

## **Literature and the Shaman: Jung, Trauma Stories and New Origin Stories in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis**

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“Yes. Of course you’ll get back to Narnia again some day. Once a king in Narnia, always a king in Narnia. But don’t go trying to use the same route twice. Indeed, don’t *try* to get there at all. It’ll happen when you’re not looking for it.” (Lewis, 1950: 203)

Literature is now studied in universities as an “academic discipline.” A degree in vernacular literature is a respectable qualification signifying years of study. Such a state of affairs indicates both cultural strengths and, I believe, an endemic weakness for the great enterprise of the literary arts. For literature has been substantiated by a body of literary *theory*, which has accreted round the core material as scholars need to justify the intellectual depth of their courses. This is advantageous because literature as a *separate* discipline has been stripped of some of its cultural and psychological functions.

One key point here is that the whole notion of academic disciplines is an Enlightenment inheritance of *reductionism*. Isaac Newton argued that reality should be reduced to its smallest component parts. These should then be studied with the goal of eventually stitching up the autonomous and different truths into a grand whole. “Disciplines” are significant here, for they are engendered by different grounds for knowledge or epistemologies. The debate about literary epistemology goes back at least as far as Plato, who famously condemned poets for merely producing “appearances.”<sup>1</sup>

In the modern university era, literary theory offers a number of justifications for studying literature or epistemologies for the discipline. Extremes range from a grand canon of “authorized” texts as transcendent of historical matter, to the melting away of literature as a distinct category in the face of Marxist analyses of power or neo-Darwinian ideas of human biological motivation. Literature is thus, on the one hand, a kind of “holy” entirety, sufficient unto itself, or, on the other hand, nothing more than a mystification of baser drives for power and/or sex.

Here, I argue, is an important rationale for Jung in literary studies. The majority of my research has been into Jungian psychoanalysis in relation to literature. I have stuck with it because it is the only framework I know that grants the literary text meaningful autonomy as well as intrinsic cultural, historical, and political embodiment. Such an astonishing theoretical flexibility is owed to Jung's only foundational principle. There is only one Jungian proposition, I contend, that operates as a metaphysical term; one that cannot be discarded from his psychology. It is his definition of the unconscious as creative and, in part, unknowable. Moreover, Jung himself takes the term seriously, by asserting that this means that all knowledge is provisional to an unknown degree.

Nobody drew the conclusion that if the subject of knowledge, the psyche, were in fact a veiled form of existence not immediately accessible to consciousness, then all our knowledge must be incomplete, and moreover to a degree that we cannot determine. (Jung, *CW* 8: par. 358)<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, a Jungian frame for literature cannot rule out anything absolutely. Nor does it prescribe the criteria for making knowledge *about* literature. Hence it can include those dimensions of mental processing often left out of modern reductionist disciplines, such as intuition, feeling, tacit knowledge, and aesthetic considerations. For instance, within this broad Jungian frame a materialist understanding of literature may be philosophically cogent, may be used to reveal fascinating occluded patterns of power in the text; what it may not do is claim to be the *complete* or *definitive* way of understanding the text.

Jung's literary theory always has a space for the Other, whether that other be the other race, gender, space, nature, the sacred, or the other idea. So a Jungian approach to literature means that the text can be understood as expressing a particular historical moment while, at the same time, retaining the possibility of "other" kinds of reading.

In this way, Jungian literary theory can show how literature produces meaning within itself, while also refusing to be cut off from the larger culture. Jung's psychology can be used to form a space for a literary discipline with an ethical connection to the world, to other people, and to the cosmic environment. Yet Jungian notions can take the cultural project of literature even further.

For Jung understood that the Enlightenment's paradigm of a reductionist science that creates separate disciplines that claim a methodology of neutrality and objectivity, was no longer possible as the *grounds* for valid research, be it scientific or artistic. Whereas Newtonian science, insisting upon a discrete "distance" between observer and observed, expects to be functional in a mechanical universe, Jung questioned the validity of this position. He knew that there is never complete objectivity, that psyche is always observing itself.

