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Abstract
Examines Lilith-figures in Tolkien, Lewis, Williams, and Sayers, discussing how each demonstrates certain attributes of the archetypal temptress character.

Additional Keywords
Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Jadis; Lewis, C.S.—Characters—Lady of the Green Kirtle; Lilith (archetype) in literature; Sayers, Dorothy L.—Characters—Helen (“The Devil to Pay”); Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Galadriel; Williams, Charles—Characters—Lily Sammile; Williams, Charles—Characters—Succubus (Descent Into Hell); Nancy-Lou Patterson

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"All Shall Love Me and Despair"

The Figure of Lilith in Tolkien, Lewis, Williams, & Sayers

Meredith Price

Who is Lilith? According to Hebrew tradition, she was the first wife of Adam, cast out of Eden for insubordination and doomed to roam the world a malevolent spirit. Mother of the Jinn, her name means "the Nocturnal One," and she is the spirit of whirlwinds and destruction. Able to assume the shape of a beautiful woman, she is the smotherer and devourer of children, seducer and strangler of men. Long an archetype in Christian and Heorean literature, she sometimes appears as the wife of Satan and occasionally emerges as "Dame Hell," synonymous with the Devil himself (or should we say 'her'?).1

Three important Christian authors of the famous Oxford writers' group, the Inklings, made use of the Lilith image. Charles Williams did so quite explicitly in his Descent into Hell,2 where aspects of Lilith are readily apparent both in the person of Lily Sammile (whose character also incorporates the Semitic storm-demon Samuel)3 and in the false Adela or succubus. By contrast, J.R.R. Tolkien's use of the motif in The Fellowship of the Ring4 is the least explicit, to be found in the figure of Galadriel—not as she is, but as she would become under the influence of the One Ring. C.S. Lewis falls somewhere in the middle with his portraits of Jadis, the White Witch of Narnia, an enchantress descended from Lility (LWW, 77) and sharing many of her attributes, and in the Emerald Witch (The Silver Chair5) who is "one of the same crew" (SC, 22).6

In addition to the three Inklings, another Christian author, Dorothy L. Sayers (who had contact with the group through Lewis) also employed the Lilith motif in her Faustian drama, The Devil to Pay.7 Here Lilith emerges as synonymous with the pagan Helen, whose beauty destroyed the Trojans and ravaged the Greeks. These six figures are all recognizable descendants from a common prototype in that they all partake in large measure of a common set of attributes: 1) association with the garden motif, 2) great beauty (or at least, allure), 3) immortality, 4) association with the cold or with darkness, 5) dominion over (or at least truck with) a host of hideous creatures.

To begin with, each author at some point associates each of the Lility figures with some manner of garden, recalling to the reader's mind The Garden in which God created Lilith and from which He later barred her. For example, the Mirror of Galadriel, beside which Frodo witnesses the Lady's potential for evil, stands within "an enclosed garden" (FR, 468).8 Similarly, Lewis portrays Jadis, unable to pass the gates of Aslan's garden, scaling the walls to steal the apples from the Tree of Life (MN, 159-60) while the Green Witch first appears beside a fountain near a wood where the court went maying (SC, 51). Later, both attempt to seize control of the garden paradise of Narnia (LWW, SC). Likewise, Sayers, who uses the Lilith figure more openly, has Helen (Lilit) remind Faustus (Adam) of their love "in the old, innocent garden" before the coming of Eve (DP, 66). Williams also employs the garden motif: the chapter entitled "Return to Eden" (DH) sees the succubus lead Wentworth down into the false, internal paradise of his own body; afterwards, he must carry her across the threshold into his own garden—she cannot pass the gate herself (DH, 129). Meanwhile, Mrs. Sammile stands "at the gate—of (Pauline's) garden or world or soul" (DH, 111), entrusting Pauline to let her enter and lead the way to Gomorrah.9

