ransom's response is quite telling, because it shows the complete incompatibility of the idea of sexual desire with a perfect, innocent world:

"Oh, sexless!" said Ransom disgustedly. "All right, if you like. It's about as good a description of living in Perelandra as it would be to say that a man had forgotten water because Niagara Falls didn't immediately give him the idea of making it into cups of tea. But you're right enough if you mean that I have had no more thought of desiring her than—than . . ." Comparisons failed him and his voice died. (P 88)

The Lady herself reinforces the lack of relevance of sexual desire in Perelandra by her reaction to Weston's words about women on Earth after the fall. He tells her how some women became "more beautiful and excelled their fellows" so that "thousands were striving for their love . . ." (P 120). As soon as he says this, the Lady decides to go to sleep; while this could be mere coincidence, the narrator's words show a direct connection between the mention of sexuality and the Lady's

indifference: "Up to this point she had been listening to Weston's body with open mouth and wide eyes, but as he spoke of the women with the thousands of lovers she yawned, with the unconcealed and unpremeditated yawn of a young cat" (120). Later in the novel, when Weston teaches the Lady about clothes, Ransom is extremely worried that she was learning about sexuality and feels relief when he finds out she is not: "'Thank heaven,' thought Ransom, 'he is only teaching her vanity'; for he had feared something worse. Yet could it be possible, in the long run, to wear clothes without learning modesty, and through modesty lasciviousness?" (135). Such a passage suggests that learning sexual desire would be worse and more destructive to the Lady's innocence than learning other, "lesser" vices such as vanity. Thus, both Narnia and Perelandra are worlds of childish innocence, and as a result, there is no place in them for sexual desire.

The question of desire is further complicated by texts such as *Surprised by Joy* and the allegorical novel *The Pilgrim's Regress* [PR], in which Lewis describes the desire for God in terms that could be mistaken for sexual desire. In *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis describes the feeling of desire that comes over him at moments during his childhood. He writes, "It was a sensation, of course, or desire; but desire for what? [...] and before I knew what I desired, the world turned commonplace again, or only stirred by a longing for the longing that had just ceased. It had taken only a moment of time; and in a certain sense everything else that had ever happened to me was insignificant in comparison" (SJ 16). He goes on to describe this desire as "Joy" (SJ 18). John, the protagonist in *The Pilgrim's Regress*, has a similar experience. He feels desire for something that he cannot name but that he calls the Islands:

[T]here came to him from beyond the wood a sweetness and a pang so piercing that instantly he forgot his father's house, and his mother, and the fear of the Landlord, and the burden of the rules. All the furniture of his mind was taken away. A moment later he found that he was sobbing. (8)

These descriptions of momentary flashes of intense pleasure, sobbing, and sweet pangs are all suggestive of an orgasmic experience, something that John himself acknowledges when telling Reason about the similarities between his lust and his desire for the Island. He observes, "Both are sweet. Both are full of longing. The one runs into the other. They *are* very alike" (PR 58). Left untreated, the reader could easily interpret both Lewis and John's experiences as intense sexual desire.

In both of these texts, however, Lewis works to make clear that the desire he and John feel is not sexual desire, but desire for something more.¹ To

¹ In his analysis of Lewis's letter, Higgins explains how Lewis's exclusion of erotic love from *The Chronicles of Narnia* is intended to focus on the theme of divine love that pervades the series. In responding to Lewis's comment that he excluded erotic love, Higgins writes,