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A similar plight was discovered by scientists trying to clean up language to find an “objective” medium to express their work. It proved impossible to distinguish between “observing” words and “theory” words: every act of science happens inside language and is both obviously and insidiously shaped by it. If we are always *inside* what we are trying to know, then the complete division into different disciplines starts to break down. So with a major (scientific) paradigm shift in how we look at the world, we need to go back to this thing we call “literature” and look at how it fares within different paradigms or different world views.

For example, in our ancient history and in some contemporary non-Western cultures, there is no such thing as an author, an artist, or even literature. Just as there is no such thing as a priest teaching people religion, or any specialist doctors. Rather, these cultures have *shamans* who are story makers, artists, healers, and mediators of the sacred all at once. Art by its nature is a vital aspect of healing, and religion encompasses both. Even our Western medicine, built upon separation of mind and body, is starting to appreciate thousands of years of shamanic culture by including storytellers, animals, rituals, and imaginative exercises in hospitals. So can literary studies learn from shamanism?

The first question is an epistemological one: Can we continue to assert the validity of separate disciplines if we cannot claim objective view points? I further suggest that the question of learning from shamanism is also an ethical and postcolonial one. That shamanic artefacts continue to be regarded anthropologically rather than as art is colonial and demeaning when it ignores their aesthetic achievement. Categories assumed by Western museums, often created on Enlightenment principles, demonstrate blindness and incomprehension of holistic shamanic cultures, an incomprehension that furthers ethically inadequate assumptions about “other” cultures.

Thus what we have gained so far in literary studies by reading texts “ecologically” has arguably been muted if the structure of the “discipline” has been permitted to purge aesthetics of its social and ethical energy. We are in danger of missing the potential role of “literature” in going beyond “representation” to enacting social and psychic values. Meanwhile, we look for social and psychic “answers” in non-Western art, while not exploring what Western culture values very highly: artistic excellence.

To return to the original consideration of the value of the literary discipline, the question is asked even more urgently in view of this century’s environmental crisis. Of course, we can study literature as an excellent source of the failed values that got us into this mess. But can literature really help make a positive difference? If we look for values in literature beyond evidence of cultural failure, will we find

something beyond the reductionist box of aesthetics? So far it has been an aesthetics that we have torn away from positive social *functions* and only allowed to be the static entity of “art for art’s sake.” At most, literature becomes a space where our base greed is analytically revealed.

Jung himself escaped from Enlightenment reductionism into alchemy, for here was a textual practice that combined the ancestry of material science with the shamanic arts of symbolism, poetry, and higher consciousness. Shamanic art and literature are embedded in its culture, while drawing upon something very much like the Jungian notion of the Other as its sacred center. By being deeply embodied yet invoking a true Other, the shaman strives to incarnate a spirituality or psychic liveliness that not only diagnoses but also helps the culture to be reborn. So I am suggesting that the Jungian frame can work for a traditional literary studies discipline. However, it can also be used to open up the spaces in knowledge disciplines to draw in shamanic qualities to our culture.

In fact, I am suggesting that we might model future literary criticism on shamanism and so break down what is harmfully reductive about it. This would enable the study of literature to look at the artistic, ideological, numinous, health-promoting aspects of literature *together*. That way we would treat art as the outcome of shamanic practices in which personal, collective, embodied, ideological, creative, and numinous aspects are all valued as entangled qualities. *We would direct literary studies towards psychological and cultural healing.*

In the 1950s, the theologian and author C. S. Lewis, who was aware of Jung’s ideas, was also similarly deeply troubled about the psyche of modern man. Unlike Jung, he was most devoted to what he considered to be a Christian orthodoxy. Also unlike Jung, and perhaps paradoxically for a staunch Christian, he took seriously the psychological planetary values of medieval astrology. He considered that these ultimately would lead the believer into the city of the true God. Yet, crucially like Jung, Lewis adopted the notion of archetypes. Taking them as planetary *and psychological dominants*, Lewis believed that his age was sick with the over-dominance of leaden Saturn. As Michael Ward has shown, in *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis*, he wrote his most famous children’s books to rectify this dangerous psychic sickness in modernity.

