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Abstract
Presents "those chauvinistic elements which have irritated so many women" who encounter Lewis's work, and argues that Lewis's attitude toward women altered in his life and his work as he matured. See also a letter and response in Mythlore #15, p. 27–28, 30.

Additional Keywords
Davidman, Joy—Influence on C.S. Lewis; Lewis, C.S.—Attitude toward women; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Women
"Surprised by Joy":
C.S.Lewis' Changing Attitudes Toward Women
by Margaret Hannay

C. S. L E W I S' B I O G R A P H E R S concede that "Though Lewis' attitude was to alter considerably after his marriage, it is probably true, as Owen Barfield said in a meeting of the New York C. S. Lewis Society in 1972, that Lewis could properly be called a misogynist on at least the 'theoretical level', though decided not to call it his personal relations with individual women." It is the intent of this study to document the obvious "theoretical misogyny" of Lewis' earlier works did indeed change, particularly after he encountered Joy Davidman.

Lewis has emerged as one of the most prominent spokesmen for twentieth-century evangelical thought. "St. Clive", as he was affectionately called in my undergraduate days, is cited as an authority on almost every aspect of Christian life and doctrine, including, unfortunately, the 'place' of women. The more Lewis' works are used to enforce the idea of the domination of men and the subordination of women, the less attractive his works become to the intelligent Christian man and women who are intensely concerned with articulating an ideal of the "godly woman" which is based on Scripture rather than on tradition. This is particularly distressing since there are so few novels written from a Christian perspective which repel serious critical attention; Lewis do. Therefore, it matters that the magnificient Green Lady descends into ignorance to provide a foil for the King's wisdom. Few Christian books for Children merit the international recognition given to the Narnian Chronicles: The Last Battle. Fully deserved the Carnegie Medal it received. The Narnian books deal with the significant issue of sin and redemption, of the need for valour in the struggle against evil, and of the difficulty in combating hypocrisy. Therefore, it matters that young girls see Mrs. Beaver in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe commended for her "fussy domesticity, while the leadership roles are given to the Pevensie boys. Lewis' literary criticism has significantly affected the way in which such great Christian writers as Milton and Spenser are read; therefore, it matters to the Christian scholar that the words "masculine" and "virile" appear so often as eulogistic adjectives, with the obvious implication that "feminine" is a dyslogistic term. Lewis' attitude toward women is important precisely because his work is so good. Christian parents, anxious to have their children read something "good for them" give them the Narnian Chronicles, which are good for them, both good fun and good doctrine. Christian adults seeking constructive leisure reading, and non-Christians interested in space fantasies are entranced by Lewis' interplanetary trilogy, which follows the medieval adage of "teaching by delight." The scholar studying Milton, Spenser, or medieval allegory finds in Lewis a balanced and profoundly Christian critical theory and interpretation. But the parent handing out Narnian books, the adult reading the space trilogy, and the scholar studying The Allegory of Love need to be aware of Lewis' background so that they can separate what is sound doctrine from what is personal prejudice against women.

Stella Gibbons, writing in Light on C. S. Lewis in 1965, was probably the first to articulate that attitude toward women which underlies Lewis' fiction. She says she receives from the novels "an impression that Lewis disapproved of women...of some women; women who have entered rather boldly into the world that men have reserved for themselves. The domesticated, fussy, kind woman gets an occasional pat on her little head—(Mrs. Beaver in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, Ivy Maggs in That Hideous Strength.)" Gibbons points out that the Un-man works on the Lady's weakness by imparting a dramatic conception of herself. "He also (worse and worse—but then he is a devil) gives her a looking-glass" (italics hers). Stella Gibbons also objects that Lewis is "narrow and unkind" when Jane is rebuked "for trying to stick to her books" and "rather donnishly lectured for her lack of wisely obedience" (93). "What is a woman to do," she asks? "If women are not to enter into the world of men, nor stay in their own world of foolish vanity" what can they do? "I am afraid Lewis implies that if they cannot be goddesses they are to go on sucking fools and chronicling small beer, and be disapproved of." She concludes, "There seems no way out of the situation and I prefer not to think any more about it" (94).