erase any confusion, Lewis has John undergo several sexual experiences, such as the encounter in the woods with the brown girl. Although she tells him, "I am better than your silly Islands" (*PR* 13), his original desire for the Island comes back stronger than ever, showing that it is not a sexual desire after all. John's second sexual experience with Media is described more eloquently by Mr. Halfways, who says, "You have found your Island—you have found it in one another's hearts" (30). Although John describes what he feels as love, he still longs for the Island, showing that not even sexual or romantic love can fulfill his desires. A similar situation can be seen in *Surprised by Joy*, where Lewis writes, "One thing, however, I learned, which has saved me from many popular confusions of mind. I came to know by experience that [Joy] is not a disguise of sexual desire" (*SJ* 169). Later, as he gets closer to God, he realizes that "all my erotic and magical perversions of Joy look like sordid trumpery" (181). The inclusion of sexual desire is extremely important in both *The Pilgrim's Regress* and *Surprised by Joy*, in that it allows Lewis to distinguish more clearly between desire for earthly things and desire for God. The differentiation between desire for God and sexual desire can even be seen in *Perelandra*; the examples cited above show how Lewis acknowledges that sexual desire could be an issue because of both Ransom and the Lady's nakedness, but then explains why such a concern need not exist. Therefore, by including sexuality and sexual desire in these stories and then dismissing it, Lewis has more control over how the reader thinks about the characters' desires, rather than giving them room to project their own interpretations of desire onto his texts.

When the question of desire is examined in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, we can see close similarities to Lewis's "Joy" and John's "Islands," but without the definitive statements that differentiate this kind of desire from desire for earthly things, such as food, power, or sex. The most important example of this feeling of desire appears when Mr. Beaver first tells the Pevensie children about Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*:

"My goodness! But of course!" a reader is inclined to exclaim. It is significant, however, that Lewis feels pressed to mention this exclusion; the reason being that the pervading theme of all his books is love — divine love and the human love which necessarily springs from the divine. This is not the spongy emotion which self-indulgent man sometimes invents for his own pleasure. It is the hard, painful, overwhelming love for which man has been grasping from the beginning of time. It is the love which was given life when a voice burst out of the heavens one day to lay not a request but a commandment upon the head of man: "Thou shalt love. . . ." (Higgins 537).

Unlike in *Pilgrim's Regress* and *Perelandra*, however, Lewis does not distinguish between erotic love and divine love in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, leaving such deliberations up to the reader.

And now a very curious thing happened. None of the children knew who Aslan was any more than you do, but the moment the Beaver had spoken these words everyone felt quite different. Perhaps it has sometimes happened to you in a dream that someone says something which you don't understand but in the dream it feels as if it has some enormous meaning—either a terrifying one which turns the whole dream into a nightmare or else a lovely meaning too lovely to put into words, which makes the dream so beautiful that you remember it all your life and are always wishing you could get into that dream again. It was like that now. At the name of Aslan each one of the children felt something jump in its inside. Edmund felt a sensation of mysterious horror. Peter felt suddenly brave and adventurous. Susan felt as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music had just floated by her. And Lucy got the feeling you have when you wake up in the morning and realize that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer. (LWW 64-65)

The similarities between this feeling and Lewis's descriptions of "Joy" are notable – the inability to describe it well, the quest throughout life to regain this feeling, the momentary flash of insight, and ultimately, that it is directed toward God/Aslan. But what is perhaps most interesting about this passage is the way in which for each child, the desire is described in terms of something else; for Peter, Susan, and Lucy, it is described in terms of the desire for some earthly thing. While the children's initial desires are countered later in the story after they have met Aslan, such as when Peter does not feel brave, but instead "felt he was going to be sick" (LWW 127) before killing Fenris Ulf, this is less explicit than Lewis's direct statement in *Surprised by Joy* that his desire for God should not be mistaken for sexual desire. Additionally, the connection between the desire the Pevensies feel and sexual desire is not directly countered as it is in the texts mentioned above. While the passage from *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* does not contain the sexual imagery that the passages from *Surprised by Joy* and *The Pilgrim's Regress* do, introducing the concept of desire opens up the possibility that that desire is sexual, a problem that will be addressed at greater length later in this essay. And although both Perelandra and Narnia are worlds of innocence where sex is not relevant, Lewis directly addresses the issue of sexual desire in *Perelandra*, whereas in Narnia, we see a world where sexuality is neither acknowledged nor denied, but simply does not exist.

