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The Nurse of Elfland: Lizzie Endicott and C.S. Lewis

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The Nurse of Elfland: Lizzie Endicott and C.S. Lewis

Abstract

In *Surprised by Joy*, C.S. Lewis introduced Lizzie Endicott as the first of two "other blessings" in his childhood, even before his introduction of Warnie. But apart from his abbreviated 136-word biography, very little is known about the nurse who introduced Lewis to faery tales. Based on the Lewis Family Papers, genealogical research, and personal interviews with Lizzie's relatives, this article introduces Lizzie to the world of Lewismania. It also suggests various ways in which Lizzie influenced the man and the author that C.S. Lewis became, as well as the mythical worlds he created and Lewis's anonymous tributes to her.

Additional Keywords

C.S. Lewis; Lizzie Endicott; faery worlds; Castlerock; Flora Lewis,

NOTES

THE NURSE OF ELFLAND: LIZZIE ENDICOTT AND C.S. LEWIS REGGIE WEEMS

ONE OF THE FIRST SURPRISES IN *SURPRISED BY JOY*, the autobiography of C.S. Lewis, is that he introduces his nurse, Lizzie Endicott, before introducing his elder brother, Warnie. From the very beginning of their sibling relationship, the younger Lewis writes “Though three years my senior, he never seemed to be an elder brother; we were allies, not to say confederates, from the first” (Lewis, *Surprised* 4). When Flora, their mother, died, “Everything that had made the house a home had failed us; everything except one another. We drew daily closer together (that was the good result) – two frightened urchins huddled for warmth in a bleak world” (20). During their nightmare ordeal at Wynyard (Watford, Hertfordshire, England) Lewis remembers,

We stood foursquare against the common enemy. [...] To this day the vision of the world which comes most naturally to me is one of which ‘we too’ or ‘we few’ (and in a sense ‘we happy few’) stand together against something stronger and larger. (*Surprised* 35)

In Lewis’s final days of life, Warnie fondly remembers, “these last weeks were not unhappy [...] and once again—as in the earliest days—we could turn for comfort only to each other” (“Memoir” 48).

As in any sibling connection, the Lewis brothers endured relational strains. They disagreed about Malvern College.¹ Warnie’s military career placed him in foreign countries, away from Lewis, for extended periods of time. He always disliked Mrs. Moore, even though she, he, and his brother bought the Kilns, and lived there together. Once retired, Warnie’s alcoholism gravely concerned his younger brother.² But Lewis and Warnie were a band of brothers,

¹ In later life, Lewis conceded that Malvern was not as terrible as his accusations in *Surprised by Joy*.

² Warnie was broken by his brother’s death and was too inebriated to attend his funeral.

from beginning to end. That bond was tested, but never broken. They sincerely, dearly, loved each other.

That Lewis names Lizzie as the first of “two other blessings,” before introducing Warnie, speaks yet-to-be-written volumes about Lizzie. He writes about her,

In addition to good parents, good food, and a garden (which then seemed large) to play in, I began life with two other blessings. One was our nurse, Lizzie Endicott, in whom even the exacting memory of childhood can discover no flaw—nothing but kindness, gaiety, and good sense. There was no nonsense about ‘lady nurses’ in those days. Through Lizzie we struck our roots into the peasantry of County Down. We were thus free of two very different social worlds. To this I owe my lifelong immunity from the false identification which some people make of refinement with virtue. From before I can remember I had understood that certain jokes could be shared with Lizzie which were impossible in the drawing room; and also that Lizzie was, as nearly as a human can be, simply good. (*Surprised 4*)



Lizzie was Lewis’s nurse only for the three years between 1901-1904. She was between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-four at that time. He was between the ages of two and five. Their time together was limited, and he was very young. As children, both Warnie and Lewis often reflected sarcastically, even mercilessly on adults, particularly their father. But Lizzie survives “the exacting memory of [his] childhood” as a flawless person. Different from other

nurses of the day, Lewis describes Lizzie as a blessing, kind, happy, fun and possessing a good sense of humor. She was down-to-earth and truly virtuous. In summary, Lewis remembers a young woman who was simply, yet amazingly, as nearly good as any human being can be.