But "not thinking any more about it" is no longer sufficient reaction to the apparent chauvinism in Lewis' works; many women have grown so sensitive to the underlying prejudice that they no longer appreciate Lewis' work as a whole. Therefore, this paper will first present those chauvinistic elements which have irritated so many women, and then demonstrate how Lewis' attitude toward women altered in both his life and his work as he matured. He finally came to perceive that women are indeed fully human, as Dorothy Sayers had claimed, and that women can be friends in the rich sense that Lewis gave that word. When Joy Davidman became first his friend and then his wife, she radically altered his perception of women in his fiction, his use of masculine as a term of praise, and perhaps most significantly, his pronouncements on marriage. Those who object to the narrow view of women in Lewis' early works should delight in the deeper understanding of such later works as Till We Have Faces and The Four Loves. The gradual awakening of the evangelical community to the fact that Man is both male and female, equally acceptable to God, need not detract from our appreciation of the writings of C. S. Lewis, when those writings are viewed chronologically.

In his younger days Lewis certainly would have provided an excellent case study of the "typical male chauvinist." His attitude toward women is clearly shown in the otherwise delightful romp 'Abecedarium Philosophicum':

M is the Many, the Mortal, the Body,
The Formless, the Female, the Thoroughly Shoddy.

N is Not-being which sinks even deeper,
More formless, more female, more footling—and cheaper.2

3 "Abecedarium Philosophicum," Oxford Magazine, 30 (Nov. 1933), p. 298. Father Walter Hooper says that Owen Barfield does not remember writing the lines, but thinks that they were mocked another poem published earlier, and therefore do not mean what they appear to say. (Letter from Father Hooper to me, 29 Sept. 1975). It is difficult to understand how Lewis and Barfield could have written this, however, if they were at all concerned about the chauvinistic inferences which could be drawn from the poem. The matter needs further clarification. In fact, the lines may echo Spenser's statement: "The one imperfect, mortal, feminine, / Th'other immortal, perfect, masculine" Faerie Queene II. ix. 22-23.

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This poem fits in with his comments about women in his letters. He mentioned a mutual friend to his brother, saying, "he used to write poetry but is now too engrossed in history, and he has also become engaged—that fatal tomb of all lively and interesting men." In 1927 he wrote to his brother with glee that the term had "produced one public event and concern in the last days of J. S. Mill, when feminism was the new, exciting, enlightened thing" and voted for women; and his own lot who voted against.

blocks—the old guard who were against women; the slightly younger group who were for women but whose numbers noticed and not yet found out; the third, to us. Ignorance, romance, realism..." (118). By any realistic standards, Lewis was saying, women should not be encouraged to study at Oxford, and if permitted, their number should be limited.

Lewis also wanted to exclude women from the priesthood. His attitude toward women in the church apparently includes a measure of superstitions taboos. In Arthurian Torso he shares with Williams the belief that women are excluded from the priesthood because of "the menstrual flow... excluded because they share mystically in the role of Victim." However, this logic assumed that women should be the only priests, for Christ also shared "mystically in the role of the Victim." In "Priestess in the Church," written in the same year as Arthurian Torso (1948), he admits that "all the rationality" appears to be on the side of letting women serve as priests. In no way were women less capable of being men of learning, and whatever else seems necessary for the priestly office." Against this he can only assert that God, though sexless, must be portrayed as male; he asserts that if we cast off the exclusively male image of God (which Lewis believed is Scriptural), we cast off our Christianism as well. If God must be portrayed as male, then his representatives must be male. The argument is based on the unstated presupposition which is made explicit in Preface to Paradise Lost: "whether the male is, or is not, the superior sex, the masculine is certainly the superior gender." To one holding such an assumption, God and God's representatives must be masculine because God is superior to us. The assumption itself is completely unsupported, but Lewis apparently never wavered in this conviction. In a 1961 review of Ellrodt's Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser, Lewis said: "The sexual and personality of Venus to Adam is heavily compromised by her overwhelming superiority in every other aspect." In other words, being a goddess almost, but not quite, makes up for being female!

Lewis apparently developed a reputation for misogyny at Oxford, a reputation which amused him. Kathryn Lindskoog recalls that "When I met him in July, 1956, we laughed about the silly public idea that he was a woman hater." This was at the time of his marriage to Joy. It was generally assumed (erroneously, Lewis' biographers note) that Lewis disliked tutoring female pupils; therefore, many young women were afraid to study under him. Mrs. Kilby recounts that when he and his wife visited Magdalene College, he asked the porter if there were any truth to the rumor that Lewis did not like women. The porter said there was, and Mrs. Kilby never did meet C. S. Lewis. The porter may have been referring to probably wrong observations of women such as Katherine Raine, Dabney Hart, and Kathryn Lindskoog who visited Lewis in his latter years indicate that he was a gracious host indeed. But Lewis must have done something to establish his reputation as a misogynist at Oxford; given the prevailing attitude toward women at Oxford in his early days, it was easier to achieve such a special antipathy toward women. Perhaps his 1927 vote to limit women students was long remembered. Or perhaps that reputation was gained through his writings.

