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## BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Gender Stereotypes in The Chronicles of Narnia by C. S. Lewis

Genderové stereotypy v Letopisech Narnie C. S. Lewise

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this bachelor's thesis is to analyse the presence of gender stereotypes in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (published between the years 1950 and 1956), a series of fantasy novels for children authored by Clive Staples Lewis (1898 – 1963). Gender-based stereotypical expectations shape an individual's identity and support the social system of relations between women and men. Children's literature generally reflects the social reality and consequently assists the reproduction of gender stereotypes in society.

The theoretical part of this thesis will first seek to explore the term gender and the construction of gender, then focus on the explanation of gender accountability, that is, a person's responsibility for the adherence to gender expectations, followed by the description of the process of sex-role socialization. It will also examine the nature of gender stereotypes and their influence in the area of children's literature. The last part then focuses on the general introduction to the life and work of Clive Staples Lewis.

The practical part of this thesis will analyse the selected phenomena found in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. It will aim to uncover the stereotypical gender-based messages in the recurrent themes and ideas featured throughout the series. For the most part, a qualitative approach will be applied as this thesis focuses on the interpretation of the messages conveyed.

## **KEYWORDS**

gender, gender stereotypes, children's literature, C. S. Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia

## **ABSTRAKT**

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzovat přítomnost genderových stereotypů v Letopisech Narnie (vydávaných mezi lety 1950 až 1956), sérii fantasy novel pro děti, jejichž autorem je britský spisovatel Clive Staples Lewis (1898 – 1963). Stereotypní, na genderu založená očekávání mohou do značné míry formovat identitu jedince a zároveň podporují daný systém vztahů mezi muži a ženami. Dětská literatura obecně odráží společenskou realitu a tím napomáhá reprodukci genderových stereotypů ve společnosti.

Teoretická část této práce nejprve zkoumá pojem gender a způsob, jakým se gender konstruuje, poté se zaměřuje na odpovědnost člověka za naplnění genderových očekávání, a následně popis procesu socializace z hlediska mužských a ženských rolí. Práce také zkoumá povahu genderových stereotypů a jejich vliv v dětské literatuře. Poslední část se pak zaměřuje na obecný úvod do života a díla Cliva Staplese Lewise.

Praktická část této práce se zaměřuje na analýzu vybraných fenoménů, které lze nalézt v sérii Letopisy Narnie. Jejím cílem je odhalit stereotypní, genderově zaměřená sdělení v opakujících se jevech a myšlenkách v rámci všech dílů série. Uplatněn je především kvalitativní přístup, skrze nějž vede tato práce k interpretaci daných sdělení.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

gender, genderové stereotypy, dětská literatura, C. S. Lewis, Letopisy Narnie

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# Introduction

Throughout the twentieth century, the notions of femininity and masculinity in sociology underwent a dynamic development. The concept of gender was introduced, as well as the idea that sex is not derived solely from the anatomical differences of reproductive organs, and most importantly, that gender differences are certainly not determined by those organs. Society traditionally functions on the basic argument of the existence of homogeneous male and female identities, emphasizing objectively minor biological differences which supposedly determine the varying male and female behaviour. This division of humanity into men and women, which is generally considered to be natural and static, serves purely social goals. Though providing a certain order within society, it is a source of a gross generalization in the area of many corresponding social issues.

Similar ideas can be found regarding the construction of gender identity as well; men are commonly perceived as always playing only the role of a man, and women merely the role of a woman. At first, sociological theories also led to the belief that specific male or female behaviour which children acquire does not change throughout their lives. However, gender is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon; therefore, the theory of gender can be described as an intricate network (rather than a closely integrated logical system), which includes issues such as “the social subordination of women, and the cultural practices that sustain it; the politics of sexual object-choice, (...); the sexual division of labour; the formation of character and motive, so far as they are organised as femininity and masculinity; the role of the body in social relations“ (Connell, *Sociology*, 261), among other issues.

The notion of gender is closely connected to the stereotypical expectations society holds towards its individual members based on their belonging to one group within the social hierarchy, or another. Children’s literature, that is, literature written for children, functions as a means of socialization as well as a reflection of social arrangements concerning the qualities and roles of men and women in society. As a result, children’s literature serves as one of many producers and supporters of gender stereotypes, which can and often do negatively affect the lives of people they concern.



# 1 Theoretical Part

## 1.1 Gender

When describing gender, we tend to define it in opposition to sex (something ascribed by person's anatomical and hormonal characteristics) as an achieved status of social and cultural origin. Accordingly, the central idea of the widely accepted theory of gender socialization expresses that "while gender may be achieved, by about age five it [is] certainly fixed, unvarying, and static – much like sex" (West, Zimmerman, 126). Nevertheless, the essence and attribution of gender (and sex) is nowhere near as simple since it is not just a property of an individual. Gender is essentially a set of characteristics ascribed by society to men and women, whether it be personal qualities and attitudes, interests and behaviours, or roles and actions people perform; however, gender should not be perceived as a mere state a person adopts and devotes themselves to as it is variable at both the individual and cultural level.

Firstly, sex categorization (as an everyday life process) is based solely on the presumption that human world is clearly divided into two distinct categories which can and should provide us with specific characteristics to distinguish between them. These criteria of categorization are not uniformly applicable (as "sex is a determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males" (West, Zimmerman, 127), and therefore its definition can vary depending on a specific cultural perception); yet the impression of an essential male and female nature remains. Moreover, as members of society, we also naturally have the desire to be able to recognize the sex category of other people based on a presumption that they are displaying it for us as conclusively as possible (West, Zimmerman, 134). In other terms, we like to believe that others intentionally show clear signs of their manhood or womanhood, and these signs should preferably always be present and distinct enough to be immediately acknowledged.

Secondly, even though the attribution of sex category is in fact culturally determined, it still differs from the accomplishment of gender. For instance, a man can be perceived as effeminate, which does not make him 'unmale'. Despite possessing a normative property, gender (in the sense of gender dualism) is never truly abode. Hence, it should rather be perceived as a process of constant construction. It is fundamentally "a socially scripted dramatization of the culture's idealization of feminine and masculine natures, played for an audience that is well schooled in the presentational idiom" (West, Zimmerman, 130). We assign, assume and discern supposedly natural signs in order to identify a person's nature. Nevertheless, common depictions of gender are hardly the result of an

essential nature, but a specific portrayal of what we wish to convey about the sexes via the use of conventionalized gestures applied in interaction (West, Zimmerman, 130).

Both men and women adopt various roles and identities throughout their lives, which are always dependent on the context of the situation given, with gender as one of many. There is, however, a considerable difference in quality, as gender is rarely the main focus of an interaction. Usually, it creates the background in which social interactions take place, functioning as a prerequisite for the performance of other roles. Additionally, any individual is capable of playing the role required of them in a particular context, expressing the fact that there is no solid, inalterable gender identity.

The same can be said about personality traits in general. Despite the stereotypical binary view of men as strong, logical and decisive, and of women as emotional, passive and empathetic, there are not any actually masculine or feminine characteristics (from the psychological perspective), as they combine in various original ways in every individual. At the same time, what we call manhood and womanhood cannot be simply seen as provided by an outside force. In fact, it is us who “claim a place in the gender order – or respond to the place we have been given – by the way we conduct ourselves in everyday life“ (Connell, *Gender in World Perspective*, 6). An individual’s chosen behaviour and attitudes decide their compliance with the notions of masculinity and femininity or the lack thereof.

### **1. 1. 1 Doing Gender**

As was already mentioned, gender is not just a set of traits or a role being played at a corresponding time and place. The state of being a woman or a man “is not a pre-determined state“ (Connell, *Gender in World Perspective*, 5) but rather “a becoming, a condition actively under construction“ (Connell, *Gender in World Perspective*, 5). This can be applied to both men and women as neither is truly born with such characteristics. Regardless, one of the first things we do in an everyday interaction is try to recognize the other person as a man or a woman. Simply said, we take gender for granted, as well as the social arrangements that evolved from it.

Social activities (interactions) result in the construction of gender, which expresses artificially created distinction between men and women “used to reinforce the ‘essentialness‘ of gender“ (West, Zimmerman, 137). These interactions “do not so much allow for the expression of natural differences as for the production of that difference itself“ (West, Zimmerman, 138). Doing gender is not necessarily something conscious or intentional. Any social situation can be in the service of

voicing some gender relations; not every situation in itself is obviously gender-based, though. The process of doing gender involves a whole set of perceptual, interactional and political actions which pursue the expression of masculine and feminine natures (West, Zimmerman, 126). People are not distinctly gendered beings solely by the verdict of the society; perpetual individual actions are required.

Not only is gender constructed via interactions but also it simultaneously shapes the interaction. It is a feature that emerges in situations “both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society“ (West, Zimmerman, 126). Ultimately, individuals “do“ gender by the way they think, speak and act, but it can only be done due to the presence of other people. However, this individual behaviour is not confined to a strictly defined package of attributes everyone follows. We “do“ gender perpetually on any possible occasion to achieve a certain social competence (as either women or men), and consequently assist the reproduction of gender order, the arrangement of relations between women and men constructed throughout the historical development of human society.

As long as society supports the differences between what it means to be a man and a woman, doing gender cannot be avoided, as no matter the situation, human beings are always seen as gendered. Since the reproduction of gender arrangements is socially provided, various cultures can significantly differ concerning their notions of gender appropriate behaviour. Gender order shapes the individual members of society but acts of individuals also affect the gender structure.