THE LACK OF LIZZIE

Apart from his gracious, but concise, 136-word biography in *Surprised by Joy*, very little is presently known about Lizzie Endicott. The subsequent years have not been as generous to her as Lewis's stellar appraisal. Lizzie is as absent in Lewis studies as he is famous. His first biographer, Chad Walsh (*C.S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics*), focuses on Lewis's Christian ministry and does not mention her. George Sayer (*Jack: A Life of C.S. Lewis*) repeats only a small portion of Lewis's comments about her. William Griffin's *Clive Staples Lewis: A Dramatic Life*, begins in 1925, with scant reference to the childhood that shaped Lewis. Her name does not appear in Alan Jacob's *The Narnian*. Alister McGrath mentions Lizzie by name but only in connection with her threats to smack their "piggybottoms," and their resulting nicknames: "Smallpiggybotham" or "SPB" for Lewis, and "Archpiggybotham" or "APB" for Warnie.

Lizzie does not merit discussion in the 'Who's Who' chapter of Walter Hooper's monumental *C.S. Lewis: A Companion and Guide* or Colin Duriez's *The C.S. Lewis Encyclopedia*. In *Tales Before Narnia*, Douglas A. Anderson seeks possible sources for Lewis's imaginative works, but fails to mention Lizzie's fairy stories as the oral cradle for Lewis's faery fantasy. Even biographies intended to retrace Lewis's spiritual pilgrimage fail to reference the women who first opened the numinous window in Lewis's life. Only Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper (*C.S. Lewis: A Biography*) provide any meaningful sense of Lizzie's presence in the Lewis household. These few examples are not intended to criticize but highlight the opportunity for research about Lizzie and her influence on Lewis's life, vocation, and Christian ministry.³

Although he writes a critical biography of Lewis, A.N. Wilson recognizes that Lewis "had two great friends—Warnie and Lizzie Endicott" (Wilson 9). But Wilson then asserts that Endicott encouraged Lewis to carefully step around mud puddles because they were "'all full of dirty wee popes'" (Wilson 9). This comment is uncited insofar as Lizzie is concerned, hence, unsubstantiated. This may be why McGrath does not name Lizzie, even

³ This author is presently writing a biography of Lizzie Endicott. For the biographical information on Lizzie and her family, the author wishes to acknowledge the investigative research of Fiona Pegrum, QG (Qualified Genealogist) who also put the author in touch with Lizzie's great-great-grandson. The author and his wife were privileged to sit with this great-grandson and three of Lizzie's grandchildren, each of whom provided personal insight into the woman they called 'Granny Thompson.'

though he echoes a different version of the unverified story. He writes, "When the young Lewis was being toilet trained, his Protestant nanny used to call his stools 'wee popes'" (McGrath 4). Given Lewis's adult disdain for religious division, his family's employment of the Roman Catholic nurse, Sarah Conlon, his numerous Roman Catholic friends, his apolitical nonsectarian worldview, and trans-denominational commitment to mere Christianity, it is unlikely that the mature Lewis would have recalled Endicott as "simply good," in Surprised by Joy, if she had exhibited this attitude toward Roman Catholics (Lewis 5).

LIZZIE AND THE LEWIS FAMILY

Before Lizzie worked for the Lewises, the 1901 census notes that she and her brother Charles Henry were employed at the home of Robert and Sassima Thompson in the suburban fringe of Belfast. Lizzie's brother, Charles, served the family as the coachman. Twenty-one-year-old Lizzie was the only domestic servant; the sole housemaid responsible for the first-class standard, 12-room house, and the needs of the entire family.⁴

C.S. Lewis entered the world on 29 November 1898, in the semi-detached Dundela Villas of Strandtown, East Belfast. He was born eighteen years and two days after Lizzie. His family still lived at Dundela Villas when she left the Thompson household to work for the Lewis family. This occurred sometime between the 31 March 1901 census, and early June when the Lewis family first holidayed in Castlerock, County Londonderry of what is now Northern Ireland.

That census reports only one Albert Lewis living in County Down at 21 Dundella (two '1's in the census) Avenue, (Victoria, Down).⁵ The occupants were thirty-seven-year-old Albert James Lewis, his wife, thirty-eight-year-old Florence Augusta, their two children, five-year-old Warren Hamilton, and two-year-old Clive Staples; all Church of Ireland congregants. Their servants included the unmarried, Presbyterian, 28-year-old Martha Barber, and the unmarried, Roman Catholic, 22-year-old Sarah Ann Conlon.⁶ Martha was listed as a 'house-Domestic Servant' and Sarah as a 'Cook-Domestic Servant.'