In addition to each author's linking the Lilith figure with the garden motif, an attribute shared by all, all six also partake in some respect of beauty, usually a superhuman loveliness in association with
stature. Tolkien's Galadriel, for example, an elf-maiden already fair and tall (FR, 459) would become under the influence of the Ring "beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow" (FR, 473). Lewis's Jadis is also tall and breathtakingly beautiful (MN, 48), but is stern and cold as well (LWW, 27). Likewise the fair Emerald Witch who, though merrier-seeming (SC, 75), is "green as poison" (SC, 51). The legendary beauty of Sayers' Helen is, of course, "Beyond all splendour of stars" (DP, 40), and in Williams' tale, Wentworth finds the succubus both beautiful and infinitely seductive (DH). Only Lily Sammle seems at first to be odd woman out, but she, too, has something to do with beauty. Though Pauline as first perceives her to be short and unattractive, with "cheeks...a little...magnetism of things forbidden and desired."

But Lilith is beautiful, she is also immortal: Galadriel is already so, without becoming Lilith, for the Lady of Lorien has lived "though ages" for 'years uncounted' (FR, 462), and though she 'will diminish, and go into the West' (FR, 474), she cannot die. Jadis, too, slept among her ancestors in the hall of images for "hundreds of thousands of years" and more (MN, 62) and after eating the apple of youth, becomes immortal (MN, 161). The semi-divine, eternally young Helen in Sayers' drama is, of course, transported across the from pre-Classical times to the sixteenth century A.D. Greek legend makes her, like her brothers the Dioscuri, undying. Finally, Wentworth's youthful succubus is 'millions of years older than' Pauline's dying grandmother (DH, 134), and Lily Sammle, though "an old woman pretending youth," is an "ancient witch" (DH, 206), existing from time out of mind. Lilith is, then, for these authors, an eternal spirit, timeless, recurring, a demon which the individual may reject but not destroy.

Finally, Lilith's beauty and immortality make her the mistress of darkness, in association with the hideous, inhuman creatures of the night: Prodo's vision of Lilith-in-Galadriel occurs at night, and the armies of Sauron (who is a masculine version of what Galadriel would become were she to take the Ring) include the orcs and trolls, Balrogs and Nazguls, creatures which shun the light of day. Likewise, Jadis' army consists of horrors, cruels, and incubuses; ghouls and werewolves; ogres and minotaurs (LWW, 132, 148), while her sacrifice of the Lion takes place at night. So too, the Emerald Witch, with her sunless Underworld of ugly gnomes.12 Glen Goodnight discusses this "stealer of the light" motif as well as that of the demon hoard and Sauron's similarity to the Lilith figure in his "Lilith in Narnia," too, appearing in the Narnian Conference Proceedings, 1969. Similar to these characters of Lewis and Tolkien, Wentworth's nocturnal, false Adela is one of Satan's succubii (DH, 126), while Lilith patters through the night on Battle Hill and crouches in her sunless graveyard shed (the endless floor of which slants down to Hell), surrounded by the wreaths of the damned (DH, 206). So, too, Sayers' Helen, attended by devils, Mephistopheles' creature, who woos Faustus to his damnation, symbolized by a darkened mirror and an eclipse of the Sun (DP, 23, 71, 115).

The garden, beauty, immortality, darkness and demons: these, then, are a few of the key attributes shared to a great degree by the Lilith figures of Lewis, Tolkien, Williams, and Sayers. But when one examines other attributes, particularly the nature of Lilith's power over mortals, one discovers two distinct roles toward one or both of which all six figures gravitate: the celestial pole versus the chthonian one.13 The celestial Lilith (I choose the term because of the star imagery Tolkien and Sayers use in connection with her14) is a spirit of outwardly directed power: a queen, indeed, almost a goddess, capable of overwhelming her resisters by main force. She is a cosmic vision, "the spirit of power" (DP, 98), inspiring war. Galadriel, for example, were she to take the Ring, would doubtless overthrow "the Dark Lord (and)...set up a Queen" (FR, 473) by means of some great warhost not unlike those of Sauron and Saruman. Jadis, too, fought a great war against her sister for dominion of her own dying world (MN, 60-61) and later amasses troops to put down the Narnian rebels (LWW). The Emerald Witch likewise plots the conquest of Narnia, sending Bilian with "A thousand Earthmen at (his) back...{(to) fall suddenly on (her) enemies, slay their chief men, cast down their strong places" (SC, 137-38). Similarly, Helen inspired the bloody Trojan War, and later Faustus turns from altruistic acts of charity to mass martial slaughter after she seduces him.