Hence the Narnia chronicles are not *primarily* Christian allegories. Of course, they do allegorize Christian stories, most notably the death and resurrection of Jesus as Aslan, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950). My point is that their foremost objective is not the allegorical implied scriptural significance but rather something more participatory and transformative for the reader. Like Jung’s patients in analysis, the reader is led by the text as a sort of psychopomp into the spiritual and psychological rebirth through archetypal symbolism. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is woven from Jovial motifs: it enacts the blessings of Jove, which Lewis took to be festivals, joy, healed communities, and winter giving

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way to spring. As Ward explains, like Jung, Lewis sought to evoke psychological depth (230).

The archetypes communicated by each Chronicle feed what Lewis called “the primitive or instinctive mind.” He was not a convinced Jungian, but when he tried to account for the popularity of fairy-tales and fantasy, he admitted that Jung’s explanation was one of the theories that was most often in his mind: “For Jung, fairy tale liberates Archetypes which dwell in the collective unconscious.” Lewis had a high view of archetypes in general (he thought, for instance, that people were born knowing Circe and Alcina), and he was interested, in particular, in the literary use of “archetypal patterns.” Giants, dragons, paradises, gods, and the like are “the expression of certain basic elements in man’s spiritual experience.” Such symbols, in Lewis’s view, were able to reach a broader audience and touch deeper parts of an audience than realistic novels, because they spring from a more fundamental source. “The work of Jung and Freud, and the practice of many modern poets and prose writers, has taught us [that] . . . symbols are the natural speech of the soul, a language older and more universal than words.” And if he considered symbols in general to have this power, it is to be expected that he would view the seven astrological archetypes, those “spiritual symbols of permanent value,” as even more potently communicative. (230)

Before looking at *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* more closely, it is worth stepping out of the separate discipline of literary studies again to go to Jerome Bernstein’s research on the healing power of stories. For his arguments stem from the clinic rather than the classroom or the literary text. He describes how his book, *Living in the Borderland* (2005), began when patients started to present symptoms that they would not let him explain or explain away as stemming from their own psyches.

One woman insisted that her mind was invaded by the distress of cows as they were about to be sent to market. Another heard the wood of her house whispering to her about a time when it had been living, breathing trees. Therapists of all persuasions are accustomed to trying to reassure patients by attributing this lively presence of nature to a *disguised* form of something in the person’s own history. Does the distress of the cows signify the patient’s own childhood fears? No, she insisted, it’s the *cows!* (p.7 ). It is not something inside me that “I” am projecting onto nature.

This struggle over the meaning of the “Other” begins to sound like those poets who insist that the radical strangeness of their words should not be converted into something more convenient, should not be *domesticated*. T. S. Eliot was famous for responding to all queries about the meaning of his works by reading out loud the offending lines, and saying no more. He refused to convert wild poetry into

something more palatable, more rational. *It's the cows!* So *Living in the Borderland* records Bernstein's change of textual analysis. He realizes that, although these patients who appear to demonstrate a psychic connectedness to nature make no sense to the rational paradigm of modernity, it is the paradigm that should be challenged.

The history of Western consciousness is one of a slow withdrawal from nature. The philosopher Descartes completed the process by stressing that mind was effectively divorced from the body and hence from embodied natural existence. We address the world as subjects confronting an "object" from which we are forever severed. As Descartes states in his *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking for Truth in the Sciences* (1637), animals were machines.

It rather shows that they [animals] have no mind at all, and that it is nature which acts in them according to the disposition of their organs, just as a clock, which is only composed of wheels and weights, is able to tell the hours and measure the time more correctly than we can do with all our wisdom. (qtd. in Narby 47)

Yet the recent colonial history of Western consciousness is of encounter with the "Other" as an-other culture. To many non-Western peoples, the notion of human separation from nature is itself madness, a sickness of the soul. In particular, Bernstein's book draws on his long association and work with the Navajo people of New Mexico. To them, nature is animate; it speaks to them. Nature is the living cosmos and can take the form of spirits who communicate and converse with the people. The traditional Navajo is therefore shamanic, raised upon profound ideas of connection rather than separation. So, to them, literature is not a separate discipline to be studied in itself; it is rather part of a *holistic* culture of art-medicine-religion.