⁴ By comparison, Dundela Villas is considered a second-class standard home with 7 rooms and with two servants.

⁵ www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Down/Victoria/Dundella_Avenue/1221931/ (Accessed 28 March 2021).

⁶ Warnie told Sayer that the family endured Protestant hostility for hiring a Catholic servant. "Disparaging messages were occasionally chalked on the walls of the house or scrawled on notes pushed through the mail slot." One read "'send the dirty papists back to the Devil where they belong'" (Sayer 35).

Everyone in the household is listed as able to ‘Read and write’ except the youngest child, Clive.⁷

LIZZIE, LEWIS AND CASTLEROCK IN 1901

It was traditional for Victorian families to move “their entire way of life—maids, cooks, pets, visitors, books, clothes—into their country home for three or four months a year” (Lee 26). Warnie writes, “The highlight of our year was the annual seaside holiday” (“Memoir” 16). Green and Hooper note that “Early delights were those of rail travel each summer to and from nearby seaside resorts” (Green & Hooper 19). Once there, Flora’s holiday letters⁸ reveal that Lizzie very quickly became a much-trusted nurse who enjoyed an extremely close relationship to young Lewis. She fulfilled the role of a nurse and nanny, even functioning as a surrogate mother to the young lad (Gizella).

The Lewis family, minus Albert, who never left Belfast for lengthy periods of time, arrived in Castlerock two evenings before Flora’s first dated letter of Monday, 10 June. She was accompanied by Warnie and Clive, ages five and two respectively. Warnie would celebrate his sixth birthday on 16 June. They were attended by Martha and Lizzie. Sarah, the cook, left the Lewises just before the 1901 holiday for a similar position in another household. During the Castlerock holiday, she was replaced by Charlotte, Lizzie’s younger sister.

In her very first letter from Castlerock, Flora confided to Albert that Lizzie was very happy at Castlerock. She particularly noted that Lizzie brought her bathing suit. The new nurse may have been personally looking forward to the ocean, but Flora’s comment also recognizes that Lizzie was prepared to care for Warnie and Lewis, who both fell in love the ocean on their first “holiday at the sea,” a metaphor Lewis will eventually famously use for Heaven (Lewis “The Weight of Glory” 26).⁹ In addition, Flora notes that Lizzie’s positive attitude about the inconvenience of packing the household, travelling with two

⁷www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Down/Victoria/Dundella_Avenue/1221931/ (Accessed 13 March 2021).

⁸ The paraphrased content of the letters from Flora Lewis to Albert Lewis originates in the *Memoirs of the Lewis Family, 1850-1930*. 1933. Marion E. Wade Center, Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL. The author expresses gratitude for the invaluable assistance of Laura Schmidt, archivist at the Wade Center.

⁹ In 1900, when Jack was one year old, the family holidayed only 25 miles from Castlerock in Ballycastle. But they stayed on Quay (pronounced ‘key’) Road which runs perpendicular to, and not alongside the ocean, and it stops before it reaches the seaside. In her letters to Albert, Flora mentioned that she went to the beach, but doesn’t mention if the boys accompanied her. Instead, she highlighted their activity around the house. It is very unlikely that Lewis’s “holiday at the sea” metaphor originated in 1900, and very likely that its source is the 1901 Castlerock holiday.

small children, and then setting up in the rented home, was different than the other servants. It merited Flora's immediate attention and praise.

It appears that Martha, Lewis's original nurse, and Lizzie overlapped their nursing care of Lewis in what may have been a planned effort to help him adjust to a new nurse. Flora was diligent in corresponding with Albert about the transition. She was initially concerned about the change, but Lewis rapidly became very comfortable with Lizzie. To Flora's great relief, he made a lot less fuss about the new nurse than she expected. He was very happy, even thriving. He was doing so well with Lizzie, that he promised to sleep with her, rather than his brother or mother. If he happened to awaken in the middle of the night, he was already calling for Lizzie, instead of his mother. Flora revealed that Lizzie felt so responsible for Lewis that, one Sunday, she missed church to prepare his supper. When Lewis experienced his first lightning and thunderstorm, he found comfort hiding his face in Lizzie's lap for the duration of the storm. Afterward, she made him tea to help calm him. Flora felt so quickly confident about Lizzie that she encouraged Albert to maintain their plans for a personal holiday in Scotland later that year, which they did. When Lizzie and Charlotte went out for their free night one Sunday evening, Flora revealed how dependent she was on Lizzie, and complained about being overwhelmed with the children.

