Balder, Adonis, Bacchus, Aslan: Frazer and Sacrament in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*

Aslan's role and interpretation in *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956) have been jocundly summed up as "Jesus in fur" (Colbert 10).[1] Few would doubt that this is more or less what C.S. Lewis intended,[2] but the substance of this intention has not been scrutinized. Declaring that Aslan is a Christ-figure should not be the end of critical inquiry on Aslan's role,[3] rather, only the beginning. To assume that Lewis meant precisely whatever an individual critic might mean by a Christ-figure, and to further assume that the reader shares this meaning, is simply irresponsible. The expression of Aslan's Christological aspects within the mythological framework of the Narnia books, therefore, remains a crucial, unresolved point of analysis.[4] This is, not surprisingly, a question to which Lewis turned his totalizing powers of invention; much more surprising, however, is the apparent critical neglect of his solution. This article will analyse Aslan's role through an unconsidered aspect of Lewis's Christology, one entirely natural to an early-twentieth century author, and discuss how this is presented in the first two Narnia books.

The introduction to Aslan's identity occurs early in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950). After the four Pevensie children enjoy their thoroughly English tea with the Beavers, Mr. Beaver regales them with an account of local traditions concerning the return of spring, heralded by the children's arrival and effected by the still mysterious Aslan. When, however, Mr. Beaver realizes that the children assume Aslan is human, he is swift to correct their misapprehension:

> 'Aslan a man!' said Mr. Beaver sternly. 'Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-Beyond-the-Sea. Don't you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion—*the* Lion, the great Lion.' (76)

Lewis's choice of wording here is significant. To clarify Aslan's identity, Mr. Beaver insists that "the great Lion" is "the King of the wood." At casual glance, this appears to be merely a variation of one of the folkloric titles for great cats, such as "the King of the Jungle", or "the King of the Forest," or indeed "the King of Beasts." But the so-called "The King of the Wood,"

as Lewis knew perfectly well, is the title of the opening chapter of Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (1911-1915).[5] This study suggests the reference to Frazer to be direct textual allusion, not coincidence.

Frazer attributes "the title of King of the Wood (*Rex Nemorensis*)" to the ritual priest of the cult of Diana at Nemi, and associates it with Virgil's Golden Bough; as such, it stands a central, motivating concept in his work (I.i.1 11). Frazer flamboyantly describes the King of the Wood as "a priest and a murderer," or to put it in more prosaic terms, both sacrifice and sacrificer (I.i.1 9). The title was passed from one priest to the next only through the ritual defeat of the existing King of the Wood: "Such was the rule of the sanctuary. A candidate for the priesthood could only succeed to office by slaying the priest, and having slain him, he retained office till he was himself slain by a stronger or a craftier" (I.i.19). Frazer later clarifies, however, that this apparent succession is actually meant to be understood as a cycle of death and resurrection, explaining, "the slaying of the King of the Wood was only a step to his revival or resurrection in his successor" (III.viii.1 214). This was owing to the fact that the King of the Wood was identified as "a king of nature," specifically invigorating the trees through the natural cycle of the seasons (I.viii 2). Frazer explains:

> [T]he King of the Wood at Nemi was regarded as an incarnation of a tree-spirit or of the spirit of vegetation, and that as such he would be endowed, in the belief of his worshippers, with a magical power of making the trees to bear fruit, the crops to grow, and so on. (III.viii.1 205)

This belief, Frazer says, dictates the ritual function of the King of the Wood's sacrifice; as a vegetation deity, his death and symbolic resurrection indicate an agrarian renewal as part of the seasonal cycle. Subsequently, he states, "the custom of annually killing the representative of the tree-spirit or spirit of vegetation in spring" was meant to effect the rejuvenation of the natural world he embodied:

> For the decay of plant life in winter is readily interpreted by primitive man as an enfeeblement of the spirit of vegetation; the spirit has, he thinks, grown old and weak and must therefore be renovated by being slain and brought to life in a younger and fresher form. Thus the killing of the representative of the tree-spirit in spring is regarded as a means to promote and quicken the growth of vegetation. For the killing of the tree-spirit is associated always (we must suppose) ... with a revival or resurrection of him in a more youthful and vigorous form. (III.viii.1 212)

Tellingly, Frazer identifies the King of the Wood with "the Sacrificial King" at Rome and elsewhere, a religious office bearing a "combination of priestly functions and religious authority," built on "the idea of the man-god" (I.ii 46, 47, 51). These are self-evidently Christological terms; Frazer presumes on his readers' knowledge of Christian terminology to associate the Christ of the gospels with his King of the Wood. He renders the Christological connection still more explicit when he asserts that "the king is slain in his character of a god or a demigod, his death and resurrection, as the only means of perpetuating the divine life unimpaired, being deemed necessary for the salvation of his people and the world" (III.ii.8 115). Frazer further develops this ritual sacrifice of the priest-king into a distinctly soteriological role: "[t]he accumulated misfortunes and sins of the whole people are sometimes laid upon the dying god" (VI.i.1 1).