Here the literary heritage of the Navajo is the great complex cycles of myths that describe and enact the interweaving of nature, gods, animals, and humans. Not conceived as a separate body of texts, even oral texts, Navajo cosmology is narrative in rituals where they *enact and embody* the integration of human psyche with cosmos. These stories are not stories in the Western sense but rather collective *imaginative happenings*. They are not read in private for pleasure. They are performed at specific times and as acts of healing. Myths are sung, chanted, painted with sand, by shamans and the people guided by them.

If someone is ill, it is a sign that the *whole* is damaged, meaning not just the whole person or people but the whole universe of beings woven together. So the whole is restored by means of respinning the cosmic myths that stitch together consciousness with the universe. Navajo literature is psychology and also medicine, and also philosophy, art and sacred history all at once. What is important to a Navajo is to be reconnected to his/her origins *because the mythical origin story produces being, a being connected to nature*.

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Evidently, the Navajo and cultures like them have a radically different understanding of narrative in the human sense of existing in the world. C. G. Jung and Jerome Bernstein take similar paths in the face of this “other” practice of healing. Jung tried to recreate shamanic conditions in his consulting room. In his writings, he laments that the modern world has lost the psychic bond to its most prominent origin stories in organized religion. Ultimately, he offers the reader a “new origin story” in his “personal myth,” which is then formalized in the establishment of Jungian psychology itself. (See *Jung as a Writer*, where I explore this.)

In a later era, Bernstein is able to expand the resources for a new origin story. He takes what is probably the most psychically potent origin story of the last one hundred and fifty years, “evolution,” and extends it. For surely, he argues, if body evolves then so must consciousness. Given the problems and endemic psychic sickness of Western modernity, there is little evidence to suppose that the hardening of the Western ego in its refusal to be connected to any “other,” let alone nature, represents the heights of psychic evolution.

Bernstein believes that his patients who feel themselves to be part of nature may be the forerunners of a new evolved consciousness. It may be that in order to save ourselves we are unconsciously reweaving our souls into nature for personal and for collective healing. After all, it is this insistence on separation from nature, taken to an extreme, that has permitted and even encouraged the environmental crisis. If the cows are crying, it may not be just for themselves.

So “Borderlanders,” as Bernstein calls his patients who experience a powerful embeddedness in nature, are bringing a *new origin story* to modernity. We can re-originate ourselves by learning a new consciousness, a new openness of psyche to the Other. On the other hand, we cannot forget our inner wounds’ witness to developing in a sick society. For these wounds we need another type of story, a trauma story. In a dysfunctional society, open wounds are concealed, denied and forgotten because they are just too painful to contemplate. What is needed first is to put together a trauma story, one to hold that intimate pain. Then it may be possible to seek further, wider, and deeper to a new origin story, which can, like Navajo myth, reconnect us to the universe.

This brings me to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, written after the Second World War about children evacuated from the Blitz, the savage bombing of London. Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy arrive at the large country house of a white-haired professor. While nothing at all is mentioned about the experience of the war in London, in the opening pages the children realize that they are in a different world.

[Peter] “. . . I say, let’s go and explore tomorrow. You might find anything in a place like this. Did you see those mountains as we came along? And the woods? There might be eagles. There might be stags. There’ll be hawks.” (11)

However, it is the youngest, Lucy, who first discovers an “other” world. While hiding in a large wardrobe in an empty room, she accidentally finds herself in a snow-covered forest. This proves to be the land of Narnia, where animals can talk, trees move, and the land itself suffers from being frozen alive by an evil White Witch. Lucy meets a friendly faun, Mr Tumnus, who gives her a thoroughly traditional English tea. Unfortunately, he then reveals that he is really a spy for the White Witch and has promised to betray all humans, or “Sons of Adam and Daughters of Eve,” to her. Nonetheless, charmed by Lucy’s innocence and friendship, Mr Tumnus lets her go.