In addition to caring for the children's physical well-being, Lizzie also entertained them. She accompanied them to swim almost daily. On rainy days she got them out of the house and took them to play on the platform of the train station. One day, Flora complained to Albert that the boys were noisily dragging around the house, cocoa cans tied to strings (perhaps home-made trains), that Lizzie made for them. When Flora thought Lizzie invested too much time cleaning the nursery, she blamed her for the lack of time to write Albert. Yet Flora was absolutely confident that Lizzie would defend Lewis and Warnie from the rats that shared their rented home.

On 28 July, Flora informed Albert that Lizzie alone took the children to the neighboring Downhill Demesne. Her trips with the boys to the ocean and the train station proved her trustworthiness. But this excursion represented a serious moment of confidence in Lizzie. The Demesne rests atop a perilously high, 120-foot vertical drop. Only an easily climbable four-foot, moss-laden stone wall separates the cliff and the Atlantic Ocean far below.¹⁰ Seven miles of

¹⁰ Warnie states that when his younger brother first visited the seaside, he had no sense of proportion and interpreted the unending, horizontal vastness of the ocean as a vertical wall of water. This may be the source for the thirty-foot wall of water that separates the Silver Sea from Aslan's Country in *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader."* Once again, it is also probably this holiday, and not the 1900 holiday at Ballycastle, that gives Lewis this sense. The 1901 holiday home in Castlerock rested directly above the Atlantic Ocean, affording unhindered views. Downhill Demesne also offers spectacular a 120-foot view above the

uninterrupted wide, sandy beaches stretch beneath its majestic overlook. Downhill consists of 416 acres of volcanically enriched flora, emerald flowing grass, and deep, hidden valleys, canopied by tall forests that shelter major portions of the lower expanse. Despite the potential dangers of falling or getting lost, Flora trusted Lizzie to take her sons on so long a hike that the boys returned exhausted.¹¹

Flora taught Lewis Latin, French, and math but,

It is surprising that Flora does not seem to have read to her children, taught them nursery rhymes, or told them bedtime stories. [...] The reading and story telling was done by Lizzie Endicott. When he was two and a half, we are told that she read "The Three Bears" to him. She read many more fairy tales, and also told him the stories she had heard in her own childhood in County Down, stories of leprechauns and the crocks of gold hidden at the foot of the rainbow; of Becuma of the White Skin; or of Fionn, Morgan, and Cuchulain. (Sayer 43)¹²

Downhill Demesne is a Narnian-like world unto itself. The low-lying outline of the green, but "unattainable," Castlereagh Hills taught longing to Lewis (*Surprised* 6). Yet Warnie stated those same hills were also a boundary, limiting their world ("Memoir" 14). Standing atop the Demesne or on its beaches below, Lewis stepped into that 'other' world for the first time. This is where he gained his first real sense of the 'Northernness' that would later define his lifelong yearning for other worlds (Sayer 40). His first experience with beauty was through Warnie's tin-lid, toy garden, a product of Dundela Villa's small garden (*Surprised* 5). That entire garden, however, was only an extremely miniature version of Downhill Demesne. Far beyond any previous experience, it magnified his already growing imagination, multiplied his awareness of the world around him, and engaged every sense. With its isolated romantic setting, gargantuan Bishop's Castle and star-like Mussenden Temple, Downhill served as an earlier model of Cair Paravel than Dunluce Castle.¹³

Atlantic. Looking out a seaward window in their rented home, standing on the beach, or on the Demesne property, it is easy to see how a young child might interpret the ocean as rising straight up and into the clouds.

¹¹ Warnie took his tricycle and Flora noted this meant that he had to walk most of the way.

¹² Lizzie was born in County Donegal but spent her childhood there and, like Lewis, also in County Down.