### **1. 1. 2 Gender and Accountability**

An individual’s gender can be important in any social situation; therefore, one’s behaviour is also constantly at the risk of being assessed and deemed gender appropriate or gender inappropriate. Doing gender does not necessarily mean trying to adhere to the norms of femininity or masculinity, but rather “to engage in behavior at the risk of gender assessment“ (West, Zimmerman, 136). Every member of society usually chooses their actions with regard to the possible comment from the others – “displaying gender must be finely fitted to situations and modified or transformed as the occasion demands“ (West, Zimmerman, 135). Any person is essentially accountable, that is responsible, for the extent of their compliance with the gender expectations.

Accountability is a common feature of social situations. Everyone is essentially aware of their expected interactional patterns and position within the gender order. We generally follow these

routine behavioral models in order to be identified as members of one category (to avoid any harm to our reputation). This poses a problem as any person's association with one of the categories can and often is used "to legitimate or discredit their other activities" (West, Zimmerman, 136). When doing gender according to the common gender scheme, we also "sustain, reproduce, and render legitimate the institutional arrangements that are based on sex category" (West, Zimmerman, ??). Otherwise, we can be easily held accountable, whether it be our personality, motivation, or abilities.

### **1. 1. 3 Sex-role socialization**

Socialization as a process of becoming adequate members of society takes place in family or school, under the influence of media, and through other means. The social context of our lives tells us what manhood and womanhood are supposed to be like. The sex role theory originally proposes the idea of gender relations as "a social script which people learn and enact" (Connell, *Sociology*, 262). In other terms, it draws an association between the formation of one's personality and the structure of society based on the idea of internalizing the specific role-based attributes (Connell, *Sociology*, 262), resulting in men learning the "male" role and women the "female" role. While growing up, people learn to follow certain customs and are expected, both women and men, to abide by these stereotypes.

Gender roles can be defined by specific normative behaviours and characteristics corresponding to either "male", or "female" role. Sex-role socialization is a standard and generally believed approach towards the course of becoming men and women. It portrays children being trained to behave themselves as well as towards other people differently based on the attributed sex category, which "contributes mightily to the appearance of extreme dimorphism" (West, Zimmerman, 146). Every new member of society obtains a perception of the existing gender structure and constitute themselves as gendered beings on the basis of their conviction of belonging to a strict category.

Across generations, all internal inequalities of gender relations (such as, for example, concerning the division of labour) are reproduced due to the children's learning of gender roles. First, we are convinced of our inclusion in the gender structure; then we construct our identity accordingly. The officially attributed category of sex (and consequently gender) is taken for granted as it is what we were led up to become. Society requires individuals to be consistent with their category using diverse instruments to ensure the prominence of gender structure, mainly via the fact that "other people reward one's conformity to the stereotypes, and punish departures from them" (Connell, *Sociology*, 263).

There are, however, arguments opposing the sex-role theory. It cannot satisfactorily explain the special interactional nature of gender, since it relies heavily on the idea of an actual choice to continue the existing norms. Theoretically, a role is something anyone can choose to practise, or reject. Yet, we can only decide on the manner in which we express our gender but it is not our choice whether others will see us as male or female. Unlike gender, which can appear of significance in any social context, roles are normally connected to specific situations. The theory can even be perceived as “a form of social determinism, stressing the way people are trapped in stereotypes and expectations“ (Connell, *Sociology*, 263), without clarifying that social change of the gender structure is very much possible.

Nevertheless, others argue that “categorization practices are fundamental to learning and displaying feminine and masculine behaviour“ (West, Zimmerman, 141). The most basic concern of children at the time when gender identity is being formed focuses on the importance of differentiating themselves from the classification of a ‘baby’. As a result, children start to identify themselves utilizing the only categories generally available, the category of a ‘girl’ or a ‘boy’ (ultimately corresponding to the roles of a woman or a man). The desirable outcome of such identification is the achievement of social competence. ‘Babies’ are said to be in need of tight control, whereas ‘girls’ and ‘boys’ can reach greater amount of independence; thus “being seen as socially competent evokes their initial claims to gender identities“ (West, Zimmerman, 141) – this is what children understand when hearing: “Act like a big boy/girl!“.

Furthermore, children learn from an early age that complying with the gender patterns in social situations is, in fact, mandatory; “being a ‘girl’ or a ‘boy’ then, is not only being more competent than a ‘baby’, but also being competently female or male“ (West, Zimmerman, 142). Throughout social learning, children adopt self-regulating mechanisms which compel them to monitor not only their own behaviour, but also that of other people. One’s behaviour is then deemed adequate or inadequate depending on their compliance with the gender norms because people strive to maintain the supposedly proper gender identity. Consequently, the proclaimed male and female natures constructed by society “achieve the status of objective facts“ (West, Zimmerman, 142).

## 1.2 Gender Stereotypes

The previously mentioned ideas emphasize that gender relations do not express any natural patterns; in fact, “exclusive gender identity is the suppression of natural similarities“ (Connell, *Sociology*, 269). It would be naive to state there are no differences between men and women. However, it certainly does not do to perceive the distinctions as clear and absolute. From the point of view of Western cultures, the two gender categories are often considered psychologically and behaviourally contrary in nature, with social relations being structured around them. On the whole, we can say that social reality functions the way it does because “men are men and women are women – a division perceived to be natural and rooted in biology, producing in turn profound psychological, behavioral, and social consequences“ (West, Zimmerman, 128). It is necessary to ask for the extent to what gender stereotypes influence the way we reflect on “male“ and “female“ qualities and abilities.

Although this disparity is without a doubt socially constructed, people frequently do not realise their addition to the existing system. The reproduction of gender stereotypes within a culture is surprisingly accomplished by those who benefit from them just as much as by those who suffer because of them, as “ it is threatening to accept that the mere reality of their gender would determine important outcomes in life, regardless of their individual achievements“ (Ellemers, 290). Groups favoured by stereotypes obviously have no desire to change them or even admit to themselves that such stereotypes exist, but groups which are at a disadvantage due to the existence of stereotypes are usually not confident enough to initiate social change.

Gender stereotypes are “overgeneralized beliefs about the characteristics of individuals based solely on their gender“ (Casad, Wexler, 755). Gender stereotyping can create ambiguity in that it ascribes certain properties to a person based solely on their belonging to a particular group, without considering how individual members of the group can extremely differentiate from each other. Therefore, a simple feature such as competitive spirit is attributed to any and every man despite not all of them showing signs of such quality, while women are habitually perceived as bad drivers, even though it definitely does not apply to all female drivers. Stereotypes typically focus on and include one’s “personality traits, behaviors, physical features, roles, preferences, attitudes, skills, and interests, among others“ (Casad, Wexler, 755), and they both describe what reality supposedly is and prescribe what it should be like. Since stereotypes in general function as “a schema, or lens, through which individuals view their social world“ (Casad, Wexler, 755) as they help us “identify, interpret, and remember the things we see, hear, and learn“ (Ellemers, 282), it is actually very hard,

if not impossible, not to pay attention to them.

Society employs a great amount of standardized institutions which serve the sole purpose of expressing the nature of manhood or womanhood. For example, organized sports typically glorify the notion of manliness, inasmuch as the “qualities that ought properly to be associated with masculinity, such as endurance, strength, and competitive spirit, are celebrated by all parties concerned“ (West, Zimmerman, 137). This way gender stereotypes can be used for various purposes, such as “self enhancement or boosting self-esteem“ (Casad, Wexler, 755) as well as a statement and even an enforcement of our principles and beliefs.

### **1. 2. 1 The Nature of Gender Stereotypes**

Gender stereotypes, even among people realising their existence and influence, are often considered to give a certain amount of true information about the people they refer to. For instance, different behaviour in specific situations can be seen as a result of varying testosterone and oxytocin levels in male and female bodies. However, recent research exposes the limitations of such claims because in reality there is “no one-to-one relationship between specific hormones and specific behaviors“ (Ellemers, 278). As a matter of fact, enough evidence shows there are “larger differences among individual women and individual men than between men and women as groups“ (Ellemers, 278). Yet, people still tend to understand gender stereotypes as an acknowledgement of natural order. In spite of that, it might seem excessive to state there is not a kernel of truth in some stereotypes.

Although stereotypes can be beneficial since they help us categorize, and therefore understand the world around us, they frequently cause confusion and harm when it comes to assessing specific individuals. Stereotyping essentially starts with oversimplification and exaggeration of everyday life experiences, and by doing so serves the reinforcement of observed boundaries between men and women and presumably justify the symbolic and social implications of gender (Ellemers, 278), resulting in an endorsement of social inequality. A great example is the connection of motherhood and motherly love to the notion of proper nurture and upbringing in the case of parenthood. Based on this concept, women in many countries are (usually after a divorce) much more likely to be granted custody of their children. We could argue that women are generally more educated on the topic of tending to children; however, there is no reason why men should be emotionally or in terms of abilities less equipped to be good parents.

Thus, to summarise, gender stereotypes can have positive or negative consequences depending on

whether they bestow favourable or unfavourable qualities on a gender group. The problematic nature of negative gender stereotypes is generally easier to unmask; nevertheless, positive stereotypes can have a surprisingly damaging effect in case a person does not achieve the qualities described by it and consequently finds themselves unsatisfactory. Additionally, not only do men behave in a different fashion towards women than they do towards other men, but the same can be said about women as well; our evaluation of others depends on the same gender-based values no matter what our gender is (for example, a woman can treat another woman harshly based on an existing gender stereotype just as much as a man can). The need to describe our social surroundings using such generalizations is common for members of any gender group.

Another problem concerning gender stereotypes, which was not mentioned before, is the fact that both explicit and implicit stereotypes have a huge influence on how we behave and assess other people and ourselves. Through actions and demeanor, we express stereotypes either consciously, with full awareness of our beliefs, or unconsciously. Explicit (conscious) stereotypes, despite being more obvious and easier to comprehend, should not be overestimated at the expense of implicit (unconscious) stereotypes, as those are automatically activated and influence our judgements without us realising it. They determine one's manner of speech and nonverbal behaviour and incite prejudice with equal ease as explicit stereotypes.