Returning to the world on the other side of the wardrobe, Lucy’s perfectly truthful story is not believed. Indeed, Peter and Susan fear that she has gone mad, until the Professor persuades them, in the name of logic, to suspend their disbelief. Lucy meets the fate of all too many of Bernstein’s Borderlanders in being labeled “insane” for going beyond what her society defines as rational.

The next time Narnia reveals itself, Edmund and Lucy have separate and very different adventures. Lucy cements her friendship with Mr Tumnus, while Edmund is plucked from the snow by a dazzlingly beautiful woman (the Witch) who feeds him magically addictive Turkish Delight. She promises to make him a Prince, setting him above his siblings. The price, the Witch says, is to bring all four of them to her castle. Back in the Professor’s house, Edmund betrays Lucy and claims to have been “making up” Narnia to humor her.

Finally, all four children tumble into snowy Narnia, discover Edmund’s untruthfulness and learn that the White Witch has captured Mr Tumnus for befriending Lucy. Alone in the snow they realize that they cannot abandon him. First guided by a robin, then meeting a pair of very married Beavers, the children escape the wolves of the White Witch’s Secret Service. As Peter, Susan, and Lucy prepare to meet the mysterious “king” of Narnia, the lion Aslan, Edmund creeps away to betray them. This time the Witch offers no Turkish Delight, and it becomes clear that she means to kill him. Her aim is to thwart the prophecy of four humans occupying the four thrones at Cair Paravel, which would make Narnia safe from her kind.

The only hope for saving Edmund is Aslan, who amazingly bargains away his life for the boy’s. Lucy and Susan witness the horrific killing of the lion, bound, gagged, shaven, disgraced, and finally stabbed by the Witch with a stone knife. The battle begins the next day in a sense of hopelessness yet bravely led by Peter.

When Aslan suddenly reappears, a magnificent reversal occurs. He kills the Witch and installs all four children as kings and queens of Narnia. They reign



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prosperously and happily, until as adults, having almost forgotten their origins, they stumble across the wardrobe. Drawn back into their own world, they are once more children who have been away for minutes, not years. Only the understanding Professor is told their story.

We see here a tale that could be described as shamanistic and/or “borderland.” It is crucially about travel between worlds and their ontological verities. Not only the wood of the wardrobe but also the animal fur of old coats draw Lucy, first of all, into their original states. For coats and wood were once of the forest and its creatures, as in Narnia where they might articulate their being.

Next moment she found that what was rubbing against her face and hands was no longer soft fur but something hard and rough and even prickly. “Why it is just like branches of trees!” exclaimed Lucy. (14)

Later all four children put on the wardrobe’s fur coats to endure the Narnian winter. Shaman-like, they take on animal characteristics in order to meet “talking” or animated beasts. So first Lucy crosses into the borderland of nature. Her psyche leads her into another kind of participation in nature than the one in which she hears an owl call on her first night in the Professor’s house. For in Narnia animals talk and also look to her and her siblings as saviors and potential wise rulers. Where Lewis is less shamanistic is the persistence of the human leadership of nature, although it is clear that what is proposed in the four thrones is neither *separation from* nor *repression of* nature.

Narnia is a world of animism marked by the human political form of monarchy. Yet it retains a profound continuity between human and animal. The children have to talk to, trust, receive help from, learn from, and lead an army consisting of animate nature. There is an element of Christian transcendence of the body in the death and resurrection of Aslan; yet Aslan dies and returns *as a lion*, not as a human being. He always has greater authority than Narnia’s human rulers and therefore serves to keep them in communion with Narnian nature.

As the other books clarify, humans rule Narnia only by respecting its nonhuman articulate citizens, and only with their consent. What is on one political level an apology for “enlightened” British colonial rule (against the totalitarian regime of the White Witch), is on another level an insistence of some of the values and qualities of animism in the Narnian state.