The coincidence also forcefully struck C.S. Lewis. In *Surprised by Joy* (1955), he recounts the significance that Frazer's arguments had in the process of his conversion to Anglican Christianity:

> Early in 1926 the hardest boiled of all the atheists I ever knew sat in my room on the other side of the fire and remarked that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was really surprisingly good. 'Rum thing,' he went on. 'All that stuff of Frazer's about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it had really happened once.' (*Surprised by Joy* [*Surprised*] 223–24)

This declaration, Lewis said, had a "shattering impact" on his own atheistic beliefs at the time (*Surprised* 224). He would later employ precisely this line of argumentation in his own apologetics for the historicity of Christianity. In a talk given at St Jude on the Hill Church, London, in 1945, and later published in The Guardian,[6] Lewis asks:

> [D]oes not the Christian story show this pattern of descent and re-ascent because that is part of all the nature religions of the world? We have read about it in *The Golden Bough*. We all know about Adonis, and the stories of the rest of those rather tedious people; is not this one more instance of the same thing, 'the dying God'? Well, yes it is. That is what makes the question subtle. What the anthropological critic of Christianity is always saying is perfectly true. Christ *is* a figure of that sort. ("The Grand Miracle" 83)

Lewis seems to have taken this last statement wholly literally; at that time, certainly, he appears to have had no compunction about following Frazer in identifying Christ as "a figure of that sort"—a nature deity and dying God like Adonis. He further clarifies this in *Miracles* (1947), written while

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe was being composed, when he says:

> Every year God makes a little corn into much corn: the seed is sown and there is an increase. And men say, according to their several fashions, 'It is the laws of Nature,' or 'It is Ceres, it is Adonis, it is the Corn-King'. But the laws of Nature are only a pattern: nothing will come of them unless they can, so to speak, take over the universe as a going concern. And as for Adonis, no man can tell us where he died or when he rose again. Here, at the feeding of the five thousand, is He whom we have ignorantly worshipped: the real Corn-King who will die once and rise once at Jerusalem during the term of office of Pontius Pilate. (*Miracles* 222)

Lewis appears to be invoking Frazer's idea of the corn-spirit, specifically using Frazer's examples of Adonis and Ceres; he assumed, quite reasonably, that his readers would fully recognize the allusion. Not unusually for his era, Lewis self-evidently presumed Frazer's work to be proven, scientific fact.[7] His movement from scepticism to Christian belief seems to have done little to shake his acceptance of Frazer; rather, he likely found Frazer's theories resoundingly, comfortingly proven in the person of Christ.

Seen from this perspective, Mr. Beaver's comment that Aslan is "the King of the wood" gains new significance. If Lewis understood it to be "perfectly true" that Christ is a figure like Frazer's King of the Wood, then his Narnian figure of Christ should similarly be the King of the Wood. Aslan, indeed, bears, in Frazer's words, "a magical power of making the trees to bear fruit, the crops to grow, and so on" (III.viii.1 205). Or, in Mr. Beaver's words, "And when he shakes his mane, / we shall have spring again" (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* [*LWW*] 75). The association of Aslan with Frazer's King of the Wood appears to explain why his messianic role in Narnia contains little regarding the salvation of souls and forgiveness of sins, as in Lewis's Christian beliefs, or even deliverance from the evil one, as in Ransom's blatantly allegorical role in *Perelandra* (1943). Aslan, rather, primarily brings the end of winter with the fructifying renewal of spring, and, particularly in *Prince Caspian* (1951), wakes the trees from dormancy. As the incarnate Christ of Narnia, Aslan often appears to function more in the agrarian role of Frazer's King of the Wood. This would not have made Aslan less of a Christ figure to Lewis but would simply been a requirement of making him one at all.

The solution that Lewis found to the question of a Narnian Christ seems to include adapting the theoretical apparatus of Frazer within the story's mythological framework. This article, then, will attempt to suggest the interpretive significance of Aslan's identification with the King of the Wood. It will examine, first, Lewis's understanding of Frazer before proceeding to how this informs Aslan's role in Narnia. For the sake of both brevity and

to remain within the chronological scope of Lewis's comments, the study primarily restricts itself to the first two Narnia books, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) and *Prince Caspian* (1951).