The organization of gender stereotypes is generally "based on two fundamental dimensions of social judgements: agency and communion" (Casad, Wexler, 1975). The first emphasizes competence, ability, efficiency and ambition; the latter prefers qualities such as kindness, solicitude, warmth, and cordiality. According to gender stereotypes, a prototypical woman would achieve a high rating in the matter of communion but low in agency, whereas a prototypical man would receive opposite results. Gendered expectations, then, focus primarily on individual task performance with work and professional achievements as the main priorities for men, and care for others with family and interpersonal connections as the main priorities for women (Ellemers, 2001). Consequently, women are said to be more tolerant and understanding due to their caring nature, for instance.

Moreover, people have a tendency to "evaluate women primarily in terms of their appearance, rather than their accomplishments" (Ellemers, 2001), which does not happen with men in the same manner. Attractiveness is the prevailing factor that often decides the general worth of women (Ellemers, 2001), even if the appearance is completely irrelevant in the situation at hand. It puts an unnecessary amount of pressure on young girls (though there are definitely such implications concerning boys as well). Furthermore, it was established that more attractive people (according to



the stereotypes) “experience many advantages over their less attractive counterparts“ (Casad, Wexler, 757). This is unfortunately strongly emphasized in hiring and similar practices as well as regarding the choice of a sexual partner.

### 1. 2. 3 Stereotypical Gender-Based Qualities

A person’s gender role in society consists of a wide range of expected behaviours, qualities, actions and attitudes. Others want us to behave in a manner corresponding to our acquired gender identity and in order to confirm the existing gender order. To be considered tolerable, satisfactory or appropriate, one must conform to the traditional gender stereotypes to some extent at least. Adapted from Taylor (2003) as found in Macionis (2001), these are:

<b>Feminine Traits</b>	<b>Masculine traits</b>
Submissive	Dominant
Dependent	Independent
Unintelligent	Intelligent
Emotional	Rational
Receptive	Assertive
Intuitive	Analytical
Weak	Strong
Timid	Brave
Content	Ambitious
Passive	Active
Cooperative	Competitive
Sensitive	Insensitive
Sex object	Sexually aggressive
Attractive due to physical appearance	Attractive due to achievement

Moreover, the longer form of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (a gender role research tool through which the examinees evaluate themselves considering their masculine and feminine features) denotes other properties which are generally deemed typical of males and females. Masculinity is presumed to be connected to individualism, decisiveness and forcefulness. From this point of view, men are natural leaders willing to take a stand and defend their own beliefs. On the other hand,

women are supposedly rather gullible and childlike, though at the same time understanding, compassionate and loyal. They are meant to show affection and support in a gentle, polite manner. However, there are also characteristics labeled as gender neutral since those are not limited by one's sex. Anyone, without regard for their otherwise immensely important masculinity or femininity, can be described as helpful, happy, jealous, solemn, friendly or conventional.

#### **1. 2. 4 Change Resilience of Gender Stereotypes**

As already mentioned, gender stereotypes can be positive or negative, and are prescriptive; due to their nature, they cannot be seen as neutral because any prescription automatically serves a certain objective. Whether an individual personally believes that they are true has no real significance in how the stereotypes affect the person because it is a matter of an external influence, which always has an impact on their life without their permission. Negative stereotypes (and sometimes positive as well) may have unfavourable consequences when one does not conform to them; they may "limit individuals' life aspirations and put unnecessary restrictions on their behavior" (Casad, Wexler, 757). The result remains the same whether a person is criticised for complying with the negative stereotypes or not complying with the positive stereotypes.

While it seems inconvenient to comply with gender stereotypes, there are several reasons why people tend to follow the norms given by them. First and foremost, it is the desire to be a proper and competent member of the particular group. One person might not attach value to their presumed gender identity, whereas another may recognize their membership as a subject of an immense importance. Such individual would then find it greatly disturbing and potentially harmful to be seen as a nonprototypical group member (Ellemers, 288). Their performance in various situations, as they are trapped by the fear of being inadequate, would therefore be more impaired than in the case of the aforementioned person.

Another reason for the promotion of gender stereotypes is the motivation to believe the world to be just. To make sense of our lives, we require the conviction that society is structured the best way possible according to everyone's abilities and qualities. The richest people are so affluent because they deserved it. Men are more suited to be powerful politicians because they possess the proper skills and personality traits. It is, of course, an illusion meant to bring a feeling of security and order, which unfortunately "prevents us from seeking, processing, or accepting evidence indicating that differences in societal outcomes may stem from gender stereotyping" (Ellemers, 288). Women, despite being employed, do the vast majority of housework as well as provide child care, and in

many cases both women and men perceive this as a fair arrangement (West, Zimmerman, 143). Such allocation of household labour is a classic example of a result of this motivation.

Furthermore, an individual's impressionability concerning gender stereotypes can eventually receive the function of a self-fulfilling prophecy. People are motivated to "adapt their self-views, behavioral expressions, and life choices to what seems appropriate for their group" (Ellemers, 287). Not only is one compelled to consent to gender stereotypes, but they are also forced to reproduce them by unintentionally confirming them. The emphasis is again put on interaction; when one individual treats another in a certain manner, it can condition how the other responds (Casad, Wexler, 758). A woman might get too nervous and insecure to perform her assignment sufficiently when met with the notion that she is bound to be a worse leader as a female than a man would be.

### **1.3 Gender Stereotypes in Children's Literature**

The process of socialization educates children, among other things, on what it means to be a man and a woman. However, parents and other family members or acquaintances that influence the social and psychological development of a child are not the only means of socialization at an early age. Children's literature contains a high number of symbols which represent a simplified version of a particular culture, expressing the structure of social relations, its prominent values and beliefs. Books teach children how to feel, think and behave in certain situations depending on their gender. It does not do to challenge the claims that stories "change children's ideas about the world" (Diekman, Murnen, 373). By the time they encounter such influence, they do not have much else to rely on, and therefore can easily internalize the messages provided by literature.

One of the first things children learn about society is the fact that people do not expect the same from boys as they expect from girls. Not only are they able to reflect how others treat them based on their gender identity, which is generally perceived as corresponding to one's sex, but they also recognize how they are supposed to treat others given the same assumption. It is said that "by age seven, and perhaps as early as age four, children begin to understand gender as a basic component of self" (Taylor, 301). They start to categorize themselves as well as family members, friends, teachers, or just any strangers they meet as either male or female. To acquire the ability to assign stereotypical expectations to a specific person, they need a medium to show them what 'proper' qualities men and women are required to possess, "they must learn the gender code" (Taylor, 308), which is provided by children's literature.

Primary education on the culturally significant concept of gender is secured by books and stories. Even nowadays, when a major part of this purpose has been taken over by other kinds of tools and media, children's literature, especially picture books, play an important role in children's learning about the world. They provide an ideology of gender, a system of beliefs and ideals which children internalize and then practise by conducting themselves as the ideology commands. This is not something that people generally realise and perform consciously but rather what precedes and shapes our perceptions of reality in terms of gender. Additionally, it is parents rather than children who decides which books will be read. Parents naturally, for the most part unintentionally, select books that correspond to their own view of the world, not uncommonly also those they read themselves in their childhood. This repetitive pattern in socialization through literature then contributes to the reproduction of gender stereotypes in people's minds.

While picture books are certainly the most prominent providers of early socialization as it is the first type of literature children come into contact with, it would be unwise to diminish the effect of literature read and processed by children of the subsequent age groups. If picture books introduce gender stereotypes and gender order to the youngest, books written for older children reinforce these ideas and assist their further reproduction within society. The stereotypical views of the social structure as well as an individual's gender identity acquired by children at a young age are therefore additionally promoted, creating a possibly permanent impression in one's mind.

Moreover, it is essential to emphasize that gender stereotypes in children's literature are not necessarily explicitly stated and easy to find. These days especially, they tend to be expressed in more covert ways. It has been noted that "stereotyped portrayals of the sexes and underrepresentation of female characters contribute negatively to children's development, limit their career aspirations, frame their attitudes about their future roles as parents, and even influence their personality characteristics" (Anderson, Broaddus, Hamilton, Young, 757). Although there has been a significant social transformation throughout the last few decades, concerning the stereotypical properties of both real people and fictional characters, there has been an "increase in the masculine characteristics of women but stability in the feminine characteristics of women and men" (Diekmann, Murnen, 374). In other terms, women in general have grown more "male" in some aspects, whereas neither men nor women became more "female" in other aspects of life, which can also be seen reflected in children's literature.

### **1.3.1 Representation of Male and Female Characters**

The representation of male and female characters in literature does not necessarily correspond to the perceived development of gender-related issues in society. Although an improvement towards equality concerning the depiction of gender stereotypes in children's literature has been documented, a noticeable disparity remains (Fairchild, Grauerholz, McCabe, Pescosolido, Tope, 198). Male and female characters are often portrayed in different manner throughout books, corresponding to the gendered ideas already present in children's minds as well as proposing and enforcing other differences the children might acquire and intertwine with their own gender identity. This is, for example, evident in the general preference for male characters among both boys and girls (Fairchild, Grauerholz, McCabe, Pescosolido, Tope, 200), which are consequently often depicted as more extraordinary and significant than female characters within the microcosm of the story. Boys can therefore start to perceive women, their abilities, needs and desires, as less

important, and girls often share the sentiment.

