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Children's Literature Association Quarterly

Johns Hopkins University Press

Volume 29, Number 1-2, Spring/Summer 2004

pp. 32-44

10.1353/chq.0.0041

ARTICLE

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

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Jean E. Graham (bio)

The White Witch of the Narnian Chronicles "is of course Circe," C. S. Lewis

wrote in an unpublished letter in 1954 (Schakel 140). But the Witch is also Lilit h, as Mr. Beaver explains to the children in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*: "She comes of your father Adam's . . . first wife, her they called Lilit h" (81). Although there are influences on Lewis' Witch other than Circe and Lilit h, the White Witch and her successor, the Emerald Witch, possess dangerous qualities—the qualities of female sexuality and power—that can derive only from Circe and Lilit h in their mythological, Renaissance, and Victorian manifestations. Lewis' Christian mythos unites Circe and Lilit h with Satan, in the latter's biblical and Miltonic manifestations. Good and evil become polarized along gender lines: the deity remains masculine, while the two witches replace male characters in assuming responsibility for the fall of mankind and the crucifixion of mankind's Savior. On the other hand, the girls in the Narnian Chronicles play active, positive roles.¹ The impression left on readers by Lewis' children's stories, and confirmed by his other fiction, is that puberty ends the freedom of girls to assume nontraditional roles. A girl influenced by Narnia might well determine never to grow up. Thus, a study of his application of the Lilit h and Circe myths to children's literature demonstrates that, although Lewis rather predictably sanitizes the sexuality of the two myths, his Narnian novels contain all the same ambivalence about female power as does his writing for adult audiences.

As a literary scholar, Lewis was familiar with the Circe of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid: her enchanted food and phallic wand capable of transforming men into swine, her beauty and her seduction of Odysseus. In *The Odyssey*, "the nymph with lovely braids" mixed a potion for Odysseus' men, "but into the brew she stirred her wicked drugs / to wipe from their memories any thought of home" (X, 259-60). Then "suddenly / she struck with her wand, drove them into her pigsties, / all of them bristling into swine" (261-63). Odysseus is protected from her magic by a magic herb, moly, given him by Hermes; when Circe tries to transform Odysseus, he draws his sword "and rush[es] her [End Page 32] fast as if to run her through" (358). "Come, sheathe your sword, let's go to bed together," she responds (370). Ovid's *Metamorphoses* retells the story with added

commentary. Although Circe is the daughter of the Sun, she is quite capable of summoning "Night and the gods of Night / . . . forth from hell; Chaos itself she invoked;/ and Hecate, witchcraft's mistress" (XIV, 5-7). Ovid makes the conflict between Circe and Odysseus even more a competition of phallic symbols, as Odysseus uses the moly to "fend off the wand/ she waved about"; when he draws his sword, she gladly concedes to a better man: "She had met her match, her master. / She wasn't at all dismayed, but pleased, even delighted" (XIV, 283-84, 286-87).

The phallic wand was an important part of Circe's portrayal in early modern Europe, when her usurpation of masculine power was emphasized in woodcuts showing her with a wand, while a male victim kneels before her. In the opinion of Judith Yarnall, "[t]hese woodcuts accord well with the woman-on-top *topos* that sported with—but did not seriously challenge—the prevailing sexual order of the times" (101). Circe and her wand feature in masques such as William Browne's *Inner Temple Masque* (1614) and Aurelian Townshend's *Tempe Restored* (1632), as well as in art (Yarnall 147).

The early modern period's most significant literary Circe figure is Comus in Milton's *Maske* (1634); this is also the Circe probably most familiar to Lewis, who taught and wrote about Milton. The son of Circe and Bacchus, Comus has inherited from his mother her "charmed Cup," a taste from which turns humans into swine (51). Comus kidnaps the nameless Lady, imprisoning her in a chair with a wave of his wand. One of Lewis' witches handles a prince similarly. While...

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