"That Stuff About the Dying God"

Lewis's first exposure to the ideas in *The Golden Bough* must have occurred quite early.[8] In *Surprised by Joy*, Lewis comments that his schoolmaster, Mr Kirkpatrick, was "an Atheist, … of the old, high and dry nineteenth-century type. ... [T]he fuel of Kirk's Atheism was chiefly of the anthropological and pessimistic kind. He was great on *The Golden Bough* …" (*Surprised* 139). We find that Lewis has already absorbed these ideas in even his early letters.[9] In a letter dated 4 July 1916, he refers to Greeves' "precious Jehovah" as "an old Hebrew thunder spirit," and a few months later, he rebuts Greeves with a rather vehement rehashing of Frazer's ideas (*Letters to Greeves* 118, 135–7). This is corroborated by Lewis's statements that "[w]hat I got [at Kirk's] was merely fresh ammunition for the defence of a position already chosen. Even this I got indirectly from the tone of his mind or independently from reading his books" (*Surprised* 140). However, the best evidence of Lewis's interest in Frazer's theories is usually in retrospective statements; for instance, in a later letter to Greeves, he states

> [I]f I met the idea of a god sacrificing himself to himself … I liked it very much and was mysteriously moved by it: again, that the idea of the dying and reviving god (Balder, Adonis, Bacchus) similarly moved me provided I met it anywhere except in the Gospels. The reason was that in Pagan stories I was prepared to feel the myth as profound and suggestive of meanings beyond my grasp even tho' I could not say in cold prose 'what it meant.' (427)

The young Lewis's fascination with Frazer's theory of the dying God came, in the end, to exert a strong influence on his own Christology. In his 1945 talk at St Jude on the Hill, Lewis recalled his youthful keenness for Frazer as a framework of religious thought:

> When I first, after childhood, read the Gospels, I was full of that stuff about the dying God, *The Golden Bough*, and so on. It was to me then a very poetic, and mysterious, and quickening idea; and when I turned to the Gospels never will I forget my disappointment and repulsion at finding hardly anything about it at all. ("The Grand Miracle" 83)

This passage is peculiar and, to a certain extent, self-deprecatory. There is nothing about Frazer's theories which must *ipso facto* apply to any or every

religious system; there is no strictly logical reason that Lewis should have expected to find elaborate fertility rites in, say, the *Gospel of Luke*. This expectation, however, was likely nurtured in part by Frazer's own insistence on using distinctly Christian terminology to advance his theories; much of his work, indeed, presupposes that Christ is but one of a pantheon of dying gods.[10] The source of the young Lewis's disappointment may, indeed, have stemmed partly from finding scant support for this claim in the biblical text; just as likely, however, is that his "disappointment and repulsion" rose from the perception that Christianity—the religion in which he had been raised—appeared to have so little of that "poetic, and mysterious, and quickening" idea which so appealed to him.

However, he says, the one place in which he did find Frazer's dying God is, in fact, no less a figure than Christ, and no less a moment than the spiritual centre of the Christian gospel:

> [I]t seemed to me extraordinary. You had a dying God, Who was always representative of the corn: you see Him holding the corn, that is, bread, in His hand, and saying, "This is My Body," and from my point of view, as I then was, He did not seem to realize what He was saying. Surely there, if anywhere, this connexion between the Christian story and the corn must have come out; the whole context is crying out for it. ("The Grand Miracle" 83)

Although Christ, in the young Lewis's understanding, might not have realized what he was saying, the older Lewis, addressing an Anglo-Catholic congregation, certainly did. The "whole context" that seems to be "crying out" for Christ's identification with Frazer's "dying God" is, of course, the night he was betrayed: "you see Him holding the corn, that is, bread, in His hand, and saying, 'This is My Body.'" Lewis connects Frazer's theories not just with the narrative of Christ but with Anglican sacramental belief, specifically with the celebration of the Eucharist. This connection would not likely have been lost on the congregation of St Jude's. Lewis, speaking after a Sunday Evensong service, is using the same words that the congregation would have heard during the Eucharist that morning when the celebrant consecrated the host.[11] In other words, Lewis identifies Frazer's dying God not just with the person and teachings of Christ but with the liturgical tradition and the very ritual that his hearers have been actively performing. Lewis's self-deprecation and gentle mockery of his younger self here become more pointed; he was distressed to find the Christ as a corn-king nowhere in Christianity except for one point. But that point was the fructifying centre out of which all the rest grew; it was, in fact, the entire point.

Lewis further suggests that the words that Christ spoke—or rather, neglected to speak—are not in themselves the bearers of significance:

> How if the corn king is not mentioned in that Book, because He is here of whom the corn king was an image? How if the representation is absent because here, at last, the thing represented is present? If the shadows are absent because the thing of which they were shadows is here? ("The Grand Miracle" 84)

In saying that "He is here of whom the corn king was an image," Lewis may in fact be speaking quite literally. "Here" may not, strictly, refer to Christ's incarnation in the ancient Near East but instead to the immediate, physical context of St Jude on the Hill, to the ritual space of the liturgy and the real presence of the reserve sacrament nearby. Lewis seems to be suggesting that the fulfilment of Frazer's corn-king is not found, "in that Book" but in the ritual that Christ taught his church—in the way that "the repercussions of His words (and sufferings)" are enacted and re-enacted through participation in the Eucharist. A few years earlier, Lewis made the point explicit in his first talk at St Jude's, where he stated:

> When [God] created the vegetable world He knew already what dreams the annual death and resurrection of the corn would cause to stir in pious Pagan minds, He knew already that He Himself must so die and live again and in what sense, including and far transcending the old religion of the Corn King. He would say 'This is my Body.' Common bread, miraculous bread, sacramental bread —these three are distinct, but not to be separated. ("Miracles" 37)

In neither of these instances is Lewis making an abstract apologetic point but instead inviting his hearers to consider their physical surroundings and to reflect on their ritual actions from earlier in the day. Here, he says, in the commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection through the breaking and eating of bread, is that "poetic, and mysterious, and quickening idea" preserved, fulfilled, and enacted—*here*, in this building and among these people. Where the young Lewis looked for a form of the nature religions on the surface of stories, the older Lewis identifies instead the actual, tangible ritual and physical elements which point beyond and into themselves to the person of Christ.[12]

In other words, Lewis's employment of Frazer's theory seems hardly to have been merely ancillary to his Christian devotion. By identifying Frazer's corn-king with the celebration of the Eucharist, he positions it squarely at the emotional and theological centre of his experience as a practicing Anglican.[13] It remained for him "a very poetic, and mysterious, and quickening idea," but rather than being repulsed by its near-absence in the biblical text, he had come to recognize its fulfilment in the communal life and liturgical practice of the church. By recognizing that "corn itself is in its far-off way an imitation

of the supernatural reality"[14] which was "first there in God Himself," Lewis says, "one is getting in behind the nature religions" to the "Someone Who" is the reality behind the idea ("The Grand Miracle" 83–84). Consequently, he seems unabashed at positioning Frazer's ideas at the crucial centre of Christian belief. Writing in 1944, he claims:

> The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, *without ceasing to be myth*, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It *happens*—at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences. We pass from a Balder or an Osiris, dying nobody knows when or where, to a historical Person crucified (it is all in order) *under Pontius Pilate*. By becoming fact it does not cease to by myth: that is the miracle. ("Myth Became Fact" 66–67)[15]

Although here Lewis is engaging with the arguments of a sceptical interlocutor, he still appeals not to the testimony of the scriptures or the structures of logic but to the liturgy, invoking a line from the creed to connect the historicity and mythology of Christ. Tellingly, he then declares: "To be truly Christian we must both assent to the historical fact and also *receive the myth* (fact though it has become) with the same imaginative embrace which we accord to all myths" (67, emphasis added). He further goes on to assert that "[a] man who disbelieved the Christian story as fact but *continually fed on it as myth* would, perhaps, be more spiritually alive than one who assented and did not think much about it" (67, emphasis added). The choice of wording is pointed; one can, in this understanding, *receive* myth and be *continually fed* by myth. This association of receiving and eating is strikingly, even peculiarly, Eucharistic: one goes forward to *receive* the Eucharist, and the communicant is invited to *take and eat*. This, indeed, makes sense of Lewis's otherwise strange assertion: to feed on the myth of Christ, that is, to ritually participate in the fertility legend of his death and resurrection through active reception of the Eucharist, is of necessity more spiritually nourishing than simple intellectual assent without subsequent devotion. So Lewis turns to exhort his Christian readership:

> But Christians also need to be reminded ... that what became Fact was a Myth, that it carries with it into the world of Fact all the properties of a myth. God is more than a god, not less; Christ is more than Balder, not less. We must not be ashamed of the mythical radiance resting on our theology. (67)

This could almost be a defence of Anglican liturgical practice. Writing from

the standpoint of Frazer, "all the properties of a myth" would include the "mythical radiance" of their ceremonial re-enactment and the centrality of such sacred ritual to worship and devotion. If Christ is "more than Balder, not less," then he would, among other things, fulfil all the offices of a corn-king and nature deity with the attendant rituals and ceremonies; it is natural then, Lewis suggests, that his worship would centre around the ceremonial enactment of his death and resurrection. For Lewis as an Anglican, this would be no insignificant detail; the identification of Christ as Frazer's corn-king lay in the Eucharistic heart of his Christian belief and practice.

"An Old Rhyme in These Parts"

It should not be surprising, then, to find Aslan also displaying the characteristics of the myth of the old Dying God, in both the narrative and the ritual function. The logic for this is simple: if, in Lewis's understanding, Christ is the fulfilment of Frazer's corn-king, and Aslan is Narnia's Christ, then Aslan should be Narnia's corn-king. This, indeed, is precisely what is indicated in Mr. Beaver's declaration that Aslan is "the King of the wood" (75). This study, then, will turn to examine further textual evidence in the Narnia stories of Aslan as a corn-king.