Throughout the history of children's literature, exceptions to the otherwise general devaluation of female characters, or to be more precise, the devaluation of whatever is considered to be feminine, can certainly be found. Nevertheless, children's literature usually involves a rather clear distinction of "male" and "female" qualities and activities functioning as polar opposites. Women are often passive, emotional and dependent, whereas men are active, rational and self-reliant. Unequal representation of male and female characters is not only characterized by their distinct properties but also by the sole presence of such characters in books. According to the study of gender in twentieth-century children's literature, male characters dominate children's books; they appear in greater numbers within the story, in the book's title and even in the illustrations (Fairchild, Grauerholz, McCabe, Pescosolido, Tope, 207). However, we cannot assume that male characters are exceptionally more diverse than female characters for this reason only. They are in fact subjected to gender stereotyping as well, exemplified by giving them the attributes of aggressiveness or ambition, which can in various contexts be perceived as negative qualities. Gender stereotypes regarding both sexes can therefore create inaccurate and potentially harmful expectations in children's view of their roles in society.

Considering the adult characters of children's books, the most dominant female character is undoubtedly a mother. Frequently, mothers appear more often than fathers (Brugeilles, I. Cromer, S. Cromer, 253) as a woman's most important achievement in life is said to be the birth of a child to which they then dedicate the majority of their lives. Accordingly, grandmothers are more common than grandfathers, though both of these kinds of characters are generally not as numerous as parental figures. While women in children's literature are often given the roles of caretakers and housekeepers, adult males are more diverse (Brugeilles, I. Cromer, S. Cromer, 253). They are given greater opportunities to obtain various occupations of a much wider range than women. To exemplify, fathers are often "adventurers, doctors, pharmacists" (Brugeilles, I. Cromer, S. Cromer, 261) while mothers' occupations are limited to "cashiers, schoolteachers, fashion models" (Brugeilles, I. Cromer, S. Cromer, 261). For the most part, "employment is a male characteristic" (Brugeilles, I. Cromer, S. Cromer, 263) and is considered more valuable when connected to men.

Moreover, the expressed gender stereotypes do not only concern the human characters in children's literature but the anthropomorphic animals as well (Brugeilles, I. Cromer, S. Cromer, 249). Animals have always been important characters of mythology and folk tales and nowadays appear in various roles in children's literature. However, the stereotypical portrayals of each gender do not suddenly disappear simply because the characters are no longer human. Animals are often named and clothed,

engage in gender-appropriate activities and as such help to confer the same universal values as any other characters of the story (Brugeilles, I. Cromer, S. Cromer, 250). In general, the “sex disparity increases in the representations of children (...) as we go from the human world to the humanized animal world“ (Brugeilles, I. Cromer, S. Cromer, 250), where the male characters constitute the majority of the books’ heroes.

### **1. 3. 2 The Author’s Sex**

There may be a general assumption that male authors would tend to write stories with a man or a boy as the main character, whereas female authors would prefer a female protagonist. It could be explained by various arguments. If we perceive men and women as inherently different beings, then only men will be able to truly understand and write male characters, and the same applies to women. Moreover, female authors might want to promote women as interesting and complex characters in order to compensate for their underrepresentation in literature. On the whole, there is also the question of who is the addressee of the story and what the supposed message is. We can presume that female writers are more probable to desire to communicate certain ideas to girls and therefore create female protagonists they can easily identify with, while male writers are for the same reasons more likely to do so in order to convey certain ideas to boys.

However, the scientific research on this topic often brings results showing the exact opposite of what has been mentioned (Anderson, Broaddus, Hamilton, Young, 759). There does not seem to be an actual relationship between the sex of the author and the central character’s sex. For instance, despite the fact that books written before 1980 were authored by more male writers than female and books written after 1980 were authored by more female writers than male, the “title roles in both samples were dominated by male characters or by characters of ambiguous sex, regardless of author sex“ (Anderson, Broaddus, Hamilton, Young, 759), as Tognoli’s research in 1994 established. Other researchers, such as Kolbe and LaVoie in 1981 or Heintz in 1987, also reported the absence of this relationship in children’s literature, noting that both male and female authors overall do not devote proper attention to female characters in particular.

Conversely, the twenty-first century updated research of Mykol C. Hamilton, David Anderson, Michelle Broaddus and Kate Young from 2006 shows that in books written by men there are more male title characters as well as more male characters in general, while books written by women do not seem to show a significant preference regarding the sex of the characters. Moreover, the higher number of male characters was also generated by the overall slightly higher number of male

authors. The results of this research are declared to be an evidence of a development and improvement in the portrayal of women in children's literature, even though statistically speaking, female writers do not necessarily favour female characters over male in a remarkable manner.



## 1.4 General Introduction to the Life and Work of C. S.

### Lewis

Clive Staples Lewis, born in Belfast, Ireland, in 1898, is widely considered to be one of the most popular British authors of the twentieth century, whose works have sold millions of copies all over the world via their translation into more than 40 languages (Burrus, 4). Already throughout his life Lewis was a renowned scholar, holding the position of a professor of literature at both Oxford and Cambridge University. Lewis, along with such names as J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, or Owen Barfield, was a member of the Inklings, an informal literary group of enthusiastic supporters of fantasy literature, which would most commonly hold readings and discussions of the members' unfinished works. Apart from that, Lewis was also the President of the Socratic Club, a student club focusing on religious discussions at Oxford University.

According to C. S. Lewis's memoir book, *Surprised by Joy* (1955), he was baptized after birth in the Church of Ireland, an autonomous province of the Anglican Communion, but in later years of youth lost interest in religion. However, due to the influence of his friends, Lewis set off on a spiritual journey that ultimately resulted in his return to the Anglican Communion during his adulthood, and actually became an acknowledged apologist of the Christian faith. Although he is best known for his fantasy literature, he wrote several philosophically oriented works on Christianity, such as *The Problem of Pain* (1940) or *Mere Christianity* (1952). Furthermore, Christian themes had a significant impact on his works of fiction, as those are often analyzed and interpreted in his *The Space Trilogy* (1938 – 1945) and *Till We Have Faces* (1956), with his most famous children's series, *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950 – 1956), included.

As Lewis writes in his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, for many years his view of the world was rather pessimistic and materialistic, perhaps among other influences also as a result of his mother's early death when Lewis was only a child. While he was a creative thinker with Romantic tendencies, he would struggle to reconcile those aspects of his author's personality (Burrus, 3); consequently, the combination of imagination with reason is a typical feature of his stories.

#### 1.4.1 Gender Differentiation in Lewis's Writing

A critical look at C. S. Lewis's works often emphasizes that his stories feature a numerous evidence

of sexism (stereotyping or discrimination based on sex prejudice) in connection to his female characters. In his earliest works, females are often rather simplistic types, not proper characters manifesting special personal qualities. They are not uncommonly regarded as “mysterious and impossible to understand, and they are often presented as temptations for men (Burrus, 38), which is an idea obviously advocated by Christian beliefs. Lewis was apparently not interested in female characters, which is not surprising since he had a limited access to women in his early life (Schilling, 1) due to his mother’s untimely death, the absence of any sisters, and his years spent in all-boys boarding school in England.

However, it is fundamental to state that Lewis’s portrayals of women considerably changed throughout his literary career. Perhaps as a result and effect of his own marriage as well as various encounters with other women of diverse social backgrounds, he started to create more distinctive and realistic female characters possessing and displaying “courage, strength, and resourcefulness, qualities that are usually reserved for men“ (Burrus, 38). The last novel Lewis wrote, *Till We Have Faces*, expresses a very different attitude towards the equality of men and women than his earlier works did. The protagonist of the story is able to learn swordsmanship and even becomes a warrior and a ruler despite being a female (Burrus, 38).

Unfortunately, Lewis never fully abandons ideas which can be described as sexist in his works as the aforementioned character is only allowed to achieve such positions because of her unattractiveness (“there is no place for a beautiful woman on the battlefield“ (Burrus, 39), apparently) and the absence of a husband. In all of his stories, gender stereotypical family structure prevails as “wives are still inferior, their wills secondary to their husbands“ (Burrus, 39); it is a woman’s duty to first and foremost obey her husband. Nonetheless, sexism in Lewis’s works of fiction fades over time as there is gradually a lower number of less explicit gender-based assumptions and expectations concerning the characters.

#### **1. 4. 2 The Chronicles of Narnia**

Although Lewis authored a high number of literary works, *The Chronicles of Narnia* is by far his most famous and widely beloved books many children grew up reading. This fantasy series gained immense popularity not only in English-speaking countries but all over the world. We can only assume the reasons: the rather realistic portrayal of child characters, their dialogues and the popular fantastical features present throughout the entire stories. As *The Chronicles of Narnia* series consists of seven books in total which, however, do not all follow the same continuing storyline, the readers

might be confused as to in what order they should read the books. The first part to be published in 1950 was *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, followed by *Prince Caspian* in 1951, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* in 1952, *The Silver Chair* in 1953, *The Horse and His Boy* in 1954, *The Magician's Nephew* in 1955, and finally *The Last Battle* published in 1956. Nevertheless, the publication order does not correspond to the timeline of the stories because *The Magician's Nephew* takes place around one thousand years before the story of the first book, while *The Horse and His Boy* would be placed approximately in the same spot on the storyline as *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Concerning the presence of gender-based stereotypical themes and gender-appropriate personal qualities and attitudes of the characters, many people criticise Lewis for embedding his own sexist views of women into the books, while others argue that there are also many instances in which the author intentionally diminishes the value of gender stereotypes. In comparison to other literary works by C. S. Lewis, "prejudices against gender equality are indeed relaxed in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but they are not eliminated" (Burrus, 33). On the other hand, it has also been argued that "by attributing bad vices to females only, Lewis's portrayal of Lucy and Susan is obviously a sexist one" (Brenett, 9), and the other major female characters are not treated much better, as any of their acceptable "male" qualities are in the end always overshadowed by the manifestation of their femininity. Moreover, Filmer describes as disturbing the fact that "ultimate good is depicted as ultimate masculinity, while evil, the corruption of good, is depicted as femininity" (110) within the stories. Without regard for one's own sensitivity towards the presence of gender stereotypes and elements of sexism, it is indisputable that those are to be found in Lewis's Narnian series.