¹³ Many scholars think Dunluce Castle serves as an early, and perhaps the most comprehensive model for Cair Paravel. Lewis visited Downhill Demesne several times on each holiday of 1901, '04 and '06. Yet, according to a letter written to Arthur Greeves, he visited Dunluce Castle only once in his youth, 1906. In an earlier *Mythlore* article, the author has demonstrated that Downhill Demesne, adjacent to Castlerock, served as an

LIZZIE, LEWIS AND CASTLEROCK IN 1904

The family did not holiday in Castlerock during the next two years. They returned in 1904, staying at Clifton Terrace, a multi-story, apartment building. The train tracks were less than 25 feet from the apartment and only a short distance to the station. On one occasion, Flora awakened before dawn to find the boys already looking out the window for the first train of the morning. Warnie celebrated his ninth birthday on this holiday. Albert in Belfast, and Flora in Castlerock, observed their tenth anniversary. In her second letter, Flora mentioned that the boys again walked to Downhill Demesne but this time, without the fairy-story telling, Lizzie. This was because she married Samuel on 18 April of that year. The Lewis holiday extended from July to August, and she was pregnant with her first child by September.

Lizzie was, however, still employed in some fashion by the Lewis family. She remained in Belfast caring for Albert, but from her own home. In one letter, Flora suggested that Lizzie might care for the family's pet rabbit if Albert chose to spend the weekend at Castlerock. Flora was sure that Lizzie would either come to their home or take the rabbit to her home. Her service at this juncture may have been on a part time or as-needed basis. Yet Flora preferred asking Lizzie to help, until she and the servants returned, rather than bringing a stranger into the house. On 22 August, Flora wished Albert a happy birthday (he was born on the 23rd) and mentioned that Lizzie could get some bacon for him from 'Mitchell's.' Albert's father was also coming to visit him at Dundela Villas. Flora encouraged Albert to have Lizzie come to the house each morning and prepare something more than just eggs for the elder Lewis. Finally, Flora noted that she would feed the children before they caught the return train for Belfast, and Lizzie could prepare something for them when they arrived at Dundela Villas.

LITTLE LEA

The Lewis family moved into their new home, the Leeborough House, affectionately known as 'Little Lea', on Easter Sunday evening, 23 April 1905. Lizzie is not mentioned in any family record or correspondence after her service at Dundela Villas. The family returned to Castlerock during the summer months of 1906, but again, without Lizzie.¹⁴

earlier, more exact, and substantial model for the Narnian capital of Cair Paravel (Weems 226-239).

¹⁴ There is no record of any interaction between Lizzie and the Lewis family after the 1904 Castlerock letters. Her own children and grandchildren were aware that she was Lewis's nurse but, based on Lizzie's representation of her service to the Lewis family, did not view the relationship as extraordinary. From their perspective, Lizzie, as a proper Victorian nurse, chose to maintain the privacy of her service to the Lewis family. It would have been

Flora and the boys enjoyed their 1907 holiday in the small town of Berneval-le-Grand in Normandy, not far from Dieppe, France. Except for his WWI tour in France, this was Lewis's only foreign excursion until he and his new wife, Joy, visited Greece in 1960. Neither Lewis nor Warnie knew that the French holiday was Flora's last. She endured surgery for abdominal cancer in February of 1908. She enjoyed a short respite but was bedbound by June. She died at Little Lea on 23 August of that year (Albert's birthday). The next month, Lewis was bound for the infamous Wynyard School in England. Unless prohibited by war or illness, he would faithfully return to Ireland each year for the rest of his life. His once-joyful, family holidays, however, slowly faded into distant memory—but they were not forgotten. He revived both Castlerock and Lizzie in his most popular fantasy writings.

LIZZIE'S INFLUENCE

Lizzie's impact in the life of C.S. Lewis was much more in-depth and expansive than the approximately three years that she served the Lewis family, or than can be unearthed in this article. Three illustrations, however, demonstrate the powerful extent of her short time as Lewis's nurse.

First, Lizzie introduced Lewis to fairy stories. Although Lewis was very grateful for Albert and Flora's passion for reading, he also confessed that "Neither had ever listened for the horns of elfland" (*Surprised* 3). Instead, it was Lizzie who first opened the wardrobe door to the enchanted worlds that thrilled and haunted him. She shared the stories that shaped his romantic reading, early passion for otherworldliness, and his childhood and adult writing.