The space trilogy evidences an attitude toward women which might contribute to such a reputation. Out of the Silent Planet is a special case, since none of the major characters are female; it needs no further treatment in this context. However, in Perelandra the pivotal character is a woman, the Green Lady. As Eve in a yet sinless world, she is responsible for the fate of a planet and its future inhabitants as she resists the material and practical temptations. Her husband and king watches in serene comfort, not even appearing in the story until the struggle has been won by other minds and hands. This leaves Lewis the author with a serious archetypal problem. Given his presuppositions, the man must be superior to the woman; however, the Adam has no opportunity for action or debate which will demonstrate that superiority. In a completely gratuitous scene, Lewis significantly alters the whole characterization of Eve in order to make her serve as a foil to the King's greatness:

"... Our sons shall bend the pillars of rock into arches—" "What are arches?" said Tinidril the Queen. "Arches" said Tor the King, "are when pillars of stone throw out branches like trees..." And there our sons will make images. "What are images?" said Tinidril. "Splendour of Deep Heaven!" cried the King with a great laugh.

Although the King wants to believe that Tinidril is somehow responsible for his learning, it is clear that she is not. While she has been actively engaged in withholding temptation, the King has been given divine revelation. She will learn these matters second-hand from her husband, or not at all. The man learns from the woman. This is how humans learn from man. At first glance, this may appear to echo Paradise Lost, where Eve leaves Raphel's lecture because she prefers to have Adam instruct her: he solves "high dispute with conjugal Caresses" (VIII, 56). However, Eve has already listened to Raphael's account of the war in heaven and of the creation in the world. She actually leaves just in time for Adam to tell the angel how marvelous she is. Tinidril seems to receive all her scientific instruction indirectly, without...
out even expressing a preference for such pedagogical methods.

This scene in Perelandra can best be understood by reference to Lewis' work on Milton, but the parallel is not quite that direct. In Preface to Paradise Lost, Lewis demonstrates that Eve is a very great lady indeed, her words of submission to Adam are to be interpreted as "The Queen of earth" speaking to the King. Lewis compares Eve to Portia, who called herself "an unlessoned girl" before Bassanio.

But I should feel sorry for the common man, such as myself, who was led by this speech into the egregious mistake of walking into Belmont and behaving as though Portia really were an unlessoned girl. She may speak thus to Bassanio; but we have better reason, that we are dealing with a great lady. Lewis no doubt intends to echo this gentle submission of a person evidences the image of God while the female person is physically strong and agile, commands the animals, has the poise befitting the Queen of the planet, and has a direct relationship with Maleldil. There are few qualities left which can be attributed to the King to prove his superiority. Instead of showing us that superiority in accordance with the dignity of the character, Lewis is reduced to telling us that the King is greater than the Queen. Lest we mistake his purpose, it is made painfully clear when Ransom meets the royal couple on the mountain:

...it was not of the Queen that he thought most. It was hard to think of anything but the King. It was that face which no man can say that he does not know. You might ask how it was possible to look upon it and not to commit idolatry, not to mistake it for that of which it was the likeness. (236)

Is the maleness of Christ really so essential that the male person evidences the image of God while the female person does not? If Lewis means his words here to be taken literally, he has created a very serious theological problem. Genesis makes it quite clear that both male and female are created in God's likeness, and there is no indication whatever that one sex is closer to that likeness than the other.