## 2 Practical Analysis

The practical part of this thesis seeks to analyze gender-based stereotypes in C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Qualitative approach will be applied for the most part as this thesis focuses on specific themes and ideologies, which occur repeatedly within the series, and the interpretation of the messages they convey, rather than determining the exact frequency of certain elements in the books.

On various occasions throughout the books, we are presented with some explicitly stated gender stereotypes, mostly in the utterances of the characters. For instance, during Digory's quarrels with Polly in *The Magician's Nephew*, he repeatedly declares that it is just like a girl to act in the respective manner. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* the character of Edmund unfairly criticises his sister, saying it is typical for girls to "[sulk] somewhere, and [not] accept an apology" (Lewis, 14), and in *Prince Caspian* the women's worst flaw is said to be the fact that "they never carry a map in their heads" (Lewis, 63).

The female characters are also to blame for expressing such beliefs. Lucy claims that the most annoying part of working with boys is that they are "all such swaggering, bullying idiots" (Lewis, 68) after the argument between Edmund and Caspian at the enchanted lake in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. However, there is the question whether Lewis himself intentionally supported these stereotypes. All of these ideas are spoken in anger or fear or under the influence of a curse, that is, in situations which diminish their value. Moreover, Lewis himself sometimes destroys these claims by adding his own comments to refute them.

However, searching for gender stereotypes in the Narnian stories definitely has its purpose. Some are expressed in a rather subtle manner, some are not. There is a considerably high number of events which clearly voice certain stereotypes commonly present in people's minds. This thesis focuses on presenting and exemplifying several selected phenomena featured in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which are based on stereotypical gender expectations.

## 2.1 The Major Character's Personal Qualities

When examining the presence of gender stereotypes in literature, one of the elementary approaches is the assessment of the character's personality traits and attitudes. The necessary question is whether there is a connection between the character's sex, or the gender identity acquired on its basis, and the behaviour they express within the story. This part focuses mainly on the protagonists of the stories, the boys and the girls, with some other memorable characters mentioned. There is a significantly higher number of male characters in C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and those generally demonstrate a greater variety of qualities than the female characters. For the most part, women in the Narnian series tend to comply with the stereotypical expectations one may have for them, or at least do not excessively distance themselves from it. That is not to say they are uniformly simple character types, since each of them possesses a distinctive personality. However, certain stereotypical gender-based properties can be assigned to most of the female protagonists.

### 2.1.1 Male Characters

In spite of the previously stated argument, male characters in *The Chronicles of Narnia* are not exempt from the effect of gender stereotypes. In fact, they might in some cases be more stereotypical than the females. One could hardly find a boy who does not enjoy the adventures among the male protagonists. Indeed, they are for the most part adventurous, curious and willing to take risks, as a proper man ought to be according to the stereotypical gender expectations. Upon first arriving in Narnia, Peter Pevensie voices his desire to "go and explore the wood" (Lewis, 29) with his siblings, and this motivation is not particularly diminished by the information he later obtains about the capture of Mr. Tumnus and the threat of the White Witch. Similar tendencies are even more noticeable in characters such as Caspian, who has dreamed of wonderful adventures from an early age, or Digory Kirke. In fact, the majority of the Narnian escapades might not have happened at all were it not for Digory's adventurousness, curiosity and willingness to take risks in *The Magician's Nephew* because he was the one to break the curse cast upon the White Witch and bring her to Narnia, creating the starting point of the following predicaments.

Another of the stereotypically masculine properties is the ability to act as a leader. Peter, for instance, is clearly the leader among his siblings, presumably due to the fact he is the oldest; he receives the position of a commander of Aslan's army in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and

later occupies an important leadership position in Caspian's army in *Prince Caspian* as well. Peter nor Edmund are ever shown any definite signs of disrespect from their subordinates or their subjects, and neither of them seems to exhibit a lack of leadership qualities necessary during the respective events. Caspian, in both *Prince Caspian* and *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, appears to be a good enough leader despite being very young as all his men follow his commands and value his judgement without pointlessly protesting his authority. Although some disagreements can be found in the books, those are generally caused by strong emotions of the participants (not a long-term dissatisfaction) or by the sole fact that the disagreeing person knows more about the subject at hand than the king himself. Caspian is only truly betrayed once, by the dwarf Nikabrik, who pursues goals of his own. Such trend can then easily lead the reader to an assumption that the boys in *The Chronicles of Narnia* are generally gifted leaders.

The case of the characters of Edmund and Eustace differs in a way from the other male characters. Both of the boys start their journey exhibiting only the improper qualities they possess. Readers learn early on in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* that on occasion "Edmund could be spiteful" (Lewis, 12). His act of selfishness puts Mr. Tumnus as well as his siblings in danger, although there is a possible excuse in form of the enchantment of the Turkish Delight. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Eustace is said to enjoy "bossing and bullying" (Lewis, 1) and he has the potential to be cruel, as he likes "animals, especially beetles, if they [are] dead and pinned on a card" (Lewis, 1). He also comes across as quite a dishonest individual, since his diary does not reflect reality precisely. Nevertheless, Edmund and Eustace gradually realise their mistakes and achieve all the "proper", stereotypically manly qualities. The newly acquired adventurousness and bravery of Eustace's is evident in *The Silver Chair*. After the final battle in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Peter claims that "nothing would stop [Edmund]" (Lewis, 95) as he "fought his way through three ogres to where [the Witch] was just turning one of [Aslan's] leopards into a statue" (Lewis, 95), demonstrating immense courage and willingness to take risks.

Additionally, the boys are definitely the active characters in comparison to the girls as they speak, initiate actions and resolve problems more often; however, their dominance in interactions is not absolute as they seldom hesitate to ask questions and seek advice, not only from other men but the girls as well. For example, Peter often requests Susan's opinion on how to proceed in their journey in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. On the other hand, the final decisions are almost exclusively the boys' domain, with only a few instances in which a woman's plan or idea is embraced, and it is always after the men present their objections and realise there is no other way. This proves the presence of yet another stereotypical male quality, assertiveness. The male

characters are never afraid to confidently state their opinions or feelings about the issue at hand. Furthermore, male rationality also plays a significant role, as the judgements of the “good“ male characters are based on reason and logic rather than feelings. They often explain their beliefs in a long and well-structured manner, such as Peter in *Prince Caspian*: “First point: this hall is exactly the same shape and size as (...). Second point, (...). The castle well is exactly where (...). Third point: Susan has just found one of our old chessmen (...). Fourth point. Don't you remember — it was the very day before (...).“ (Lewis, 10). Conversely, the girls rarely get as much space to display their intellect.

However, there is always an exception to the rule. The one protagonist among the boys to exhibit clear signs of passivity and, on occasion, a rather submissive behaviour would be Shasta from *The Horse and His Boy*. He generally accepts most of what happens to him without actively resisting the situations. When Shasta’s foster father agrees to sell him to a nobleman, Shasta does not have strong feelings about becoming the lord’s servant apart from the somewhat naive hope for a better life. As the man’s horse Bree persuades him to go to Narnia together, Shasta consents. After the Narnians mistake him for Prince Corin and bring him to their lodging, he seems more than ready to leave Calormen with them, despite knowing that his previous companions might be waiting for him. Although he does not wish to join the final battle against Rabadash, he keeps his view to himself, immediately agreeing to Corin’s suggestion; yet as he loses the rest of the army in a fog, he does not seem particularly upset about this new development either. Shasta is a rather calm individual whose actions and choices should not be regarded as selfishness or indifference; he simply accepts whatever opportunity others present to him. Moreover, he is neither forceful nor ambitious. When his father, King Lune, announces that he will become his successor instead of Corin, Shasta only manages to mention he would rather not to, before he is coaxed into compliance.

To conclude, while the male characters generally exhibit a rather wide range of qualities, the main aspects of their personalities expressed via their behaviour comply with the stereotypical notion of manhood. In the end, the boys show clear signs of bravery and quick decision making, though some of them after an internal development. They are dominant, self-sufficient individuals, whose desire for adventure or independence transpires through their active natures.

## **2. 1. 2 Female Characters**

Bravery, stereotypically a masculine quality, is required from all the characters regardless of their sex; nevertheless, while it is an unavoidable requirement for the acceptance of the male characters

by other people, it remains a matter of relative tolerance for the female characters. In other terms, the girls and women are usually brave, but there is not a particularly strong criticism directed at them in their weaker moments as there often is in the case of the boys. There is evidence of other properties in the personalities of the female characters as well. Jill, in particular, shows how cunning and resourceful she can be when deceiving the giants who keep her, Eustace and Puddleglum in their castle. She shows her abilities and courage to risk herself for the sake of the group to such extent that “the others [admit] afterwards that Jill [was] wonderful that day“ (Lewis, 67). Polly Plummer from *The Magician’s Nephew* has quite the independent spirit. She uses a part of the tunnel between the houses as a smuggler’s cave, where she “[keeps] a cash-box containing various treasures, and a story she was writing and usually a few apples“ (Lewis, 3), and she also comes there often to drink “a quiet bottle of ginger-beer“ (Lewis, 3).