The lack of romantic love and sexual desire in *The Chronicles of Narnia* becomes increasingly problematic in terms of Lewis's own ideas and goals when such elements are brought into the novel through the use of outside imagery. While the Pevensie children's desire for Aslan opens up the possibility that desire *does* exist in Narnia, the connection between Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen" and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* takes this a step further.

Many critics have noticed the connection between these two stories, including Downing, who writes, “[the White Witch] reminds us also of Hans Christian Andersen’s Snow Queen, another pale, cruel beauty who holds a little boy captive” (33). Certainly, the physical descriptions of the White Witch and the Snow Queen are strikingly similar. The White Witch is described as

a great lady, taller than any woman Edmund had ever seen. She also was covered in white fur up to her throat and held a long straight golden wand in her right hand and wore a golden crown on her head. Her face was white—not merely pale, but white like snow or paper or icing sugar, except for her very red mouth. It was a beautiful face in other respects, but proud and cold and stern. (*LWW* 27)

When Kai first meets the Snow Queen in Andersen’s tale, many of these same traits can be seen in her description: “She was beautiful but all made of ice: cold, blindingly glittering ice; and yet she was alive, for her eyes stared at Kai like two stars, but neither rest nor peace was to be found in her gaze” (Andersen 237). Later, when she pulls Kai behind her sleigh, we again see similarities between her and the White Witch: “The fur hat and coat were made of snow; the driver was a woman: how tall and straight she stood! She was the Snow Queen” (239). The physical descriptions of these two women, in addition to the fact that they both choose a sleigh as their mode of transportation, point to the connection between them.

The similarity between the White Witch and the Snow Queen extends to the power that each woman has over her surroundings. When Lucy asks Mr. Tumnus who the White Witch is, he explains, “Why, it is she that has got all Narnia under her thumb. It’s she that makes it always winter. Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!” (*LWW* 16). Andersen’s description of the Snow Queen’s palace contains similarities to the White Witch’s hold over Narnia:

The walls of the palace were made of snow, and the windows and doors of the sharp winds; it contained more than a hundred halls, the largest several miles long. [...] Here no one had ever gathered for a bit of innocent fun; not even a dance for polar bears, where they might have walked on their hind legs [...]. No, empty, vast, and cold was the Snow Queen’s palace. (Andersen 258-59)

Both the Snow Queen and the White Witch rule over a vast expanse of never-ending winter, but more importantly, this is a winter that is never any fun. For Narnia, the lack of happiness is signified by it never being Christmas; in the Snow Queen’s palace, the sheer emptiness of the palace denies the possibility of

any of the social activities—whether indoor or outdoor—that make winter enjoyable.

Certainly there are some differences between the Snow Queen and the White Witch. Most obvious is the fact that the White Witch dies at the end of Lewis's tale, while the Snow Queen does not. Another difference is that the Snow Queen is symbolic of reason and intellect in a way that the White Witch never is. Very noticeable in Andersen's "The Snow Queen" is that when Kai is following the Snow Queen's sleigh on his sled, "all he could remember were his multiplication tables" (Andersen 239) and that while putting together the Snow Queen's mirror, he is playing "the Game of Reason" (259). As Gracia Fay Ellwood notes, "Andersen's icy queen differs from Lewis' in that the former is identified with rationality. [...] She is almost impersonal—she destroys by virtue of what she is, in contrast to Jadis, who is gratuitously cruel and a betrayer. And correspondingly, she is not destroyed at the climax; she is simply absent when Gerda comes for Kay [*sic*]. Rationality cannot be slain" (23). While the White Witch is cruel for the sake of being cruel, the Snow Queen is simply dispassionate and rational.