That Hideous Strength is apparently founded on the same assumption of male superiority, at least in some hierarchical sense. But the problems here are even more complex, for Lewis makes the wife a more sympathetic character than the husband, and then brings the authority of Ransom and all Deep Heaven against her, to force her to learn obedience to her husband. In this novel, the woman has fallen to the Enemy's camp, and the wife is told to be submissive. Obviously both Mark and Jane have serious flaws, but Mark is certainly the weaker person morally. His intoxication with the inner rings leads him into activities he knows to be criminal. It is for the sake of his wife that he realizes the full extent of his degradation; then he finds a better "inner ring" first with the trumpet and then, by implication, at St. Anne's. Jane's flaw is the desire to be independent, to run her own life. The narrator declares: "To avoid entanglements and interference, Mark has had love been one of her first principles." This cannot help but recall Lewis' own words about his conversion in Surprised by Joy: "Remember, I had always wanted, above all things, not to be interfered with" (182). The difficulty arises in that what Lewis learned by submission to God, Jane is apparently supposed to learn by submission to Mark. The lesson was more palatable to Jane when she first learned submission to Ransom, in his golden manhood. It is made explicit that submitting to Mark is somehow submitting to the Director. Either "Jane" or Lewis is playing a dangerous game here.

As one reader observed, "She is still infatuated with Ransom, but as he is obviously unattainable, has channelled her feelings into obedience to him, which means a return to Mark." After her introduction to Ransom, the narrator says: "At the very moment when her mind was most filled with another man there arose, clouded with some undefined emotion, a resolution to give Mark much more than she had ever given him before, and a feeling that in so doing she would be really giving to the Director." Then he compels her by pressure to hunt for Merlin she places herself in obedience to Ransom rather than directly in obedience to God (282). As she grows in wisdom at St. Anne's she reaches a point where she "ceased to feel any resentment at the Director's tendency, as if were dispise of her, at one time, or in any sense, to keep her for herself. She accepted that." (286).

All the efforts of St. Anne's are directed to force her to be obedient to Mark, including sexual obedience. It has previously been established that Mark is not a successful lover: "Only one thing can you know and do—able to keep him awake after he had gone to bed, and even that did not keep him awake long" (10). He is also presented as becoming physically repellent. Dimple is shocked by his appearance; his face "had grown fatter and paler and there was a new vulgarity in the expression." (266). It is also clear that Jane does not enjoy making love with Mark. When Mrs. Dimple asks, "Do you hate being kissed?" Jane breaks into tears (31). Thus it is highly significant that when Ransom dismisses Jane, he sends her to Mark's bed, with the injunction: "You will then find that you will have no more dreams. Have children instead" (475).

Lest the reader dismiss these instructions as part of the plot of the novel, Lewis said the same thing in cold prose in the essay "Equality," published two years earlier:

Men have so horribly abused their power over women in the past that to wives, of all people, equality is in danger of appearing as an ideal. .... Have as much equality as you please—the more the better—in our marriage laws: but at some level consent to inequality, nay, delight in inequality, is an erotic necessity.... This is the truism of the modern world; taken earnestly by Freud to consider the act of love the most important thing in life, and then inhibited by feminism from that internal surrender which alone can make it a complete emotional success. Merely for the sake of her own erotic pleasure, to go no further, some degree of obedience and humility seems to be (normally) necessary on the woman's part. (italics mine)

In the novel, Lewis has come dangerously close to adding: if the woman cannot love her own husband, she can first transfer her obedience to some superior man, and then let him redress the matter after she has failed to her husband. This type of reasoning is the more distressing since Lewis begins the novel with a very sympathetic portrait of the life of the university-student-turned-housewife. We first see Jane Studdock sitting alone in her empty flat, remembering the words of the marriage ceremony: "Marrying was ordained, thirdly, for the mutual help, and comfort that the one ought to have of the other." The narrator tells us: "In reality marriage had proved to be the door out of a world of work and comradeship and laughter and innumerable things to do, into something like solitary confinement." The marriage is extremely personal, and the solution is even better—Jane contemplates taking out her notebooks and editions to work on her doctoral dissertation on Donne. (Note the irony of her subject—Donne's "triumphant vindication of the body." ) But suddenly the intelligent woman reader is betrayed; we are not to have a competent woman who fills her life with scholarship after all. The narrator continues "Jane was not perhaps a very original thinker." She thinks she can regain her lost enthusiasm for the subject but, the narrator says, "it makes one look, instead of instead she procrastinates by looking at the paper. This is an excellent device for getting the story going—she remembers her dream of Alcusan and Merlin. But it immediately implies that scholarship is not a possibility for women such as Jane. The
story could have proceeded equally well by having her go to the library to find out more information on Alcasan and Merlin; even an unoriginal thinker can read a history book. Instead, she buys a hat (29).