While it is true that expressing emotions, the positive ones especially, is more evident in the female characters, it would not do to insist that the male characters are never emotional. In fact, there is a high number of situations in which one of the boys can be found crying. Nevertheless, the girls in *The Chronicles of Narnia* are by far more emotional in this sense of the word. Similarly, in many interactions throughout the series, girls show affection, care for others’ needs and empathy for their suffering, that is, stereotypically feminine concerns, to a proportionally much larger extent than the male characters. The character of Lucy Pevensie especially functions as a nurturer within the stories. After any battle, it is Lucy’s duty to administer her healing cordial to all those who have been wounded. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Lucy constantly expresses her worry for Eustace and shows sympathy for his seasickness; she even shares her water with him, claiming that “girls don’t get as thirsty as boys“ (Lewis, 39), only to make him feel better. Other female characters also express such sentiment at times. For example, Susan is deeply relieved when Corin (or Shasta, whom she believes to be Corin) is brought back to the Narnian company. She “[throws] her arms round him and kisse[s] him, saying: ‘Oh Corin, Corin, how could you?’“ (Lewis, 34), obviously showing her concern for his safety. While Susan seems to be by far the most feminine of the characters, she is also said to be athletic and can be seen acting rationally too.

In parallel to the example of Shasta from *The Horse and His Boy*, his female counterpart Aravis differs significantly from the rest of the girls in the stories of Narnia. She is a very self-reliant and assertive individual, never afraid to state her mind, and dominant in nature. The re-telling of her story after her meeting with Shasta reflects her desire for independence. She narrates: “I rose up and washed my face and caused my mare Hwin to be saddled and took with me a sharp dagger which my brother had carried in the western wars and rode out alone“ (Lewis, 20). Not only is this desire as strong as to almost make her commit a suicide in order to avoid an undesirable marriage, but it



initiates her following actions and the immense risk she takes by leaving her home. Yet as a female, she still is exempt from stereotypically male activities within the book. We never see her fight and throughout the journey, she remains in the position of Shasta's companion rather than a decisive force of their joint adventure.

To summarize, the female characters exhibit stereotypically female qualities for the most part of their presence within the series. They are generally rather submissive, compassionate and overall express their attitudes in gentler manner than the male characters usually do. However, it does not do perceive them as entirely stereotypical women, as they possess a number of male qualities as well, and at the same time remain easily distinguishable from one another.

### **2. 1. 3 The Differences of Male and Female Villains**

First, it is important to state that the main antagonists of *The Chronicles of Narnia* are both men and women. However, there is a noticeable difference between the male and the female antagonists. To put it simply, the female villains somehow seem more evil than the men. Both the White Witch and the Lady of the Green Kirtle are powerful beings only resembling humans, who use deceit as well as enchantments to hurt the innocent and the heroes of the stories. Conversely, the male villains, such as Miraz, Uncle Andrew, Rabadash or the Tisroc, are merely men possessing wrong ambitions. There is an apparent paradox complicating the depiction of the major antagonists. Although the female villains exhibit masculine qualities (they are ambitious, dominant, aggressive), Lewis describes them in a stereotypical manner as feminine as possible. Despite being leaders, warriors and rulers, they remain women nonetheless.

Jadis, the White Witch, does not hesitate to declare her ambitions, stating that she will conquer the world Digory and Polly came from. Yet Digory keeps saying for years that he has "never in all his life known a woman so beautiful" (Lewis, 28). As the beautiful is generally perceived to also be the good, another common stereotype in people's minds, Jadis and her evil deeds are contrasted to her unusual beauty, resulting in the depiction of a person whose actions do not correspond to the attitudes they should express. Digory even compares the witch to Uncle Andrew, remembering that he "used exactly the same words" (Lewis, 36) when presenting his journey to success to Digory in *The Magician's Nephew*, but it is Jadis, not Andrew, who becomes the great villain of the story. In fact, Uncle Andrew is even given a partial salvation as he supposedly "learned his lesson, and in his old age (...) became a nicer and less selfish old man" (Lewis, 110).

For the reasons already mentioned, the punishment the villains are rewarded with differs quite significantly depending on their gender. While the male antagonists are punished for not being decent enough men, but are depicted as masculine nonetheless, the female villains are punished for not being feminine. In other terms, men are punished for their personal faults, whereas women are killed for not behaving like women ought to. Indeed, the end of the White Witch and the Lady of the Green Kirtle appears to be rather brutal, as both of them are murdered by Aslan and Rilian respectively. By contrast, the Tisroc from *The Horse and His Boy*, as cruel and cold as a man he is (just like Jadis or the Lady of the Green Kirtle), remains in his position. Before Aslan turns the Tisroc's son Rabadash into a donkey, he speaks to him: "Your doom is very near, but you may still avoid it. Forget your pride (what have you to be proud of?) and your anger (who has done you wrong?) and accept the mercy of these good kings." (Lewis, 118). Rabadash is given a chance at salvation, something unheard of with the female villains. Though *Prince Caspian* ends with Miraz deceased, he does not perish by the hand of a protagonist but his own traitorous companions; therefore it is not good that punishes evil. Evidently, there is different criteria for assessing the wrongdoing of these characters.

## 2.2 Appearance and Achievement

Without concern for individual differences between people, society generally values different qualities in men and women, and this inequality of expectations and matters of praise is reflected in *The Chronicles of Narnia* as well. Women are valuable due to their attractiveness and kindness, whereas personal achievements are emphasized with men. Although this notion is not particularly important for the stories, there is a notable number of examples supporting the inequality. Throughout the books, many female characters are described or discussed in terms of their physical appearance or more precisely, the abundance or the lack of beauty. While we also learn that some men have long beards or blond hair, the only male character who is once depicted in such a manner is Rilian in *The Silver Chair*. In comparison, there are more than twenty instances of the same approach towards women. At the same time, we are more commonly reminded of the achievements and skills of the male characters, although those are occasionally mentioned in connection to women as well. For example, Susan is said to be a good swimmer who even “won prizes for swimming at school” (Lewis, 15) in *Prince Caspian*.

As most of the girls in the Narnian adventures are still rather young children, they are usually not described in the aforementioned manner; nevertheless, the same cannot be said about older and adult female characters. When Jadis is first introduced in *The Magician's Nephew*, we are immediately told that Digory “[has] never in all his life known a woman so beautiful” (Lewis, 28), which is a sentiment he still holds years later as an old man. Throughout the book, she is referred to as “the woman whom Digory thought so beautiful” (Lewis, 33), “seven feet tall and dazzlingly beautiful” (Lewis, 36), a queen whose “height [is] nothing compared with her beauty” (Lewis, 40), so that Uncle Andrew, “thinking more and more of her wonderful beauty” (Lewis, 44), forgets how much she frightened him before. Unsurprisingly, she is described as having “a beautiful face in other respects, but proud and cold and stern” (Lewis, 15) in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Furthermore, other female characters' appearance is emphasized accordingly, though usually not in such a high number of cases. When acquainted with the daughter of Ramandu in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, the members of Caspian's company cannot help but think that “they [have] never before known what beauty meant” (Lewis, 110) upon looking at her. Prince Rilian in *The Silver Chair* declares that the Lady of the Green Kirtle is “the most beautiful thing that was ever made” (Lewis, 32), and she is later described in similar fashion during her first encounter with Eustace, Jill and Puddleglum. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and *The Horse and His Boy* the character of Susan Pevensie is also thought of as “the pretty one of the family” (Lewis, 2) or “the most beautiful

lady [Shasta] had ever seen“ (Lewis, 33).

Additionally, the notion of beauty in women is connected to their value in marriage. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Caspian refuses to marry the daughter of the Duke of Galma for she “squints, and has freckles“ (Lewis, 11) while he does not seem to hesitate to take Ramandu’s daughter, whose beauty has already been mentioned, as his queen. Moreover, Susan becomes an object of Prince Rabadash’s desire due to her attractiveness in *The Horse and His Boy*, subsequently resulting in an armed conflict between Narnia and Calormen. Rabadash declares: “I shall die if I do not get her (...)! I cannot sleep and my food has no savour and my eyes are darkened because of her beauty. I must have the barbarian queen.“ (Lewis, 60). A woman’s worth as a wife is then somewhat diminished by this attitude.

Not only is women’s attractiveness as important to the male characters as one might expect, but it is a matter of concern for women themselves. A very memorable moment from *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* features Lucy looking through the Magic Book in Coriakin’s manor and finding “an infallible spell to make beautiful her that uttereth it beyond the lot of mortals“ (Lewis, 83), or a spell which would make her the most beautiful woman all men would fight for. Lucy is strongly tempted to utter the spell and only stops at Aslan’s intervention. Another stereotype mildly pronounced in the series and related to women’s perception of the importance of physical attractiveness is the supposed interest in clothes and fashion. While the male characters in *The Chronicles of Narnia* never seem to show special attention to their clothing, the girls are said to be discussing the topic on several occasions. In *Magician’s Nephew*, Polly was the first to inspect the mysterious room in Charn because “there was something (...) which interested her more than it interested Digory: all the figures were wearing magnificent clothes“ (Lewis, 27). Jill praises the witches dress in *The Silver Chair*, Aravis states her disinterest in such pointless matter only to discuss it with Lucy at the end of *The Horse and His Boy*, and the character of Aravis’s friend Lasaraleen, who helps her escape the capital city of Calormen, presumably does not care about much else.

Although women’s achievements are brought into light once in a while, this tendency is more pronounced regarding the boys and men in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. A significant portion of the books serves to remind the readers of the achievements of the male characters in combat and in the professional or intellectual sphere. This is evident in comparison with the female characters especially. While Peter becomes “a great warrior“ (Lewis, 98) and Edmund a man “great in council and judgement“ (Lewis, 98) at the end of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Susan is described as “a tall and gracious woman“ (Lewis, 98) whom many kings ask for her hand in marriage, and

Lucy in similar terms stating that “all princes in those parts desired her to be their Queen“ (Lewis, 98). The women’s beauty and desirability as a marriage material is pointed out, whereas the men are either strong or wise.