But alongside this awesome vision of an all-powerful, irresistible ravisher runs another conception of Lilith's might. Besides the celestial stands the chthonian Lilith: Lilith the serpent,15 the cunning persuader, Lilith the seducer. This is not one to conquer another against his will. Hers is a far more personal damnation—she beguiles only "[j]oining eyes and
eager hands" (DH, 126, emphasis mine). Those who come to this Lilith come of their own free will (thereby losing it), and though some of our authors' Lilith figures gravitate toward the celestial pole, all include some aspect of the cthonian temptress. Wentworth's succubus is the best example: it is 'quite subordinate to him' (DH, 86), an object for him to "delightfully tyrannize" and which "cajoled him—in the prettiest way—to love her" (DH, 127). Likewise, Williams' Lily Summle can only invite, entreat, offer: 'Give me your hand and I'll give you a foretaste now!' (IH, 110, emphasis mine)—she cannot take Pauline's hand, force the forbidden knowledge on her; this cthonian Lilith can be resisted. Sayers' Helen, too, is plainly the seducer with siren's call, 'O love, hast thou forgotten (me)!' (DP, 65). Lewis' characters as well have elements of the temptress. The Emerald Witch, for example, woos Rilian with visions, inviting him to come to her (SC, 50-51), and Jadis beguiles Edmund with enchantment, pretended kindness, and promises (LWW, 30-36). Even Galadriel, who would, like Wentworth, be her own seducer, must wrestle with the decision whether to accept the Ring from Frodo and become Lilith, or reject it "and remain Galadriel" (PR, 473-74).

The polarizations, then, are far from complete, and it is at this second pole—the "cthonian" pole of temptation and seduction—that Lilith becomes most keenly Lilith. The temptations she offers are many and varied. She is, in fact, "all things to all men" (DP, 97). She proffers 'Crowns for the victor, crowns, / Riches and wisdom, honour and glory and blessing' (DP, 208) in Sayers' drama. For Williams, she holds out "health, ... money, ... life, ... good looks and good luck, ... peace and contentment" (IH, 208). Indeed, she offers "Everything, anything; anything, everything" (IH, 112). In short, she would give to each person his heart's desire (which seems inevitably to fall into one or more of three categories: beauty, power, knowledge16) and she often uses a dual approach, appealing to her victim's altruism and narcissism simultaneously.

On the altruistic side lies power, the power to do good for others. At one point, Pauline is almost induced "to indulge...in the spiritual necromancy of Gomorrah" (DH, 209) out of pity for the pathetic Lily Sannile. So, too, Digory wants the apple of youth to heal his mother (MN, 162), while Edmund envisions improving the road system of Narnia (LWW, 87). In the same vein, Faustus demands power to end world poverty (DP, 42); Rilian only desires to please his lady in conquering Narnia (SC, 132, 134), and Galadriel would preserve Lothlorien (PR, 473). However, another side often exists to the power Lilith offers, a narcissistic side. Jadis first offers Digory the apple for himself (MN, 161). Edmund desires to be crown prince "to pay Peter out for calling him a beast" (LWW, 85). Likewise, after pledging his soul to Helen (DP, 70), Faustus turns his power to evil, and Galadriel knows her power would eventually corrupt. Power alone is enough for some, all good intentions absent: Sayers' Emperor longs for the power of Helen solely that he might "Crush the Pope...and...be sovereign of the world" (DP, 89), and Wentworth wants his own interior world where he alone is God (DH, 86-87).

If Lilith appeals both to the individual's self-love and to his love of others through her gift of power, she appeals wholly to human vanity with her gift of beauty. For men, this beauty resides in the form of a beautiful woman, carnal possession of whom the masculine ego demands. The Emperor and Faustus both desire Helen. The Emerald Witch offers the be-
of cause and consequence, / Or speed time's arrow backward" (DP, 109), and the redeemed Pauline exclaims to Lilith, "I only want everything to be as it is... and if it changes, it shall change as it must, and I shall want it as it is then. 'Change,'" mutters Lilith. "I don't change." (DH, 209).