To begin with, Lizzie Endicott would tell him fairy stories from her home county of Donegal—of leprechauns, of the Daoine Sidhe, and of the Isle of Mell Moy which was to make him such an enthusiastic reader of James Stephens and the early Yeats. Then came the early Beatrix Potter volumes, hot from the press (Green & Hooper 22). "The family's Irish nurse Lizzie Endicott," writes Brian Sibley,

who looked after the boys, told them wonderful stories about leprechauns and ancient gods. Listening to Lizzie's tales was for Jack the beginning of a lifelong fascination with the extraordinary characters and creatures of myth and legend. (Sibley 9)

considered 'name-dropping' to mention her connection to Lewis, especially after he became a world-famous author. However, it might be that Lizzie named her first daughter, Florence Amelia Jane in honor and memory of Lewis's mother, Florence Augusta Lewis.

One humorous story that Warnie recalled was an incident that took place during the “old house era” (at Dundela Villas), when a nurse (undoubtedly Lizzie) told Lewis about leprechauns and their pots of gold at the end of rainbows. He was convinced that such a treasure was buried in their driveway, and persuaded Warnie to help him dig for it. As their father made his way toward their home after dark, he fell into the treasureless, empty hole. Warnie, being the eldest child, bore the brunt of his father’s anger and wrote, “gold mining is an activity which I have left severely alone ever since” (C.S. Lewis: *A Biography* 1).

That early, supernatural, otherworldly influence expresses itself in multiple genres of Lewis’s literary inventory. The *Pilgrim’s Regress*, (allegorical fiction), *The Screwtape Letters* (epistolary fiction novel), The Ransom Trilogy (science fiction), *The Great Divorce*, (fantasy fiction) and “The Weight of Glory” (nonfiction sermon), are only a few examples. It ultimately reveals itself in Lewis’s most famous faery story, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In his dedication to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Lewis noted that Lucy Barfield is “already too old for fairy tales” but will one day return to them, and will, at that time, remove his book from her shelf and read it. He also referred to the first three published books in *The Chronicles of Narnia* series as “my fairy-tales” in a letter to an American pen-pal (*Letters to an American Lady* 5). This makes Lizzie Endicott the nurse of elfland. Her lap is the cradle of the *Chronicles*. She is the woman behind the wardrobe.

Second, Lewis “supposes” Lizzie in various venues. David Downing noted that Lewis repeatedly used the “words *nurse* and *nursery* virtually always [to] connote that which is simple, but also that which is true and good.” Downing highlighted that in his essay, *The Poison of Subjectivism*, Lewis warned, “Unless we return to the crude and nursery-like belief in objective values, we perish.” Downing also called our attention to Reepicheep, who “discovers [...] the nursery rhyme about the ‘utter East’ in his cradle.” Finally, Downing reminds us that Jane Studdock is rescued from spiritual destruction when she meets a woman who reminded her of her childhood nurse (Downing 26).

Lewis also honored Lizzie as Caspian’s nurse in *Prince Caspian*. The unnamed caregiver used fairy stories to introduce the young prince to Narnia. When she was discovered as a believer in the old magic, she was replaced by Dr. Cornelius. But he too, was a believer and led Caspian into the real Narnia. His half dwarf and human blood may reflect Lizzie’s English parents and her Irish raising. Andrew Lazo also detects a definite echo of Lizzie in Poobi, Orual’s faithful maid and comforting nurse whom she visits near the end of *Till We Have Faces*.¹⁵ Each of these examples is a tribute to Lizzie. She opened the window of

¹⁵ Text to the author. (Used with permission).

his imagination at Dundela Villas and the door to faery worlds at Castlerock and Downhill Demesne.