Although such differences do exist, the similarities between the two figures are much more significant and noticeable, the most important of which is perhaps the relationship that each shares with a boy. Just as the Snow Queen lures Kai away from home, so the White Witch convinces Edmund to betray his siblings. The White Witch uses Turkish Delight to buy Edmund's loyalty; eating it made Edmund "quite warm" and "very comfortable" (*LWW* 32). After he eats it, he

was looking very hard at the empty box and wishing that she would ask him whether he would like some more. Probably the Queen knew quite well what he was thinking; for she knew, though Edmund did not, that this was enchanted Turkish Delight and that anyone who had once tasted it would want more and more of it, and would even, if they were allowed, go on eating it till they killed themselves. (*LWW* 33)

Similarly, the Snow Queen uses her kisses to make Kai forget about his home and his family:

[Her kiss] went right to his heart, which was already half made of ice. He felt as though he were about to die, but it hurt only for a minute, then it was over. Now he seemed stronger and he no longer felt how cold the air was. [...] The Snow Queen kissed Kai once more, and then all memory of Gerda, the Grandmother, and his home disappeared.

"I shan't give you any more kisses," she said, "or I might kiss you to death." (Andersen 239-40)

In both passages, we see that the Snow Queen and the White Witch lure Kai and Edmund into thinking only of potentially fatal kisses or sweets, becoming oblivious to the cold around them and forgetting everything else, including their families back home.

Kai and Edmund's interactions with the Snow Queen and the White Witch also lead to a noticeable change in the way they treat those around them. While Kai used to love playing with Gerda, after he gets the splinter in his eye, "he told her that picture books were for babies. And when the Grandmother told stories he would argue with her or—which was much worse—stand behind her chair with a pair of glasses on his nose and imitate her most cruelly" (Andersen 238). When Lucy finds out that Edmund also visited Narnia and shares the news with Peter and Susan, Edmund undermines her, saying, "Oh, yes, Lucy and I have been playing—pretending that all her story about a country in the wardrobe is true." When Lucy rushes out of the room, Edmund continues, "There she goes again. What's the matter with her? That's the worst of young kids, they always—" Peter turns to him, saying, "You've been perfectly beastly to Lu ever since she started this nonsense about the wardrobe and now you go playing games with her about it and setting her off again. I believe you did it simply out of spite" (*LWW* 41-42). In both stories, the boys act very cruelly to those they were once close to and look down on things they now see as childish or immature.

Although the experiences of Kai and Edmund are very similar, there is one striking difference between the two – while Edmund is lured into betraying his siblings with sweets, the Snow Queen seduces Kai with her kisses. Once the Snow Queen kisses Kai, it awakens in him the desire for more kisses, which she denies him because they might kill him. This doesn't stop Kai from thinking, however, that "he could not imagine that anyone could have a wiser or a more beautiful face [...]. In his eyes she now seemed utterly perfect, nor did he feel any fear" (Andersen 240). Such desire is troubling, because he is described as a "little boy" (235). As Jørgen Johansen writes, "Kai's imprisonment in the Snow Queen's castle occurs when he as a boy is just on the verge of becoming a young adult and adoring a highly ambiguous female whom he perceives as half mother and half beloved" (140). Kai's desire for the Snow Queen is half desire for a mother figure, half desire for an older woman—both of which challenge the traditional heterosexual ideal of romantic and sexual love. Lewis, by opening up the possibility that the Pevensie children feel desire, yet not addressing the issue of sexual desire as he does in other texts, allows the relationship between Kai and the Snow Queen to be inscribed onto the relationship between Edmund and the White Witch. While Edmund's desire for Turkish Delight could have been read simply as a little boy's desire for candy, by writing the story of the Snow Queen

into *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Lewis brings not just sexual desire, but non-traditional sexual desire, into Narnia.²