But Lilith's followers do not, in fact, experience endless vitality and youth. Instead of finding satisfaction, they become "Insatiate" (DH, 109). The food Jadis offers Edmund is "enchanted... (so) that anyone who had once tasted it would want more and more of it" (LWW, 33) much like Lily Sammile's food, "The nourishment of (which) ... disappeared at once" (DH, 206). The damned soul is then left with nothing but itself to "live and feed and starve" upon (DH, 174), and a hideous degeneration begins. Williams speaks of "they whom she (Lilith) overtook ... found drained and strangled in the morning" (DH, 89). Wentworth descends into utter psychosis under the influence of the succubus, which itself decays into "an imbecile face (that) stared blankly... The movements of its body... jerk and inorganic" (DH, 134) and "a low voice which stammered now as it had not before; as if it were as much losing control as was his own mind" (DH, 200), and the hordes of spirits crowding about Lily Sammile in the grave-shed of Gomorrah are starved wraiths, "famished at the dry breasts of the witch" (DH, 206). The victims in the other tales also degenerate: Faustus' soul transforms into a black dog. Jadis turns her victims into statues, incapable of speech or movement, and as the gnomes enslaved by the Emerald Witch lose their capacity for joy or independent thought, Rilian becomes a blithering idiot. Even Galadriel, who swears she "not be dark, but beautiful" (FR, 473) deceives herself. The Ring of Power corrupts all who possess it—Sauron was once fair to look upon. Gollum once a hobbit. What, indeed, would the fair Elven-woman become, were she to take the Ring, give in to Lilith?

Lilith's gifts, then, are a cheat. The four authors agree whole-heartedly on this point. Not only does the recipient wither and fade, but the gifts themselves do as well, for they are nothing: illusions, images, air. With sweet-smelling smoke and a subtle music, the Queen of the Underworld seeks to convince Rilian, the children, and the Marshwiggles that the Sunlit Lands are but "foolish dreams" copied "from the real world, this world of mine" (SC, 157). But the words of Lilith are nonsense, unnecessary, the "meaningless gabble" of "the guardian of all the circles of hell" (DH, 207). Jadis' food is sweet, but it cannot satisfy; Lilith "desired infinitely to seem to give suck" (DH, 207), but her breasts are dry. Helen20 "is vanished! Melted away! Clean from our hands—only her garments left! O sorcery!" (DP, 100). So, too, Wentworth's succubus—imperceptible to all but one: damsel Adele, already halfway into Hell—which is such a "phantasm ( ), evoked from and clouded and thickened with the dust of the earth or the sweat of the body or the shed seed of man or the water of ocean, so as to bewilder and deceive" its willing consort (DH, 126). This "Image without incarnation" (DH, 127) fades from existence the moment Wentworth shuts the door (DH, 136). And Sauron's kingdom, built upon the Power of the Ring, exists largely in the surreal half-world of the Ring-wraiths. Its counterpart, Lothlorien, though as solid and intensely real as the Lady is fair, is also based upon the One Ring's power. Its time flows outside that of the rest of Middle Earth (FR, 503), and it, too, will perish with the destruction of the Ring (FR, 472). Lilith, then, our authors agree, is not the marvelous enchantress beautiful and desirable, giver of gifts and teller of tales all true. So she would have her blinded victims to think, but she is a liar. She offers not the heart's desire, but bitterness, not joy but self-deception. Cut off from communion with humanity, denying themselves outward sustenance, her victims collapse in upon themselves like burned-out stars, recede inward toward damnation and death. Worse yet, the degeneration takes place without the victim's knowledge (Lilith is, as Sayers calls her, "a worm in the brain," DH, 98): Lewis's Rilian did not know he was enchanted, nor Williams's Wentworth, nor Sayers' Faustus. Were Tolkien's Galadriel to take the Ring, she would, like Bilbo, fall beneath its influence insidiously. Lilith is, for these four authors, truly "She of the Night," demon patroness of the time when shadows shift, forms fade into indistinction, and dreams drift in to cloud one's reason. Ultimately, all four writers portray her as a sham, a shell, the sound-seeming rind of the rotten pumpkin: not goodness and love and beauty, but only the semblance of them. For the Inklings and Sayers, she symbolizes vanity and glamour, all that seemeth and is not. To love her, they warn—go with her, to enjoy her favors—is to find not happiness, but wormwood and despair.