On this question of intellectual woman and marriage Lewis could have learned a great deal from Dorothy Sayers. In Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey novels her Harriet Vane is probably no more appealing than Jane, and must also learn gratitude and submission; but Harriet is at least permitted to retain her mind and her individuality. Of course, Mark Studdock is a large part of Lewis' problem. Even an intelligent woman could, after some soul-searching, expect to find some happiness with Lord Peter Wimsey. But Lewis seems to have deliberately made Mark as repulsive as possible so that the principle of wilfully submission must stand alone, without love and without respect. Jane is to submit herself to him merely because she is his wife; Mark needs do nothing at all to merit such submission. True, Mark learns much during his imprisonment, but Jane has no way of knowing that. All she knows is that her husband has deserted her and joined the Enemy, that he is in league with Fairy Hardcastle, that Kindly Dimble can hardly bring himself to speak to Mark. It is emphasized that Jane was not so stupid as to have married Mark in his present condition. The man to whom she vowed obedience was a quite different Mark, one who had been a friend of Dennis-toon instead of Curry, Frost and the "Fairy." There might be some ground for requiring submission in retribution if Jane had somehow made Mark degenerate, if his deficiencies were her fault. But Lewis is careful to show that Jane is to Mark the one oasis in his desert of whining self-pity and pathetic social striving. Indeed, it is because Mark "made the fatal mistake" that she "must be 'nice' to Mark" (183) 17

The "good women" in That Hideous Strength are equally instructive. Camilla, one must admit, has the possibility of being an interesting person. She is described as a Val-kerie (like Lewis' cousin in Surprised By Joy) and presumably included in the statement "Dimble and he and the Dennists shared between them a knowledge of Arthurian Britain which orthodox scholarship will probably not reach for some centuries" (245). But Camilla is told to stay at home when the others go out to meet Merlin—because she is pregnant. It is her body which Logres needs, not her mind.

Grace Ironwood is another enigmatic figure. On the one hand, she is a medical doctor and therefore unique in Lewis' early fiction—a Christian career woman. Nevertheless, she exists in the novel only to serve Ransom in a clearly subservient fashion, even courtesying when she enters his room (171). It has been suggested that she is the Christian counterpart of Fairy Hardcastle. Indeed, both women are described in strikingly similar terms—they are tall, physically "big"; they have unusually large hands; they appear before us seated, dressed in black skirts. Both women have secrets in their past. Mark Studdock finds that all of the Fairy's history is "secret history" (81); when the members of the company are explaining why they came to St. Anne's, Grace Ironwood is specifically excused from painful revelations by the Director (246). Jane is taken in to be questioned by Grace Ironwood (73) and by Fairy Hardcastle (186).

The difference in the questioning procedure reveals that the similarities between the women are superficial. The Fairy is a sadistic homosexual, who "enjoys her work" in torturing Jane to obtain information. Grace requests that Jane join them, but makes no attempt whatever to compel her. The first names of the women become obviously significant. It is unfortunate that Grace Ironwood (never called Dr. Ironwood) is not given a more significant part of the action; her role is exemplified at the close of the novel where she is seated by the fire, clad in black and silver, "almost invisible in the shadows" (457). She is never made clearly visible, but her achievement and her lack of traditional "feminine attractiveness" may be seen as a faint precursor of Oral. Neverthless, Lewis in 1945 was not yet ready to portray a strong and godly woman as a fully developed character.

It is Mother Dimble, not Grace Ironwood, who is the ideal "godly woman" in the novel. She is charitable, wise, and able to adjust to any situation. But her wisdom is revealed by statements such as "Did it ever come into your mind to ask whether anyone could listen to all we say?" implying that women chatter on aimlessly while men never speak an idle word. We note that when Virilitobia inspired their speech it was Dimble and Denniston who had the gay intellectual dual while the women switched (397). Ivy, with her peasant shrewdness, declares, "Whatever we say, Jane, a woman takes a lot of living with. I don't mean what you call a bad woman" (374). A more accurate statement would be that a person takes a lot of living with, for we are all fallen creatures; Lewis has made no attempt here to avoid the implication that men are easy to live with.