Strength (not necessarily in the meaning of being physically strong) as a stereotypically male quality is connected to various fighting experiences of the characters in the books. Those are fundamental for the transformation of boys into men, and they are always rewarded as a result. After Peter protects his sister from the wolves in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, he becomes Sir Peter Wolf’s-Bane, being knighted by Aslan himself. Edmund is treated similarly when he achieves a knighthood on the battlefield after the demonstration of his brightness and courage, which saved many lives from the White Witch. Nearing the end of *Prince Caspian*, Peter “bestow[s] the Knighthood of the Order of the Lion on Caspian, and Caspian (...) himself bestow[s] it on Trufflehunter and Trumpkin and Reepicheep“ (Lewis, 112). Another example would be the commendation male characters receive after showing bravery or skill in battle, such as when “everyone praise[s] the valour of Eustace (...) and of Reepicheep“ (Lewis, 63) after the fight against the Sea Serpent in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*.

Consequently, the males in *The Chronicles of Narnia* like to remember their achievements. When Peter finds his old sword in the treasure chamber at Cair Paravel at the beginning of *Prince Caspian*, he immediately reminds us of his victory against the wolves. Later in the book, Peter and Edmund reminisce about the events of the Battle of Beruna because, as the author believes, “you can't help feeling stronger when you look at a place where you won a glorious victory“ (Lewis, 71). Throughout *The Silver Chair*, Eustace also occasionally recalls his adventures on the Dawn Treader and the new skills and attitudes he acquired there. The personal achievements of the male characters are generally formative experiences, and, as such, are never forgotten.

Furthermore, intellectual achievements are reserved solely for the male characters in the stories. When Uncle Andrew is first introduced in *The Magician’s Nephew*, he delivers a lengthy monologue concerning his journey to becoming a magician. Although this instance is primarily meant to establish his arrogant nature, he is an example of a highly educated man, and not the only one. Caspian’s education is emphasized in *Prince Caspian*, stating that he learned about “Cosmography, Rhetoric, Heraldry, Versification, and (...) History, with a little Law, Physic, Alchemy, and Astronomy“ (Lewis, 29) besides other skills he adopted throughout his upbringing. His tutor is, of course, a man as well. Doctor Cornelius is presented as a very wise man and his advice is valued as it is said to be “a good thing [to] have a learned man“ (Lewis, 47) by your side. Moreover, the protagonist of *The Magician’s Nephew*, Digory Kirke, becomes “a famous learned man, a Professor,

and a great traveller“ (Lewis, 110) after his adventures in other worlds. An element of a possibly similar development can then be seen in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, in which Peter Pevensie is not present as he is “working very hard for an exam and he [is] to spend the holidays being coached by old Professor Kirke“ (Lewis, 2). The character of Coriakin, a wise magician owning a library inundated with books, also appears in the same book. The importance of intellectual achievement is definitely accentuated within the series; yet there is not a single woman whose future is described in this manner.

## 2.3 Warrior Is a Man's Domain

Possibly the most prominent gender-based stereotype appearing in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which has already been touched to some extent, is the one supported by most societies, the general conviction that war, or less radically fighting, is a predominantly masculine action. An armed conflict especially, no matter its cause, is perceived as either the result of an aggressive male nature or an essential duty of men as the stronger sex. Although it is not the main focus of the Narnian stories, violence and combat are commonly present and, for the most part, limited in access to the male characters. The range of conflicts includes minor battles between individuals or small groups, as well as genuine warfare. While the men and boys often regard fighting as a norm and a necessity throughout the series, Father Christmas expresses the idea that “battles are ugly when women fight“ (Lewis, 58) already in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the very first book written. Overall, this is reflected in the fact that female characters tend to avoid any kind of combat, whereas it remains a clear expectation for and of the male characters. Why else would Caspian's first question on their arrival at the Lone Islands be whether Peter conquered them if not for the assumption that a man and a battle are inseparable companions?

Every single book of *The Chronicles of Narnia* includes an armed conflict. In *The Magician's Nephew*, Jadis mentions the war she led against her sister; in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* there is a critical battle determining the future of Narnia and similar conflict can be seen at the end of *Prince Caspian* or in *The Horse and His Boy*. In the chronologically latest story, *The Last Battle*, the theme even deserved its place in the title. We learn, for example, that “Caspian and other captains (...) made many sorties into the open country [and] there was fighting on most days and sometimes by night as well“ (Lewis, 48) in *Prince Caspian* or that High King Peter “was (...) preparing a raid against the giants on his northern border“ (Lewis, 63) in *The Horse and His Boy*. The books also feature smaller but equally important conflicts, such as Peter's fight against the wolves attacking his sister in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* or his duel with Miraz in *Prince Caspian*, Caspian's crew's battle against the slave traders and the Sea Serpent in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Rilian slaying the Lady of the Green Kirtle at the end of *The Silver Chair* with the assistance of Eustace and Puddleglum.

By contrast, Susan never participates in any battle described in the series and it is emphasized in *The Horse and His Boy* that she “doesn't ride to the wars, though she is an excellent archer“ (Lewis, 99). Her mastery is evidenced by the shooting match with Trumpkin in *Prince Caspian*; yet she does not use her abilities in an actual fight. As the Sea Serpent attacks Caspian's ship in *The Voyage*

of the Dawn Treader, Lucy merely stands there waiting to assist if necessary while the men try to dispose of it. Once again, in *The Silver Chair*, Jill witnesses the killing of the Lady of the Green Kirtle without any contribution of her own. Other major female characters, such as Aravis in *The Horse and His Boy* or Polly in *The Magician's Nephew*, are not even presented with a proper opportunity to engage in a fight, and as women also do not try to create such opportunities themselves. The different relationship between male characters and fighting is certainly not based on age or abilities, since the child characters are of approximately the same age and while Susan, for instance, is said to be exceptionally skillful with bow and arrows, male heroes such as Eustace and Shasta are rather clumsy and inexperienced, but participate in battles nonetheless.

Moreover, the sole action of fighting is not the only matter predominantly connected to men. Women are usually excluded from planning and strategizing before a battle as well. In *Prince Caspian*, Peter and Edmund stay behind “apparently making some plan“ (Lewis, 54) prior to the fencing match between Edmund and Trumpkin. There is an entire war council in later chapters of the book (before the final battle begins), which serves Caspian and his followers as a place of discussion about their next action and which is soon attended by Peter, Edmund and Trumpkin, while Susan and Lucy stay with Aslan elsewhere. Women are seldom present at any of these occasions if there is a choice in the matter, and even then they barely speak, let alone enforce a potential solution to their situation. Nevertheless, this is not necessarily a result of the author's general conscious claim that women do not belong in battle, since there are a few individual exceptions to the rule.

Both the White Witch and the Lady of the Green Kirtle are undoubtedly women of war. In *The Magician's Nephew*, Jadis describes the war against her sister in detail; she also personally leads her army in the final battle of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and can be seen acting violently towards various other characters in both of the aforementioned books. The Lady of the Green Kirtle in *The Silver Chair* appears to be a devious strategist as she had her minions “dug right under Narnia and was going to break out and rule it through Rilian“ (Lewis, 123), who declares he “shall ride forth in arms, fall suddenly on [the] enemies, slay their chief men, cast down their strong places“, all due to the lady's plan. However, there remains the question of the extent to which both of the witches can be perceived as actual women because they are handled as exceptionally strong and evil magical creatures rather than complex female characters without regard for any gender-based expectations one can have for them.

As far as the books tell us, the only nonmagical female character to actively participate in battles



throughout the series is Lucy, who can be seen fighting in the conflict against Calormen in *The Horse and His Boy*. To be precise, we can only assume, as it is pointed out that there is “a woman behind among the archers“ (Lewis, 103). She is also explicitly commanded by Caspian on several occasions in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* to have an “arrow on the string“ (Lewis, 73) in case of an inevitable battle. Discussions of strategy are also not particularly out of scope for Lucy. Nearing the end of *The Horse and His Boy*, “Lucy and Edmund and Peridan [are] busy with their plans for the battle“ (Lewis, 99). When Caspian’s company expects the attack of the Duffers on Coriakin’s island, Lucy boldly comments on the planning in progress and adds her own ideas. Her influence in the matters of battle is not large; yet it is certainly more prominent than in the case of any other female character. In the latest book, *The Last Battle*, we finally get to see a battle from the point of view of a female character, Jill, who is regarded quite highly there as a fighter. She is said to be somewhat skilled with a bow, “though not up to Narnian standards“ (Lewis, 71). In spite of that, she is the very first female character to actually make some difference in a fight.

Conversely, the sense of normalcy in fighting is only expressed with male characters. Most of them regard such actions as rather routine or unavoidable and welcome them without much alarm. To exemplify, Peter is immediately expected to lead Aslan’s army in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, is advised by Aslan himself on “how to conduct the operations“ (Lewis, 77) and fights the White Witch as an equal, while his brother is the one to break the Witch’s magic. They demonstrate the utmost courage and skills despite never being in a battle before, as the children they are. Moreover, when Caspian starts collecting allies for the liberation of the Narnians in *Prince Caspian*, we learn that “neither Caspian nor the others [have] really been thinking of a war“ (Lewis, 41). Yet very shortly afterwards and without any coercion, none of them hesitate as “it now [seems] to them quite possible that they might win a war and quite certain that they must wage one“ (Lewis, 41). War becomes the only answer, and although they realise its seriousness, they retain a calm and determined attitude as if they have waged a war before and therefore, it was nothing out of the ordinary.