Aslan is very much a lion, even if he does rise from the dead. Lucy and her siblings are shamans whom animals and spirits of nature talk to. Also like shamans they can assume “other” forms (as adult kings and queens) to play a role in this dimension. Edmund, of course, is from the start depicted as rejecting all attempts to “make up” for the children’s loss of their home. He is the most resistant to the new

house in the country. Indeed, his first words suggest that he refuses to accept the separation from their parents or, more precisely, his mother.

“Don’t go on talking like that.”

“Like what?” said Susan; “and anyway it’s time you were in bed.”

“Trying to talk like Mother,” said Edmund. (10)

In rejecting Susan as a mother substitute, Edmund appears still pre-Oedipal, not having fully repressed his incestuous desires and so therefore not being a fully formed ego. Such would be the Freudian reading, which is easy to substantiate as Edmund is the only child to be seduced by the exotic treats of the distinctly more sexual than maternal Witch. It is clear that Edmund falls under the Witch’s spell because she promises him worldly power to supplant his brother’s place as the first child. Rather than repress his mother fixation, Edmund wants to repress all other competition for her dangerously sweet embrace.

In this Freudian interpretation, the “unnatural” bond to the mother is signified as toxic by the person of the Witch herself and by her effects on nature. She makes it always winter and never Christmas. The land is dormant, white, frozen, and infertile. Such a blank “mother” requires a fertilizing father. So the jolly arrival of *Father* Christmas bearing magical gifts and hot coffee is the first narrative emblem of a coming confrontation between the deadly mother and an enlivening father.

Edmund’s initial refusal to support Lucy in her shamanistic embrace of Narnia is at one with his rejection of Susan as a mother substitute. He refuses to *imagine*. He will not accept his loss of primal (m)other and embrace his creative psyche, which can “play” with substitutes.

Much has been written about Christian allegory in the Narnia books, and about their avoidance of sexuality, particularly of the feminine.<sup>3</sup> Susan, who begins the series “pretending to be mother,” is later snubbed for being more interested in lipstick than Narnia.

Rather than a commingling of maternal and paternal powers, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* stages a total defeat of the mother. Through bodily sacrifice and resurrection, the children permanently change allegiance to Father Aslan. Here it is perhaps the knowledge of death through witnessing it in Aslan that finally secures the children for adulthood, at any rate in Narnia.

So far, so Freudian. Jung’s approach to the pre-Oedipal mother may be considered here for its intrinsic borderland properties. For although Jung conceded that Freud’s Oedipus complex was a valid explanation of ego-separation, he also thought that as Freud depicted it the Oedipal narrative obscured the possibility of *other stories*. To Jung, libido was not only sexuality; it could inhabit an almost infinite number of situations or animate multiple stories. So for Jungian literary criticism, it is not necessary *only* to diagnose developmental difficulties in a fantasy story about children.

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In already suggesting that the children in Narnia are shamanic-like Borderlanders, I am placing another interpretation alongside the sexual, with the aim of holding both in a relationship with each other. In fact, in developing a borderland reading, we will be able to explore simultaneously the healing power of more than one story. For *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is both a trauma story and a new origin story.

To take the notion of trauma, first of all, is to recall that the children have left London because it was being bombed by the Nazis in the Second World War. The children “escape” to the Professor’s house in the country knowing that their parents may die. So they “escape” again, to Narnia, and encounter another criminal regime.

“There are the trees,” said the Beaver. “They’re always listening. Most of them are on our side, but there *are* trees that would betray us to *her*; you know who I mean,” and it nodded its head several times. (75)

In effect, fighting the White Witch is the trauma story in the novel. It is the story generated by the psyche to contain and rewrite the terrible story of a war that has thrust the children from their home. Edmund, who refused to accept leaving his mother, is the child most threatened by the “dream-mother” in the substitute land of Narnia. However, one of the questions asked by *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is about the “substitute” nature of fantasy. A deep distinction between Freudian and Jungian understandings of fantasy fiction is posed by the borderland experience. Is Narnia merely a substitute for a reality too traumatic to be borne? Is it a dream as a disguised wish for a father to come and save the children from a maternal chaos? Even if we allow Narnia to be also imaged in political terms, so additionally embodying the war’s trauma, *Narnia still remains secondary*, derivative of something else.