Examining the description of Gerda and Kai's relationship in "The Snow Queen" is yet another way that a form of non-traditional, perhaps even troubling desire is brought into Narnia. At the beginning of the story, Kai and Gerda are described as two poor little children who "weren't brother and sister but loved each other as much as if they had been" (Andersen 235-36). Such a description seems very similar to the relationship between the four Pevensies—although Kai and Gerda are not technically brother and sister, they both listen to stories from the same Grandmother, they live right next door to one another, and overall, behave as if they were siblings. At the end of the story, however, when Gerda rescues Kai from the Snow Queen's palace, her kisses are what change him from his icy state: "Gerda kissed him on his cheeks and the color came back to them. She kissed his eyes and they became like hers. She kissed his hands and feet, and the blue color left them and the blood pulsed again through his veins" (Andersen 260). Once they return home, "as they stepped through the doorway they realized that they had grown: they were no longer children" (262). The story ends with them holding hands, looking "into each other's eyes" (262). Therefore, by the end of the story, it seems that Kai and Gerda have matured and now enjoy a romantic, possibly even sexual relationship. Since this relationship started out as a familial relationship, however, the shift from almost brother/sister to lovers suggests again the potential for non-traditional sexual desire, in this case, incest. When *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is read with this in mind, the close familial relationship among Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy is called into question. Because Lewis himself does not write sexual experiences into the story, he leaves room for these experiences to be written by the sources he draws from; in this case, the change in Kai and Gerda's relationship in "The Snow Queen" calls into question the innocence of the relationship among the Pevensies, as well the other boy/girl pairings who visit Narnia.

² Some critics, such as Hans-Heino Ewers, might argue that Kai's desire is for rational thought, rather than a sexual desire. Because the change is brought about by a splinter in Kai's eye, rather than an internal awakening of his own desire, Ewers claims, "Andersen seeks to depict this as a symbol for the awakening of the intellect rather than as a sign of sexual maturity" (79). While this is certainly a valid reading of the "Snow Queen," Edmund's gluttonous behavior in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* shows no evidence of rationality: "At first Edmund tried to remember that it is rude to speak with one's mouth full, but soon forgot about this and thought only of trying to shovel down as much Turkish Delight as he could, and the more he ate the more he wanted to eat, and he never asked himself why the Queen should be so inquisitive" (*LWW* 32). Instead, we need to focus on the similarities that do exist, in this case, the seduction of a young boy by an older woman.

This reading of "The Snow Queen" is reinforced by the knowledge that Andersen was extremely well aware of others writing around him, particularly the German romantics. As Simon Grabowski points out, Andersen was "the Danish romantic who in his writings reflected, to such a great extent, the ideas of German romanticism" (43). In his article, he points out similarities between Novalis's story "Hyacinth and Rosebud" and Andersen's "The Snow Queen," and while he comes to the conclusion that the protagonists experience different mental progressions, the stories do share similar plotlines. Rosebud and Hyacinth are sweethearts, but after Hyacinth meets a man from foreign lands, he changes. Following the advice of an old woman, Hyacinth travels out into the world, searching for a cure for his condition. After journeying to the sacred temple of Isis, Hyacinth is reunited with Rosebud, and they live happily ever after. The description of their reunion is extremely sensual and filled with desire. As he approaches the temple where Rosebud waits, "His heart pounded in endless yearning, and the sweetest trepidations coursed through him in this abode" (Novalis 80). Knowing that Andersen was extremely aware of the German romantics, it is not hard to see Novalis's influence on "The Snow Queen," and as a result, to see the ending of the story as the reuniting of two lovers. But whereas Hyacinth and Rosebud were sweethearts from the beginning of the book, Kai and Gerda's relationship changes from that of nearly brother and sister to a romantic relationship, making the sexual desire in "The Snow Queen" more problematic.