It is highly significant that the female characters in That Hideous Strength are so often lumped together, while the men are listed by name. "In the kitchen...at Dimble and MacPhee and Denniston and the women..." (596). When the party returns from seeking Merlin "the four women" are found asleep; Ivy Maggs is distinguished by having "her kind, commonplace mouth wide open." Jane is awake with the other seekers, of course, but only that she can be vilified by Merlin for not being pregnant. (Please note that Camilla was kept home because she was. Had Jane been pregnant and so confined, the party would have had no seer.) After all the important discussion with Merlin is over, the Director says, "And would someone wake the women? Ask them to bring him up refreshments!" (347). The women in Logres are valuable for child-bearing and for procuring refreshments. They are not even important enough to be counted by Ransom when he tells Merlin "We are four men, some women, and a bear" (561). (italics mine)

17 This self-sacrifice to a despicable husband which is demanded of Jane is also praised in the person of Sarah Smith of Golders Green, a "person of particular importance" in the heaven described in The Great Divorce. (New York: Macmillan, 1963). She is characterized by love for children and animals, certainly a highly desirable trait in any person, but her high status is apparently due to her loving submission to her bullying husband. He is the class male chauvinist, speaking to her in "his 'manly' bullying tone...the one for bringing women to their senses" (113). It is most heartening to note that the chauvinistic husband vanishes, presumably swallowed by Hell, and the Lady goes on in perfect Joy.
The novels are definitely patronizing in their attitude toward the female characters, but there is good biographical reason for such a treatment of women. Between the death of Lewis' mother in 1908 and his marriage to Joy Davidman in 1953, there were no women central to his life save Mrs. Moore. That Mrs. Moore could not have improved his opinion for such a treatment of women. Between the death of Love astonish ing degree. She apparently served as the model for the possessive jealous but loving mother in Till We Have Faces. She hated Christianity, abused Lewis for setting the household by going to church, and continually interrupted his writing to ask him to help with making marmalade or housecleaning.

The young Lewis was schooled in the British system of segregated "public" schools—priests' schools segregated from women, from non-Caucasians, and from the less wealthy. The army was notoriously misogynist, almost as much so as was Oxford—and Lewis went from school to army, and from army to Oxford. His social life consisted almost solely in various literary societies; there were no female members in the Martlets Society, the Icelandic Society, or the Inklings. In fact, when John Wain listed Dorothy Sayers as an Inking, Lewis vehemently corrected him. Although he liked her for the extraordinary zest and edge of her conversation! he added, "Needless to say, she never met our own club, and probably never knew of its existence." The adjective or an equivalent is well known to be mentioned in a mystery novel: "It must be Tuesday—there's Lewis going into the Bird." Since the detective novel was D. L. Sayers' forte, it would be most odd if she were not aware of the Inklings; obviously, she was never invited to attend. This is made more emphatic by Warren Lewis' own description of the title and the Eagle and Child," for his brother had said "no sound delights me more than male laughter." It was probably not said with an emphasis on male, but nevertheless, the adjective is there, and the women were not.

That adjective or an equivalent is there rather frequently in Lewis' literary criticism as well. Allegory of Love mentions the "nervous and masculine" quality of Spencer's prose ("nervous" is used in the old sense of "strong, sinewy"). The Sixteenth Century volume is full of such eulogistic usages of "masculine." Umbar is praised for "an assured virility" (98), the Scottish Chaucerians were "men of strongly masculine intelligence" (97). Southwell is commended for "the greatness of the matter and the masculine precision of phrase" (546), Daniel can achieve "the same masculine and unstrained majesty which we find in Wordworth's greater sonnets" (530). But this literary history does contain some glimmerings of hope. Lewis actually praises a woman: Mrs. Lady Bacon. Indeed, "if quality without bulk were enough, Lady Bacon might be put forward as the best of all sixteenth-century translators" (307). And, what is more important, Lewis has begun to distinguish categories of women:

18 Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, C. S. Lewis: A Biography (London: Collins, 1974), p. 66. W. H. Lewis in his memoir of his brother speaks of "the autocracy of Mrs. Moore—an autocracy that developed into stifling tyranny" (Letters, pp. 21-22). See Clyde S. Kilby and Douglas Gilber, C. S. Lewis: Images of His World (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 11, which gives an excerpt from Lewis' diary in March 1924. "During this time it was unfortunate that my first spring flood of Dymer should coincide with a burst of marmalade-making and spring-cleaning on Mrs. Moore's part, which led without intermission into packing. I managed to get through a good deal of writing in the intervals of jobbing in the kitchen and doing messages...."