Third, Lewis stated that it was “Through Lizzie we struck our roots into the peasantry of County Down” (*Surprised* 4). This was a significant personal and professional acknowledgement. She made him aware of class distinctions, often displayed in Ireland’s sectarian segregation. This was, in turn, instrumental in forming Lewis’s disdain for political and religious divisions, as well as his appreciation for mere Christianity.¹⁶ Her “peasantry” also kept him from hardening “into an arrogant prig” at Oxford.¹⁷ And it informed his passion for the nonacademic “everyman” of England, which motivated his popular translations of High-Church, stained-glass Christianity into the working-class vernacular of Lizzie’s world. Finally, there is substantial evidence that Lewis’s nickname, “Jacksie,” was borrowed from a working class (“peasantry”) train driver, who was a friend of Lizzie’s.¹⁸

DEATH AND BURIAL

Lizzie died one month shy of her eighty-seventh birthday; four years and three days after Lewis (22 November 1963) and ten months after her husband.

Her obituary in the *Belfast Telegraph* reads,

THOMPSON—November 25, 1967. At Hospital. ELIZABETH ANN, dearly-Loved wife of the late Samuel F. Thompson, late of 63 Craigmores Street. Funeral from her son’s Residence, 59 Craigmores Street, on Monday, 27th inst [...] at 2:30 pm., to Knockbreda Cemetery. House Private—Deeply regretted by her Sorrowing Sons, Daughters and all The Family Circle.¹⁹

¹⁶ In 1951, Lewis was offered a CBE (Commander of the British Empire) by Winston Churchill but declined the honor. On 14 December 1951, he wrote, “I feel greatly obliged to the Prime Minister, and so far as my personal feelings are concerned this honour would be highly agreeable. There are always however knaves who say, and fools who believe, that my religious writings are all covert anti-Leftist propaganda, and my appearance in the Honours List would of course strengthen their hands. It is therefore better that I should not appear there.” (*Collected Letters* III.147)

¹⁷ In a text to the author, Dr. Crystal Hurd stated, “I firmly believe [...] that Lewis never hardened into an arrogant prig because of his exposure to working class folks like Lizzie. He had connections and relationships with them.” (Used with permission).

¹⁸ One chapter in the author’s recently submitted doctoral treatise (Northwind Theological Seminary) is dedicated to demonstrating the substance of this scenario. It is also the subject of an article to be published in the 2023 Spring issue of the *Journal of Inking Studies*.

¹⁹ *Belfast Telegraph*, 25 November 1967.

She and Samuel are buried together in Knockbreda Cemetery, one of Belfast's oldest graveyards. Their resting place is simply, yet lovingly marked by a single, tin plated (now battered) flower bowl.²⁰ Located between Church Road and Saintfield Road, the cemetery is beautifully situated on one of the long, sloping Castlereagh Hills that taught Lewis "longing—*Sehnsucht*" before he was six years old (*Surprised* 7). It is an appropriate resting place for Lewis's beloved nurse. His birthplace at Dundela Villas, where she served as his nurse, is a mere three and a half miles away. It is set between the cemetery and Cave Hill, with its Belfast Castle, both easily visible from Lizzie's grave. Her young Jack loved that view of the majestic-looking castle, set on a hill that is crested with the silhouette of a sleeping giant.²¹ Combined, the whole scene is reminiscent of the landscapes that most resemble Jack's famous, fantasy worlds, and it is a fitting tribute to his beloved nurse.

CONCLUSION

Lizzie Endicott is a vastly more significant person than indicated by most Lewis biographies. Before this article, no research has provided an in-depth study of her life or influence. Understanding her relationship to Lewis offers additional insight into Lewis as a man, Christian, academic and author. It also provides more insight into the origin and direction of his romantic passion. Her influence is substantial and deserves further consideration. Although his memoir of her is brief, her influence is enduring. Her impact had a lifelong effect on the boy who became a world-renowned Oxford tutor, author, and Christian apologist. Philip Henderson wrote about William Morris, "Everything in Morris's childhood contributed to what he was later to become" (Henderson 7). This is also true of Lewis. And if indeed, "the Child is the father of the Man" (Wordsworth l.7), then Lizzie Endicott is the faery godmother to the child who became the man, C.S. 'Jack' Lewis.

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The picture (previously unpublished except for its sole, one-day appearance in the *Belfast Telegraph* 16 April 1964 in celebration of the couples' 60th anniversary), on page 238 of this article is used by permission of Lizzie's great-great grandson.

²⁰ The author wishes to express appreciation to Helena Herd for pictures of the Knockbreda cemetery, and Lizzie's grave. He and his wife, Teana, personally visited the grave in March 2022.

²¹ That silhouette is the suspected inspiration for Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

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