Generally, a fight is the solution to the male character’s major challenges. All of the main antagonists of the stories are battled and beaten. Any real issue occurring during Caspian’s sea travels, for example, results in his company considering fighting or actually fighting a monster, slave traders, and other dangers. Not only are such practices recognized as natural and legitimate, but they are often desirable. In fact, some of the characters view battle as an exciting experience one should look forward to, namely Reepicheep in *Prince Caspian* and *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* or Corin in *The Horse and His Boy*. The only male protagonist who explicitly does not want to go to battle (even after his character’s development) would be Shasta in *The Horse and His Boy*.

Yet, though he is frightened, inexperienced and had previously no intention of personally fighting the Calormenes, he decides to ride with the rest of the army, telling himself: “If you funk this, you'll funk every battle all your life. Now or never.” (Lewis, 101). As true a sentiment as it may be, it is only applied to the boys in the books of Narnia.

In addition, the presence and use of weaponry also supports the stereotype to a certain extent. Unlike fighting itself, weapons are not exactly uncommon in the hands of the female characters. However, direct use of swords and similar weapons of close combat is typical for men only. When Father Christmas visits the children in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, he gives Peter a sword and a shield, tools of close combat, stating that “the time to use them is perhaps near at hand” (Lewis, 57), whereas Susan is given a bow, a weapon used at longer distances and not necessarily against enemies, and Lucy is given a small dagger, both to be used “only in great need” (Lewis, 57) to defend themselves because the girls “are not to be in battle” (Lewis, 58). In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Lucy carries a bow as well but is never truly seen actively using it, despite being prepared to on several occasions. The characters of Polly, Aravis and Jill do not use any weapons in the entire series, even though both Aravis and Jill are armed with daggers during their adventures.

On the whole, female characters in the Narnian stories acquire weapons mostly as a means of personal protection and barely ever use them. Peter, Edmund, Digory or Eustace, on the other hand, habitually carry pocketknives in their own world and are often provided with swords on coming to Narnia. They are expected to use them against any threat. Furthermore, when Caspian reaches a high enough age, the fundamental skill he is required to obtain to be a proper king in the future is the ability to use a sword. In the case of the male characters, weapons are given even to those who do not know how to wield them and have no desire to. For instance, Eustace is being coerced into fighting Reepicheep with swords as a punishment for his wrongful behaviour in the earlier part of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and later breaks Caspian's sword the moment he first uses it in the fight against the Sea Serpent. There is an obvious assumption in *The Chronicles of Narnia* that all decent men will carry weapons and fight enemies without regard for their personal preferences. When Eustace states that he is a pacifist, it is not an attractive quality to have.

To summarise, armed conflicts of any kind are the forte of men as well as boys in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Although they are not exclusively directed at male characters, inasmuch as there are females engaging in combat in one way or another, the message remains fairly obvious and potentially misleading. Not only does *The Chronicles of Narnia* teach its readers that all boys and men can be fighters, but it consequently expresses the notion that they all are, should be, and should

want to be warriors, be it in the literal or the metaphorical meaning of the word. This idea does not completely exclude girls and women; however, their participation in fights is only the result of a specific individual exception or an unexpected occurrence in which a woman is forced to try to protect herself in the absence of male fighters. In other terms, some women can perform sufficiently in a fight, especially if they themselves desire so, but it is not their duty or domain.

## 2.4 Damsel in Distress

The stereotypical device of a damsel in distress, a young woman who finds herself in great danger and needs to be saved by one or more male heroes, occurs fairly commonly in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Such expectation regarding the role of female characters in fiction dwells in the general notion that women are the weaker sex, and therefore require protection from their male counterparts. This kind of treatment of female characters in the Narnian stories cannot be explained by the sole fact that they are still children since the male protagonists of approximately the same age are written in a different fashion. While searching and rescuing innocent defenseless women is never the main theme of the stories, the motif of women's helplessness remains. In fact, several of the books' storylines focus on saving a man or a group of men, such as the Seven Telmarine Lords in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* or Prince Rilian in *The Silver Chair*, making them the male versions of a damsel in distress. However, almost every single female character can be episodically found in a grave situation where her imminent death is luckily averted by a brother or a male friend.

To provide an example, Digory's true adventure in *The Magician's Nephew* only starts after his neighbour Polly is sent by his uncle to an unknown place. Uncle Andrew, the main culprit of this part of the story, asks Digory whether he intends to "leave the little girl to be eaten by wild animals or drowned or starved in Otherworld or lost there for good" (Lewis, 15). He continues: "I should be very sorry to think that anyone of our family had not enough honour and chivalry to go to the aid of (...) a lady in distress." (Lewis, 14). Naturally, Digory immediately recognizes his obligation to put himself in risk and follow Polly to another world in order to save the girl, despite being just a child himself. He firmly believes, and the readers are never let to doubt it, that there is nothing else he could or should do.

To prove the point more thoroughly, one of the most prominent scenes in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* featuring the character of Susan shows her being attacked by the wolves serving the White Witch. Not only is she utterly incapable of repelling them, but she is not even trying to do so, feeling almost shocked enough to faint. She is however protected by her brother Peter, who defeats the attackers swiftly, as his own fear is said to make "no difference to what he had to do" (Lewis, 69). Once more, it is a man's duty to rescue the lady. Moreover, when their sister Lucy is suddenly attacked by a bear in *Prince Caspian*, it is the dwarf Trumpkin, who kills the bear. Although Susan could have shot it first with her bow, she hesitated because she was "so afraid it might be (...) a talking bear" (Lewis, 63), resulting in Lucy being saved by a man again.

Another occasion of the same kind can be found in the initial chapter of *The Silver Chair*. Jill, one of the main characters of this particular book, wants to flaunt her fearlessness by standing on the edge of an extremely high cliff. When she realises her mistake, she is no longer able to move as “her legs seemed to have turned into putty“ (Lewis, 7). Fortunately, she is pushed away by none other than her male friend Eustace. Additionally, Jill’s and Eustace’s predicament is a result of her personal fault and consequently serves to demonstrate the boy’s manly traits (such as bravery and rationality). The same argument can be applied to Polly’s situation as well because she lets herself be persuaded by Uncle Andrew’s words despite Digory’s passionate warning. At last, her troubles also help establish Digory’s adventurous and selfless nature. On the whole, the distress of the female characters is either the result of an unfortunate incident or the flaws and failings of the girls.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that male characters in peril are seldom incapable of protecting themselves, be it with wit or, most commonly, a sword. The reason behind the presence of dangerous or unpleasant situations focused on a specific character seems to be somewhat different for men than for women. For instance, Edmund’s captivity in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is not only the result of his own wrongful behaviour but also an enchantment forced upon him by the White Witch. When Eustace transforms into a dragon in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, it is due to a curse just as much as his greedy thoughts. Moreover, neither of them is saved by a woman. They are simply children who learned their lesson, corrected their attitudes, and are therefore saved by adults as a reward.

To conclude, the aforementioned stereotype is not applied merely to the female characters of *The Chronicles of Narnia*; nevertheless, considering the numerical dominance of the male characters, the females are proportionally more likely to be in need of saving by others. The reasons for the characters to be subjected to such danger by the author differ as well. While the boys are meant to improve as human beings, to acquire qualities decent men should possess, the girls’ suffering usually serves to illustrate the overall menacing atmosphere or the abilities of the male characters. Despite most of the events involving the classic damsel in distress stereotype (that is, with females to be defended) being rather insignificant within the story as a whole, they constantly reinforce the notion of women’s weakness and men’s obligation as the stronger sex to protect them.

# Conclusion

The main objective of this thesis was to analyse and describe selected phenomena related to the problematics of gender stereotypes and found in C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The thesis focuses mainly on the description and explanation of the major character's qualities and attitudes as well as their influence and value throughout the series. Special attention is given to the themes of war and fighting in general in connection to gender-based stereotypical view of masculinity. Additionally, the thesis explored the position of female characters in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, particularly in connection to the stereotype of a damsel in distress.

The results of the practical analysis of this thesis correspond, for the most part, with the results of various other research papers focusing on the Narnian series. The presence of gender stereotypes in the books is indisputable, and in some cases, those are so strongly emphasized that the resulting influence on the readers may be quite damaging. While the male characters overall represent all that is good, proper and desirable in an individual, the depiction of the female characters exhibits a tendency to highlight specific stereotypically female properties, which are not portrayed in a positive manner. To be precise, feminine qualities such as submissiveness and compassion are accepted and praised. On the other hand, stereotypical interests of women in clothes or gossip are at times unnecessarily emphasized and mocked. However, it is important to state that Lewis provides his female characters with a number of stereotypically masculine qualities. The women also manage to show their courage and adventurousness, although they seldom receive as many opportunities to do so as the male characters. As a result, women are only positively depicted at the moments they express their masculine attributes or some of the "proper" feminine qualities, such as gentleness or warmth.

The male characters in *The Chronicles of Narnia* certainly prevail in all possible instances. Even those men or boys, who do not seem to have the proper masculine qualities at first, are able to achieve salvation in some cases, and in other, despite being punished, do not receive as harsh a treatment as some of the female characters do for their vices. The series evidently contains various examples of unrealistic gender-based expectations. All the main child characters, the boys especially, are required to show immense courage and skills. Indeed, the men are pressured by the gender stereotypes to be as appropriate as possible, whereas the women are often treated as weak and vulnerable creatures, or conversely, as the incarnation of either irrelevance or evil. Elements of sexism are certain to be found in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Although male characters are mostly

regarded as superior to the females, one must remember that they are subjected to gender stereotypes just as much as the female characters are.

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