19 The same subtle prejudice underlies the implicit racism of the white-skinned Normans and the dark Calormenes, for example, or Ransomed's fear when he confronts the hrosses, where it is twice emphasized that the beast was black.


"The real excellence of Deloney is in his dialogue; he has a peculiar talent for reproducing the chatter of silly women" (429). This is significant because here, in 1953, he feels the need to distinguish between the chatter of silly women and the speech of an intelligent woman. I personally feel that a few years earlier he might have written 'the silly chatter of women.' It may be significant that he had already met and worked with Joy Davidman; in his preface he thanks her for her help with the proofs (vi).

We know from Lewis' own words in A Brief Observed what she thought of his habitual use of 'masculine' as a term of praise—even when applied to her:

What was H. Joy not to me? She was my daughter and my mother, my pupil and my teacher, my subject and my sovereign; and always, holding all these in solution, my trusty comrade, friend, shipmate, fellow-soldier. My mistress; but at the same time all that any man friend (and I have had good ones) has ever been to me. Maybe more. That's what I no woman could have done for her 'masculine virtues'. But she soon put a stop to that by asking how I'd like to be praised for my feminine ones."

Another sign of a changing attitude toward women appears in The Silver Chair:

Scrubb was quite right in saying that Jill (I don't know about girls in general) didn't think much about points of the compass. Otherwise she would have known, when the sun began getting in her eyes, that she was travelling pretty nearly due west.

The parenthesis is not typical of Lewis' previous work; it is quite possible that it was influenced by Joy. For in describing the choice of the title Lewis mentioned that 'my brother and the American writer Joy Davidman (who has been staying with us and is a great reader of fantasy and children's books) both say that The Wild Waite Lands is a splendid title..... If Joy was involved in the choice of the title she must have read the manuscript. It is a most satisfying example of poetic justice that Lewis' world should finally have been overturned by a woman—and an American woman, a Jewess, and a divorcée. (Lewis had early expressed his scorn for the English school by saying, "Women, Indians and Americans predominate and—I can't say how—one feels a certain amateurishness in talk and the look of the people.")

From Till We Have Faces with its magnificent portrayal of Orual (the book was dedicated to Joy, and Lewis' biographers speculate that the character of the Queen is drawn from Joy) and particularly from The Four Loves (The Pope copied right) we can see how marriage to this fascinating and brilliant person completely altered the alteration of his attitude toward women.

The contrast between That Hideous Strength and Till We Have Faces illustrates how much Lewis has changed. The most obvious difference between them is that Till We Have Faces is told by Orual herself. Lewis has become capable of entering into a woman's mind. Though both women have visions, Orual is totally different from Jane Studdock; her significance does not lie in child-bearing or in wifely obedience, but in her complaint against the gods. Orual was a scholar, by the standards of Glome, but she is never ridiculed for her Greek as Jane is ridiculed by the author for her attempt at studying Donne. Jane is a seer who is used by Logres, but who takes no significant part in the battle.
Orual is a warrior who first wins the love of her people by single combat and retains it by leading her troops into battle till she has won the peace. In fact, the only male chauvinism in the book is put into the mouth of the cowardly king and the barbaric mob. It is King Trom who values a woman less than a man. When Psyche's sacrifice is required by the priest, he responds, "What's one girl—who, what would one man be—against the safety of us all?" It is the mob who insult the king by asking for his sons, screaming, "Barren king makes barren land," even though the king has three children. Daughters do not count. The scene is reminiscent of King Henry VIII putting Anne Boleyn to death because she bore no sons, not knowing that Princess Elizabeth would have one of the most illustrious reigns in England's history. Even so the king and people discount the Princess Orual. The irony appears in the evaluation of her reign given by the priest Arnon at the end of the volume: "Queen Orual of Glome...was the most wise, just, valiant, and fortunate of all the princes known in our part of the world" (320). Jane Studdock was pretty, foolish, and stubborn, finally learning to be submissive to the unappealing Mark; Orual was wise, valiant, and merciful, learning obedience to God Himself. It is difficult to imagine a greater contrast.

Till We Have Faces proves that Lewis has finally come to see that women are fully human, rather than some separate and inferior species. The Four Loves is written from a new understanding of the relationships between men and women. In his chapter on "Friendship" Lewis explains that in most societies men and women have friends only of their own sex, because the work and education of the two sexes are so different that they have "nothing to be Friends about. But we can easily see that it is this lack, rather than anything in their natures, which excluded Friendship; for where they can see that women are fully human, rather than some separate and inferior species.