Notes

1Sayers plays upon this theme when she reminds us that Helen (Lilith) is "hell-born, hell-named / Hell in the cities, hell in the ships, and hell / In the heart of man" (DP, 40-41), an English paraphrase of the wordplay in lines 687-690 of Aeschylus' Agamemnon:

        ...." (Helen, fittingly in that regard crusher of ships, slayer of men, destroyer of cities).

2To be abbreviated DH. All page numbers refer to

3. Samael is also the name for Satan among Kabalisticty 
   mics. From Non-Christian Religions A to Z, 
   Horace L. Friers, supervising ed. (New York: Grosset & 

4. To be abbreviated FR. All page references from 

5. SC. Collier Paperbacks.

6. The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe; Prince Cas-
   pian; The Magician's Nephew. Abbreviated LLW, PC, and 
   MN, respectively. Collier Paperbacks edition. This 
   character, also called the Lady of the Green Kirtle, 
   embodies aspects of Morgan Le Fay. Her relationship 
   with Rilian (enchantress to her captive knight) is dis-
   tinctly Arthurian, reminding one of the green-girdled 
   lady under Morgan's direction in the medieval poem Sir 
   Gawain and the Green Knight and of similar enchanted 
   knight episodes in Malory's Morte Darthur.

7. DP. In Two Plays about God and Man, the Vineyard 

8. Galadriel, who is not yet (nor ever will be truly) 
   Lilith, is free to enter the garden. Also, in a sense, 
   Lothlorien is her garden, a paradise set off from the 
   rest of Middle Earth and into which the evil Eye of 
   Sauron cannot penetrate.

9. Compare the behavior of vampires and Lamias (fe-
   male vampires) who cannot cross any threshold unless in-
   vited by their intended victims.

10. At least, she is beautiful to men (Digory, the 
    magician, and Edmund). Polly, however, "couldn't see 
    anything specially beautiful about her" (MN, 48). Aunt 
    Letty, too, is far from dazzled (MN, 79-80).

11. Not even Aslan can kill the witch, as becomes 
    apparent in the sequel to LW, Prince Caspian. See 
    page 165: the bag says, "his dear little Majesty 
    needn't mind about the White Lady—that's what we call 
    her—being dead. ...(W)ho ever heard of a witch that 
    really died? You can always get them back."

12. The gnomes, of course, though still ugly, are not 
    such a bad lot once freed from the witch's spell.

13. In his 1969 article, "Lilith in Narnia," Good-
    Knight also perceives "a two-sided picture of the 
    figure of Lilith" in literature: the "witch-hag" as 
    opposed to the "beautiful, dream-like seductress." How-
    ever, unlike my dichotomy, which stresses the differ-
    ences in Lilith's method of operation (brute force 
    versus temptation), GoodKnight divides the Liliths by 
    their victims: children stolen by the hag and young men 
    seduced by the dream lady.

14. Tolkien: Galadriel's Mirror reflects the stars as 
    she stands beneath 'earendil, the Evening Star .... So 
    bright ... that the figure of the Elven-lady cast a dim 
    shadow' while 'Its rays glanced upon a ring about her 
    finger ... and a white stone in it twinkled as if the 
    Even-star had come down to rest upon her hand." (FR, 
    472). This is Nenya, one of the three elven rings of 
    power, upon which Lórien is founded. As for Sayers, 
    following the classic myth that Helen did not die but 
    was made a star by Zeus, Mephistopheles invokes Helen 
    with these words: 'Rise up, thou star of evening, called 
    by night/ Hesperus, but in the morning, Lucifer/ And 
    sometimes Venus, lady of love' (DP, 97). One notes 
    with interest the association between Lilith and Luci-
    fer, the Light-bearer, best and brightest of the 
    angels, a star now fallen. Galadriel's name, also, 
    means "Lady of Light" -- but she remains unfallen.