To C. G. Jung and Jerome Bernstein, other interpretations are possible without dismissing the Oedipal or the political resonance. For Narnia offers the children an opportunity to forge new identities: it becomes their “new origin.” Once a king or queen in Narnia, always a king or queen in Narnia. In this pregnant “borderland” the children learn to accept death, to fulfill the prophecy that they embody, and to be the ego-like leaders of a realm in which talking to animals is essential to existence.

True, Narnia is imbued with sexism and a hierarchy that insists upon human monarchs. Moreover, racism is implicit in the evils of “Turkish Delight,” which is not fully expressed until Lewis’s formidably anti-Arab story, *The Horse and His Boy* (1954). Nevertheless, Narnia is experienced by the children as the potential fulfillment of their whole being. In this sense Narnia is a new story that *originates* their true selves. It is more “real” in a psychic understanding of their human

potential than their “outer” lives in London or in the Professor’s house. Narnia expresses the “reality” of their (Jungian) innately creative and partly unknowable unconscious.

Of course, the wholeness of being in Narnia is fatally flawed by the absence of sex. At the very end of the story, the adult kings and queens of Narnia are out hunting and talking the language of medieval courtesy.

“Fair Consorts, let us now alight from our horses and follow this beast into the thicket; for in all my days I never hunted a nobler quarry.”

“Sir,” said the others, “even so let us do.” (199)

Such rhetoric of officially chaste courtly love is a ritualization of sexuality into “respect” and “manners.” The conversion both hints at incestuous completion and simultaneously rules it out. Such a stylization of libido cannot, and does not, last. These ladies and gentlemen discover a lamp post, and then, once more, they are children in a wardrobe. This ending to the novel indicates, I would suggest, that Narnia is neither secondary, nor is it the world of their adult psychology.

For Borderlanders and shamans, Narnia is real and necessary. It is not, however, permanent. The children have to take their new psychic experiences of living and talking to animals and mold them into the other world of war and the onset of puberty. In this, as throughout the book, the Pevensies model the reader. To Jungian theory, the imaginative participation in Narnia through reading is intensely *real* and a necessary conduit of archetypal energy. Edmund, still in thrall to the mother, is a dreadful warning to those who will not imagine! Poisoned by the toxic mother’s sugar, he plans to destroy the natural landscape of Narnia.

He had just settled in his mind what sort of palace he would have and how many cars and all about his private cinema and where the principal railways would run. . . . (101)

Loss, as Freudian psychoanalysis well knows, is necessary for play and imagination. Jung believed that the imagination was not a melancholy and forever insufficient substitute for the mother. Rather, mothers are periodically available for rebirth: the imagination, or the creative, partly unknowable unconscious, is the divine spark that begets worlds. So in reading works such as *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, we encounter both trauma stories of pre-Oedipal mothers and chaotic war, and also the possibility of finding a new origin in the imagination. Whatever the regrettable biases in Lewis’s story, his divine father is a lion, not a man. Even Christians have to make peace with lions, just as humanity needs to re-imagine its origins *with the animals!*

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>For an illuminating exploration of Plato's complex ambivalence towards poetry, see Robert D. Romanyshyn, "Anyway, why did it have to be the death of the poet?: The Orphic Root of Jungian Psychology," *Spring: A Journal of Archetype and Culture* 71 (2004): 55–87.

<sup>2</sup>Except where a different publication is noted below, all references are by volume and paragraph number, to the *Collected Works of C. G. Jung (CW)*.

<sup>3</sup>See the essays in *Revisiting Narnia: Fantasy, Myth, and Religion in C. S. Lewis' Chronicles*, ed. Shanna Caughey (Dallas, TX: BenBella, 2005).