From the first mention of Aslan in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, he is associated with the spring and the coming of summer. When Mr. Beaver, urging the Pevensie children to accompany him, whispers, "They say Aslan is on the move—perhaps already landed" (66), each child reacts with a deep spiritual intuition, as if, the narrator says, "someone says something [in a dream] which you don't understand but … [feel] as if it had some enormous meaning" (66). The three older children's reactions reflect, to some degree, their personalities—Edmund, the sneak, feels "mysterious horror"; Peter, the natural leader, feels "brave and adventurous"; and Susan, the sensitive one, feels "as if some delicious smell or some delightful strain of music" has enthralled her (67). But Lucy, as the youngest and the ostensible protagonist of the book, is routinely depicted as having the greatest spiritual acumen of the four. Her response to first hearing Aslan's name is telling: "And Lucy got the feeling you have when you wake up and realize that it is the beginning of the holidays or the beginning of summer" (67). Lucy intuitively associates Aslan with "the beginning of summer"; later, in *Prince Caspian*, she also realizes, before any of the others, that Aslan's return means the waking of the trees (117f, 138–139). Furthermore, through use of the second person address, the narrator invites the child readers to equate their own emotions with Lucy's; they are, in other words, asked to respond to Aslan themselves through their own memories of summer. It is worth mentioning that Lucy has yet to start boarding school (*Caspian* 4); her experience of "the beginning of holidays" would be one of expectation—anticipating the return of her siblings.[16] Similarly, the *beginning* of summer is also a sense of *expecta-*

tion; the emotion rises at the turning of the season, not its apex. The emotion, then, that the narrator invites his readers to share is one of *looking forward* to an event controlled largely by the natural passage of the year. Lewis reemphasizes the fact when Mr. Beaver again mentions Aslan in the conversation after dinner, and the children are again filled with "that strange feeling—like the first signs of spring, like good news" (75). Here again, the narrator conflates the gospel—good news—and the rebirth of vegetation.

Similarly, when Mr. Beaver relates the Narnian folk sayings surrounding Aslan's return, these again centre on the turning of the year:

> 'He'll put all to rights as it says in an old rhyme in these parts:
>
> Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,
> At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,
> When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,
> And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again.
>
> You'll understand when you see him.' (75–76)

That final reassurance—that the children "will understand when [they] see him"—seems to be sheer faith. Mr. Beaver himself has never seen Aslan; he said earlier that Aslan is "not often here, you understand. Never in my time or my father's time" (76, 75). And unlike the patently middle-class Mr. Tumnus the Faun, the working-class Beavers do not own a comfortable library of scholarly books to consult on such subjects.[17] Their knowledge of Aslan, then, seems to derive from some kind of oral folk tradition. Mr. Beaver, indeed, goes on to quote "another of the old rhymes" about Cair Paravel, which promises that "[t]he evil time will be over and done" (77), and, "a saying in Narnia time out of mind" which prophecies that the children's ascension to the four thrones "will be the end not only of the White Witch's reign but of her life …" (78). Here again the note of *expectation* becomes apparent. These four traditional sayings gather together with Mr. Beaver's own wit and wisdom to create a history of Narnia and of Aslan which is not in any way textual but wholly one of oral, folk tradition; the centre of which that tradition is cyclical, one of change, a transition of royal authority from the Witch to the four Pevensie children, marked by the turning of seasons from winter through spring.[18]

Frazer, in preparing *The Golden Bough*, followed the standard methodologies of late-Victorian folkloristics; the crux of his argument is thus based on oral and ritual traditions. Thusly, in Narnia all knowledge of Aslan and his spring-giving role derives from just such an oral tradition. Aslan leaves no scriptures; his followers write no book. His identity is preserved, rather, in the anticipation of spring in the midst of winter seen both in Mr. Beaver's rhymes and in Tumnus's recollection of feasts such as Christmas—the solstice and turning of the year—and of summer revelries with waking trees (15f).

Frazer attributes the creation of the ritual worship of the corn-king to this kind of cultural memory of summer as well as to a fear that the winter will remain at its solstice and thus never end. He argues that early humans possessed an unclear grasp of the passing of time and may very well have thought that the winter would never end—that the days would continue shortening into unending night unless something were done to reverse their dwindling. It was, he says, the observation of an imperfectly perceived natural cycle that prompted the development of nature religions: "The spectacle of the great changes which annually pass over the face of the earth has powerfully impressed the minds of men in all ages, and stirred them to meditate on the causes of transformations so vast and wonderful" (IV.i 3). As these meditations evolved into a more acute observation of "the growth and decay of vegetation, [and] the birth and death of living creatures," and attributed them to a "pattern of human life" enacted among various gods and goddesses (ibid.). Frazer explains:

> [T]he old magical theory of the seasons was displaced, or rather supplemented, by a religious theory. For although men now attributed the annual cycle of change primarily to corresponding changes in their deities, they still thought that by performing certain magical rites they could aid the god who was the principle of life, in his struggle with the opposing principle of death. (IV.i 4)

It does not seem wild speculation to say that such a concept—aiding "the principle of life" against "the opposing principle of death"—appears in the twin oral traditions concerning the overthrow of the White Witch and the coming of spring. According to Mr. Beaver's old rhymes, the coming of Aslan and the crowning of the children both possess that power, but these are not ostensibly the same act or even presented as such. The folk tradition in Narnia, then, as the four children find it, seems to consist of an imperfect mixture of imaginative observation of the seasonal cycle and unreconciled folk traditions concerning the return of spring; in Narnia, however, the "magical theory" and "religious theory" of Frazer are reified: winter really is unending, and Aslan's return really does bring both the summer and the reign of the children at Cair Paravel.

In other words, Aslan, like Christ to C.S. Lewis's mind, is the actualization of folk and religious traditions concerning the corn-king. He fulfils the existing oral tradition of "the King of the wood" rather than a textual or legal tradition. In *Miracles*, written as *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was being composed, Lewis declares that Christ:

> … [I]s like the Corn-King because the Corn-King is a portrait of Him. The similarity is not in the least unreal or accidental. For the

> Corn-King is derived (through human imagination) from the facts of Nature, and the facts of Nature from her Creator; the Death and Rebirth pattern is in her because it was first in Him. (*Miracles* 186)

Lewis simply reiterates, in his own words, Frazer's theory concerning the derivation of the corn-king: it arose "through human imagination" interpreting "the facts of Nature," leading eventually on to their physical realization in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Consequently, in the fantasy realm of Narnia not just the corn-king but the entire ritual surrounding him is incarnated; Aslan's appearance in Narnia manifests itself in the physical blossoming of the land from winter to spring (119ff). It seems not improbable, then, that Lewis may be presenting Aslan not just as a sigil for the biblical Christ but for an embodiment of "poetic, and mysterious, and quickening idea" of the sacramental, Eucharistic realization of Christ as corn-king.

"The Ritual of Adonis"

A critical understanding of Aslan as a corn-king may help explain several otherwise puzzling features of the first two Narnia books. For instance, in a letter to a child reader, Lewis pointed out that one of the indicators of Aslan's identification with Christ is that he appeared "at the same time as Father Christmas" (*Letters to Children* 32). Yet, if Lewis intended to invoke the whole of the Christmas story, he chose a seemingly counterintuitive means. Father Christmas is, the narrator explains, a "huge man in a bright red robe (bright as hollyberries) ... and a great white beard that fell like a foamy waterfall over his chest," who drives an apparently magical sleigh filled with presents—including a very British Christmas pudding—and pulled by several reindeer (LWW 100, 108). There is no manger, no worshipful shepherds, no star in the east, or anything even tangentially resembling a choir of heavenly angels. Christmas, when it finally comes to Narnia, appears to be wholly secular; all elements of the Nativity are markedly absent. Neither the liturgical nor the biblical details of the Christmas story accompany Aslan's appearance. It is, after all, Father Christmas who arrives and not St Nicholas.[19]

Yet, if Aslan is Christ the corn-king, a Christmas without the Nativity would be logical to Lewis, even inevitable. Frazer declares:

> … with respect to the midwinter celebration of Christmas we are not left to conjecture; we know from the express testimony of the ancients that it was instituted by the church to supersede an old heathen festival of the birth of the sun, which was apparently conceived to be born again on the shortest day of the year, after which his light and heat were seen to grow till they attained their full maturity at midsummer. (VII.v.2 331–32)[20]

Lewis would likely have followed Frazer in accepting this as simple fact. Christmas in Narnia, then, without the Nativity of church tradition, appears to be a Christmas of this sort, celebrating the lengthening of the days and the return of the sun. Father Christmas, indeed, declares that "The Witch's magic is weakening" (*LWW* 100)—in other words, winter is beginning to recede. It is only after Father Christmas has come and gone that the rapid thaw begins.

The White Witch herself can be similarly explained through Aslan's role of corn-king. Little enough is recounted about her reign, though the characters all agree it is despotic. It seems to include both a degree of puritanical moral governance and a police state; she infiltrates the forest with her spies (26, 65–67), and rails against "gluttony", "waste", and "self-indulgence" (108).[21] In her interactions with Edmund, she takes on the role of Hans Christian Andersen's Snow Queen, spiriting away a mean-spirited boy for unknown or obscure reasons.[22] All this adds up to make the White Witch a fine story-book villain, but her role within the metanarrative, as the antagonist of the Christ-figure, remains unclear; the White Witch's reign seems more small-minded and petty than malevolently evil.