Ludwig Tieck's story "Fair-haired Eckbert" is yet another story by a German romantic that deals with the relationship between brothers and sisters, although in this story, the theme of incest is openly explored. The plot of "Fair-haired Eckbert" is quite different from that of "The Snow Queen," but the two stories contain similar figures, such as the women who live in the woods, keeping both Gerda and Bertha away from the rest of society. Eckbert marries Bertha, only to find out at the end of the story that she was his sister. While the connection of "The Snow Queen" to this story is not as obvious as the connection to "Hyacinth and Rosebud," the fact that Andersen was very well aware of the writings of the German romantics makes it very likely that he had read "Fair-haired Eckbert," and while perhaps he did not consciously intend to do so, dealt with some of the same themes as Tieck, in this case, incest. Furthermore, the influence of the German romantics on Andersen's writing shows that not only did Lewis bring the imagery of Andersen to Narnia, but he brought their imagery and themes as well.

One potential objection to this reading of "The Snow Queen" might argue that Kai and Gerda revert to the roles of childhood at the end of the story, thus eliminating the possibility of a sexual relationship between them. Certainly, Grabowski argues this, claiming that the fact that the focus on childhood at the

end of the story "makes it clear that the announcement of adulthood is only a superimposed postulate, and that the return to psychic unity which the author shows us is in reality a return to the happy, global simplicity of childhood" (Grabowski 57). The language at the end of the story could be seen as supporting this claim; Kai and Gerda think of the line from the psalm that reads "May we be blessed his face to see / And ever little children be" (Andersen 262). The story also ends with this line: "There they sat, the two of them, grownups; and yet in their hearts children, and it was summer: a warm glorious summer day!" (262). While these words certainly suggest that Kai and Gerda revert to their childhood roles, such an ending does not feel right. This retreat into childhood takes only half a page to describe, which does not stand up to the many pages spent describing the development and maturation of both Gerda and Kai; to remain as children would be for each character to deny things that they have learned over the course of the story. Rather, it seems that Andersen is struggling with a problem very similar to that facing Lewis, namely, the struggle to reconcile sexuality with a world of innocence and wonder. Andersen ultimately seems to want what Lewis wants—to eliminate the possibility of sexuality from his story—but because he has already allowed for the possibility of deviant forms of sexuality, an innocent ending to his story is no longer possible.

Even for readers not familiar with Andersen's "The Snow Queen" or the other tales of the German Romantics, the lack of sexuality in *The Chronicles of Narnia* can be problematic in and of itself. As was described above, by introducing desire into Narnia through the description of how the Pevensie children long for Aslan, yet not differentiating between divine love and erotic love, Lewis allows for the possibility of the confusion of the two throughout the text. In their article "'Good, Not Safe': Structure vs. Chaos in Narnia and the Writing Workshop," Ethan Campbell and Robert Jackson highlight one such passage – the romp that Aslan, Susan, and Lucy take after he rises from the dead. As Campbell and Jackson describe, in this passage, Lewis

ignores, or at least loosens up, his own ban on erotic imagery—limbs quiver, bodies roll over in laughing heaps, and afterward everyone pants in the sun, refreshed. The experience is both fearsome ("a thunderstorm") and delightful ("a kitten"). It might be painful, if not for Aslan's "velveted paws," but when it is all over, two pages later, the girls find themselves "breathless and unhurt." (54)

As they note earlier in the essay, "Were it not that Aslan is a lion and that he repeatedly calls the girls 'children,' it might be difficult to imagine the [passage] is intended for a young audience" (54). Because Lewis does not explicitly address erotic love in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, he is not able to differentiate between sexual desire and desire for the divine, and as a result, passages such as Aslan's

romp with Susan and Lucy are left open to the reader's interpretation, thus allowing the possibility of sexual desire to enter the narrative.