Lewis believed inequality to be an erotic necessity. He talks of surrendering to the"act of Venus" as a game: for in "the act of Venus" as a game: his own marriage did not follow the dominant/submissive pattern. There is no indication in the letters, the biography, or in A Grief Observed that he believed Loy to be his natural inferior, or otherwise. Indeed, Roger Lancelyn Green calls Joy "a wife who as friend was able and eager to meet him and any friend of his on equal terms as if she too were an Inking..." (Italics mine). When Green visited Lewis in 1958 and 1959 he observed of "the sheer happiness and contentment" that Lewis was finding with Joy: "the solicitude for his wife, the simple delight in her company, the argument, banaign, and rollicking fun that betokened the perfect relationship.

Though Lewis apparently never intended a double entendre in the title of his autobiography, Surprised by Joy, Green declares:

He had indeed been surprised by Joy—surprised into an absolute love and a complete marriage, the overwhelming fulfilment of an intense nature long unsatisfied, a tremendous capacity for love long channelled into strong friendship and immense literary creativity. One can only wish that Lewis had found Joy Davidman earlier—both for his own happiness and also for the difference it would have made in his work.

Lewis also nearly reversed his stand on the "headship" of the husband. Jane was forced to submit unconditionally to a repulsive man. In The Four Loves Lewis talks of surrender in "the act of Venus" as a game:

A woman who accepted as literally her own this extreme self-surrender would be an idiotess offering to a man what belongs only to God. And a man would have to be the coxcomb of all coxcombs, and indeed a blasphemer, if he arrogated to himself, as the mere person he is, the sort of sovereignty to which Venus exalts him. But what cannot lawfully be yielded or claimed can be lawfully enacted. Outside this ritual or drama he and she are two immortal souls, two freeborn adults, two citizens. (148)

Yet this idolatry is apparently what had been demanded of Jane Studdock. Because she was not friend as well as lover, she had no sphere in which she could be equal with her husband.

Lewis complains that "Christian writers (notably Milton) have sometimes spoken of the husband's headship with a complacency to make the blood run cold" (148). (Apparently Lewis is quite unaware that the one writer is one of those writers.) He then goes back to the Bible, emphasizing that Ephesians 5:25 speaks of the relation of husband and wife as parallel to Christ's relationship to the church. This headship, then, is most fully embodied not in the husband we should all wish to be but in him whose marriage is most like a crucifixion..." (148). The term "headship" has not changed, but its meaning has obviously changed for Lewis. Here he has swung over to the other side, becoming almost masochistic in his view of headship.

But more important is that Lewis, for the first time, is writing about love knowing what he is writing about. He even pokes a bit of fun at those patriotic writers who attempt to write about Eros: "I cannot help remembering that they were all celibates and probably did not know what Eros does to our sexuality..." (158). Lewis allies himself strongly with the married men, the men who do know.

 Though Lewis retained the vocabulary of hierarchy, it is apparent that his own marriage did not follow the domination/submission pattern. There is no indication in the letters, the biography, or in A Grief Observed that he believed Joy to be his natural inferior, or otherwise. Indeed, Roger Lancelyn Green calls Joy "a wife who as friend was able and eager to meet him and any friend of his on equal terms as if she too were an Inking..." (Italics mine). When Green visited Lewis in 1958 and 1959 he observed of "the sheer happiness and contentment" that Lewis was finding with Joy: "the solicitude for his wife, the simple delight in her company, the argument, banaign, and rollicking fun that betokened the perfect relationship."

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C. S. Lewis, Till We Have Faces (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), p. 69. Some readers also perceive Bardia's submission to the title of his autobiography, Surprised by Joy, Green declares:

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For an earlier statement on headship, see the 1940 article "Christianity and Literature," in Christian Reflections, pp. 4-5. Here woman is to man as man is to God— which leaves the implication that man is to woman as God is to man.


Biography, p. 277. Warren Lewis gave a similar description of Joy's intellectual equality. "Joy was the only woman whom he had met (although as his letters show he had known with great affection many able women) who had a brain which matched his own in suppleness, in width of interest, in analytical grasp, and above all in humour and sense of fun. Further, she shared his delight in argument for argument's sake, whether frivolous or serious, always good-humoured yet always meeting his trick for trick as he changed ground" (Letters, p. 23).