15. Here my terminology comes from the conception of 
    Lilith as the serpent in the Garden of Eden, tempting 
    Eve to facilitate the fall of man. Lewis actually por-
    trays his Emerald Witch as a serpent (SC). Most of the 
    Classical egyptian figures of Greek mythology had 
    snakes as their attribute: Bocote, the Gorgon (said by 
    Euripides to have been earthborn), Erichthonios, Kek-
    rops.

16. Interestingly, these are the three categories 
    represented by the goddesses Aphrodite, Hera, and 
    Athena who each offered Paris a bribe that he might 
    judge her the fairest. Aphrodite offered Paris Helen, 
    the most beautiful woman in the world, as his love. 
    Hera offered him dominion over all Europe and Asia. 
    Athena offered his unparalleled wisdom and knowledge. 
    Sayers incorporates the Judgement of Paris into her 
    Devil to Pay, conceiving of the Golden Apple as syn-
    onymous with Eve's fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge 
    of Good and Evil. Lewis, too, uses the motif of 
    Lilith and apples, portraying her not, as Sayers does, 
    tempting man to cast back the fruit and give up the 
    knowledge of good and evil. Rather, Jadis tempts 
    Digory to accept the apple of the Tree of Life and live 
    forever.

17. But she is not Lilith, only potential Lilith, and 
    through her guidance, the hobbits do not misinterpret 
    the visions, thereby endangering themselves and all 
    Middle Earth by abandoning their quest.

18. Compare this to the motif of "fairy gold" found 
    in other folklores, the crock of gold granted by lepre-
    cans in numerous Irish folktales, for example. The 
    recipient must spend the treasure before morning, for 
    it will transform to bones and ashes at the first ray 
    of dawn. Recall also the gifts of Cinderella's fairy 
    godmother, which last only until midnight. At the 
    stroke of twelve, the gown goes back to rags, the horses 
    to mice, the coach to the hollowed pumpkin shell.

19. Compare Aunt Letty's reaction to the magical in-
    cantation uttered by Jadis: "I thought as much. The 
    woman is drunk. Drunk! She can't even speak clearly." 
    (MN, 11)

20. Compare Tolkien's Nazgul, who exist mostly in the 
    spirit world but wear real cloaks and ride mortal 
    steeds in order to be perceptible on Middle Earth.

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Collier Books, 1970. continued on p. 25
The change-over to the new format with larger print, and the addition of the Subject Index, have meant less room for Reviews and Letters for this issue. If we can increase our subscribers by about 15 to 20% we can add at least six additional pages for each issue and other improvements.

1983 Mythopoeic Conference

At this point there has been no definite interest shown in the organization of the 1983 Conference. Those interested should write this this year's Chairman of the Council of Stewards, Christine Lowentrout, 115 5th St. #2, Seal Beach, CA 90740 for guidelines.

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LOOKING AHEAD

Editorial Notes - Glen GoodKnight

As a response to readers' interest, the next issue will be a special one focusing on The Silmarillion, Unfinished Tales, and The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien. As part of that issue, we would like to publish readers' comments on how these books have affected and changed their previous view of Tolkien. A sheet is enclosed for your comments for possible publication.

In the following issue, we will mark the 15th anniversary of The Mythopoeic Society. We would like to include comments from readers on what the Society has and does mean to them. The same enclosed sheet can be used for this.

I hope you will take part in both of these to share your thoughts and feelings.

The changes that were begun in the last issue have brought very favorable comments from many quarters. Your support is vital for Mythlore's ongoing improvement. Please make its welfare your personal concern by: encouraging your friends to subscribe; giving gift subscriptions; becoming a patron; posting the flyer that was enclosed in the last issue to libraries, English Departments, etc. (more copies are available on request); requesting or asking a faculty member to request that your library subscribe; and resubscribing yourself before we need to send you a renewal letter.

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