Lewis also includes outside images other than those from "The Snow Queen" in his narrative, including several images that again are associated with deviant sexual desire. Campbell and Jackson highlight several of these images in their essay, including Incubuses—"demons who, according to Thomas Aquinas and other medieval theologians, could briefly assume corporal form to rape and impregnate women in their sleep" (52). Although the nature of the Incubus is not described by Lewis, a reader familiar with this image would easily make the connection, thus bringing sexuality into Narnia. Campbell and Jackson also note that although Mr. Tumnus is described as "a Faun" (*LWW* 8), "an adult reader familiar with Roman mythology might recognize this creature as a satyr, the sexually playful and devious goat-man who often stands as a symbol for unbridled masculinity" (52). The connection between Mr. Tumnus and the image of the satyr is something that is heightened by the way in which Mr. Tumnus and Lucy meet—an adult male meets and befriends a little girl who is lost in the woods. Such an encounter calls to mind a wide variety of stories, both those from real life as well as fairy tales such as "Little Red Riding Hood," that again introduce elements of non-traditional, and even violent, sexual desire into Lewis's narrative. Interestingly enough, Andrew Adamson's recent film *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005) emphasizes the potential deviancy of Mr. Tumnus and Lucy's relationship by casting an attractive young actor (James McAvoy) as Mr. Tumnus and by drawing out the scene in Mr. Tumnus's home in which he uses music and a magical fire to seduce Lucy into falling asleep. These examples demonstrate that the lack of romantic love and sexual desire in *The Chronicles of Narnia* is not just a problem for those familiar with Andersen's "The Snow Queen," but it is a problem that pervades the text, appearing in multiple images as well as in Lewis's descriptions of joy and desire for the divine.

Lewis's omission of romantic love and sexuality in *The Chronicles of Narnia* not only allows such themes to be written in by the outside images that he uses, but it also provides a space for—and even inspires—others to create a version of Narnia in which sex and romance do exist. Adamson's 2008 film *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* is an excellent example of this. Adamson introduces a romantic subplot between Susan and Prince Caspian that Lewis did not include in his original text, a subplot that perfectly demonstrates many of the objections that Lewis had to romance in children's stories. Certainly, Lewis should not be held responsible for the decisions of other authors and filmmakers. But, as with his use of outside imagery, by not engaging the themes of romantic love and sexual desire in the texts, he provides a space for others to write in those themes in a way over which he has no control.

Philip Pullman, author of the *His Dark Materials* trilogy, is another author who sees the lack of sexuality in *The Chronicles of Narnia* as extremely problematic, and in fact, responds to Lewis's work by creating his own fantasy world in which sexuality and desire are key to preserving the structure of the world. Pullman has been very vocal about how he detests Lewis's work because of the sentimentalized version of childhood that it portrays. In an interview with Wendy Parsons and Catriona Nicholson, Pullman calls Lewis's portrayal of childhood as a time filled with ideal innocence an "obvious untruth" and believes that "his influence is actually pernicious" (130-31). Instead, Pullman describes adolescence as a time when humans lose this initial innocence but instead gain more valuable gifts such as wisdom and experience. He notes:

We lose the innocence that we were born with, and we then go on through life. But if we work hard, and if we train ourselves like the dancer, if we undergo all kinds of discipline, pain, suffering, and so forth, then the point is that we can regain grace. [...] And the grace of the human dancer who has lost the initial grace but regained it through training is actually a more valuable thing to have, because when you look at the dancer, not only do you see the grace and beauty, you also look into her eyes, and you see wisdom as well. (Parsons and Nicholson 118-19)

For Pullman, *The Chronicles of Narnia* present a dangerous, pessimistic view of the world where the innocence of childhood is valued over the more mature experiences of adulthood, including sexual desire. Pullman's rejection of Lewis's view and his embrace of a world where sexuality is a new kind of grace and beauty can be seen in the final book of his trilogy, *The Amber Spyglass*, in which the story's teenage protagonists, Lyra and Will, bring hope and light into the world by consummating their relationship. To the person looking at Lyra and Will after they experienced sex,

They would seem the true image of what human beings always could be, once they had come into their inheritance.

The Dust pouring down from the stars had found a living home again, and these children-no-longer-children, saturated with love, were the cause of it all. (Pullman 421)

For Pullman, sexuality *creates* beauty and wonder, rather than ruining it. Therefore, although Pullman's text does not explicitly use the world of Narnia, his explicit criticism of Lewis's series positions *His Dark Materials* as an alternative to *The Chronicles of Narnia* that rewrites desire for the divine as sexual desire.

One of the most disturbing responses to the lack of sexual desire in *The Chronicles of Narnia* can be seen in Neil Gaiman's short story "The Problem of Susan," which tells the story of a young researcher who goes to interview a professor, whom the reader comes to realize is the grown-up Susan Pevensie. Both the researcher and the professor have dreams about Narnia – dreams that are graphically sexual in nature. In the passage that opens the story, the professor dreams of the aftermath of the battle in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. She sees a dead centaur, and she "finds herself staring at the horse's penis, wondering about centaurs mating, imagines being kissed by that bearded face" (Gaiman 181). The story concludes with an even more disturbing dream; the researcher dreams of the White Witch and Aslan dividing the killing of the survivors of the war, after which, they come together in a graphically described sexual encounter that the reader, like the dead, is forced to watch. Although the majority of the story tells of what happened to Susan after the rest of her family was taken to Narnia, these scenes of intense sexuality are key to understanding the story. In his introduction to the story collection, Gaiman writes that although he loves so much of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, he "found the disposal of Susan to be intensely problematic and deeply irritating" and "wanted to write a story that would be equally problematic" (xxiii). Because of the lack of romance and sexuality in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and in Susan's case, even the explicit exclusion of it, Gaiman is able to take Lewis's own cherished images—those of the centaur, the magnificent lion, and the snow-white queen—and use them to portray Narnia as a world filled *only* with unnatural, graphic sexuality.

Texts such as *Perelandra*, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, and *Surprised by Joy* all show that Lewis was capable of dealing with themes of sexuality and desire, even in creating worlds of innocence; by not directly addressing them in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, however, he gives his readers free reign to make their own assumptions and associations about sexual desire. Furthermore, by invoking various outside images in his texts—including that of the Snow Queen—Lewis brings not only those images into his world, but the themes and histories of those images as well. As a result, the childish pleasure that Edmund gets from Turkish delight can no longer be read just as a boy's desire for sweets; rather, his interaction with the White Witch, and later, Digory's interaction with Jadis in *The Magician's Nephew*, are inscribed with the potential of a young boy's lust after an older woman. Reading Lucy and Mr. Tumnus's relationship as an innocent friendship is challenged by the mythological figure of the satyr, which highlights the potentially sexual nature of their relationship. And reading the love among Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy as innocent love among siblings is no longer possible, not only because of the transformation of Kai and Gerda's relationship, but also because of influences on Andersen such as Novalis and Tieck. The complications that these images pose to Lewis's world of innocence are

compounded by the way that authors such as Philip Pullman and Neil Gaiman have responded in their own texts, creating worlds in which sexuality is embraced and revising Narnia to be filled with unnatural forms of sexuality.

These images and alternate versions of Narnia not only highlight Lewis's omission of romance and sexuality from his series, but also call into question the apparent innocence of the relationships throughout the series and blur the distinction between desire for the divine and unnatural sexual desires. This reading is intensely problematic in terms of Lewis's ideal vision of childhood, for now his land of innocence, joy, and wonder is marred with multiple forms of non-traditional sexuality. Such a reading not only complicates the innocent world of Narnia, therefore, but is also ironic, considering Lewis's comments on Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*. In discussing the importance of internal logic to a fairy tale, he writes,

Does anyone believe that Kenneth Grahame made an arbitrary choice when he gave his principal character the form of a toad, or that a stag, a pigeon, a lion, would have done as well? The choice is based on the fact that the real toad's face has a grotesque resemblance to a certain kind of human face—a rather apoplectic face with a fatuous grin on it. ("On Stories" 13)

While Lewis is right in his argument that the choice of form for a story's characters is important and contributes to the overall meaning of the story, he does not see the implications this has for his own work, and as a result, the image of the Snow Queen kissing Kai in her sleigh is allowed to ride unchecked throughout his narrative.

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