However, it hardly seems accidental that, by general consensus among the Narnians, the worst of the White Witch's crimes consists in making Narnia "[a]lways winter and never Christmas" (24, cf. 43).[23] She thus would seem to function more as a seasonal antagonist, embodying the decay of the vegetation as Aslan embodies its revivification. Curiously, Frazer recounts a May Day tradition from the Isle of Man, in which the Queen of May, as the embodiment of spring, must do battle with winter:

> In opposition to her was the Queen of Winter, a man attired as a woman, with woolen hoods, fur tippets, and loaded with the warmest and heaviest clothes, one upon another. Her attendants were habited in like manner, and she too had a captain and troop for her defence. (III.viii.7 258)

Although we cannot be certain, the similarity with the White Witch seems too close to suggest coincidence. Following this, the White Witch, then, is the arch-villain because she is a kind of Queen of Winter; her will and plan for Narnia is to prevent summer from returning. When spring does recur, she gathers "captain and troop" to resist the summer's royal embodiment and to repulse the growth of the new season and preserve winter forever.

Aslan's role as a corn-king further explains the unusual timing of his death. While the messianic nature of his death and resurrection are fairly self-evident, it remains puzzling how and why the apparent salvation of Narnia—the breaking of the Witch's curse and the end of winter—is effected *before* his death.[24] The expectation in a rigidly biblical allegory, where the

winter be understood as a symbol for the sin nature and Aslan's death as the way of salvation, would be that the flowering of the land should occur after the resurrection;[25] the traditional imagery of Easter is, after all, the imagery of early spring. One would assume that Aslan's resurrection would occur at midwinter with spring rapidly following. Similarly, if Aslan's mere presence represents a final and decisive victory over the Witch and the real end of winter, his death would be only concerned with redeeming Edmund, and then this would render the pitched battle a superfluous set-piece.[26] Yet, not only is battle with the Witch presumed necessary, the outcome of the battle seems to be somewhat in doubt. So, it is not immediately clear why spring arrives before Aslan's triumph.

Yet, if Aslan is, indeed, also Narnia's corn-king,[27] then his death after spring becomes merely a matter of course. The battle with the Queen of Winter, after all, took place on May Day.[28] And, according to Frazer, the death of Adonis, to which Lewis explicitly compared the death of Christ in *Miracles*, was celebrated at the summer solstice—in opposition to the White Witch's winter solstice.[29] Equally telling is Frazer's observation about a series of rituals from Russia:

> The reason why in some of these Russian ceremonies the death of the spirit of vegetation is celebrated at mid-summer may be that the decline of summer is dated from Midsummer Day, after which the days begin to shorten, and the sun sets out on his downward journey:
>
> *"To the darksome hollows*
> *Where the frosts of winter lie."*
>
> Such a turning-point of the year, when vegetation might be thought to share the incipient though still almost imperceptible decay of summer, might very well be chosen by primitive man as a fit moment for resorting to those magic rites by which he hopes to stay the decline, or at least to ensure the revival, of plant life. (III.viii.9 263–34)

The death of the corn-king, then, would occur at midsummer precisely because the whole land itself participates in the "still almost imperceptible decay of summer";[30] for Lewis as an Anglican, the sacramental significance of this would likely have had no little appeal. If the land of Narnia participates sacramentally in the death of Aslan, it would be necessary for spring to precede the battle and triumph, so Aslan can die at midsummer. Frazer, though, comments that "the employment of a divine man or animal as a scapegoat … who is afterwards slain" is likely to occur in the Spring (Frazer VI.v 226–27). The discrepancy between Aslan's midsummer death and the normal Adonis pattern can be explained by either Milton's placement of

it in the summer[31] or the parallelism in having Aslan's grandest act at the summer solstice in opposition to the White Witch—an idea consonant with the discussion of Balder's midsummer fire festivals.[32] This has additional relevance to Aslan's role as Edmund's saviour in particular.[33]

This alignment of Aslan's death with that of Frazer's corn-kings may help explain not only the timing of Aslan's death but the details surrounding it. When, on the evening of his death, Aslan slips quietly from the camp, Susan and Lucy follow at some distance before he invites them to walk alongside with their hands in his mane (139ff). Peter and Edmund are notably absent and in fact never seem to be aware of Aslan's death at all (cf. 166). This is a marked difference from the biblical *via dolorosa*. Though the women mourners accompany Christ on the way to Golgotha and are witnesses to the crucifixion, Jesus's male disciples also play a prominent role: Simon of Cyrene carries the cross, the Beloved Disciple receives Jesus instructions concerning Mary and witnesses the piercing of his side, Joseph of Arimathea tends Christ's body. Here, once again, Lewis does not portray Aslan precisely as the biblical Christ but more in-line with Christ as the corn-king. Recounting one of the dying god rituals, Frazer writes:

> When vespers are over, the longed-for moment has come for the first procession with the Death to begin; it is a privilege that belongs to the school-girls alone. Two of the older girls seize the figure by the arms and walk in front: all the rest follow two and two. Boys may take no part in the procession[.] (III.viii.6 248)

The resemblance to the Narnian *via dolorosa* is striking: "when vespers are over" in late evening, "the school-girls alone" process with Aslan to the Stone Table, walking on either side and holding on to him, and the boys "take no part." After Aslan's death, the girls spend the night weeping themselves to exhaustion; this detail, too, aligns with Frazer's descriptions of the festival of Adonis or Tammuz. One of their ritual responsibilities was to mourn and lament the corn-king through the night from his death to his subsequent resurrection. Quoting a tenth-century Arabic writing, Frazer recounts that the feast of Tammuz was called "the festival of el-Bûgât, that is, of the weeping women" (IV.ix 230); elsewhere he correlates this to the biblical account of this practice in Ezekiel 8:14 (IV.i 11). On these occasions, "the air was rent with the noise of women wailing for the dead Adonis" (IV. ix 226).

Additionally, if Lewis intends Aslan to contain the Adonis and Tammuz aspects of Christ, then the fine details of his resurrection could also be comfortably explained. Unlike the gospel account, Aslan has no embalming and no tomb, and his resurrection occurs after only one night instead of three days. But Lewis is not dispensing with the three days in the tomb simply

to hurry along the plot; the resurrection of Adonis occurred after only one night. To, again, cite Frazer:

> In the great Phoenician sanctuary of Astarte at Byblus the death of Adonis was annually mourned, to the shrill wailing notes of the flute, with weeping, lamentation, and beating of the breast; but next day he was believed to come to life again and ascend up to heaven in the presence of his worshippers. (IV.ix. 225)

The passion and death of Aslan, then, follows the flowering of spring as a summer battle with the Queen of Winter. Two school-girls accompany him to witness his death and spend the night in weeping and lamentation; Aslan's resurrection takes place the next morning. Lewis, though following the broad strokes of the passion narrative, appears to derive the details more from Frazer's account of the ritual of Adonis.

"Behind the False God Bacchus"

In addition to helping clarify both the metanarrative and narrative role of Aslan, this reading has the advantage of explaining an otherwise almost wholly perplexing aspect of the books: the presence of the Greek god Bacchus,[34] a stumbling block to critics.[35] On the face of it, it seems difficult to reconcile the appearance of a pagan fertility god, infamous for lascivious and violent worshippers, with the Christian symbolism of Narnia.[36] However, if this understanding of Christ includes a corn-king function, then Bacchus functions as the expression or incarnation of one of Aslan's aspects, that of the vine-god. This is suggested at the first occurrence of Bacchus in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. In the midst of the unending winter, memories of Bacchus's presence in the wood serve as a poignant reminder for Mr. Tumnus of the summer and natural fertility of Aslan's reign. He tells Lucy, when Bacchus appeared "the streams would run with wine instead of water and the whole forest would give itself up to jollification for weeks on end" in contrast to the endless winter (21). Later, Bacchus appears on-screen, as it were, in *Prince Caspian* when Aslan's roar finally awakens the long-dormant trees. As the tree-spirits dance around Aslan, the narrator explains:

> [Lucy] never saw where certain other people came from who were soon capering about among the trees. One was a youth, dressed only in a fawn-skin, with vine-leaves wreathed in his curly hair. His face would have been almost too pretty for a boy's, if it had not looked so extremely wild. You felt, as Edmund said when he saw him a few days later, 'There's a chap who might do anything—absolutely anything.' (157–58)

Bacchus and the Maenads appear almost to spontaneously generate from the dance of the trees. They bring with them a literal fructifying power; as Bacchus is dancing, leaves, then vines, then "[r]eally good grapes" rapidly grow to nearly engulf the dancers and to provide refreshments for the company (159). Later, after the Narnian victory over King Miraz and the Telmarines, a similar dance occurs:

> Then Bacchus and Silenus and the Maenads began a dance, far wilder than the dance of the trees; not merely a dance for fun and beauty (though it was that too) but a magic dance of plenty, and where their hands touched, and where their feet fell, the feast came into existence[.] (*Caspian* 211)

Bacchus here embodies and expresses Aslan's power of fecundity. His dance accelerates the natural process growth and ripening, bringing feasting and satiation out of the hoped for future into the present. Emerging as he does from the trees, he does not appear to possess an existence independent from Aslan's but rather as his agent, he empowers—largely through merriment—the natural processes of vegetable growth that Aslan contains, in this case the fruitfulness of summer.

This also appears to be Bacchus's role during the liberation of Beaversdam: his vines cover and crumble a stone bridge, his ivy grows to turn a schoolhouse into "a forest glade," the summer holidays abruptly begin for a bored student and a weary teacher (200–02). The climax comes, though, when Aslan's procession arrives "at a little cottage where a child stood in the doorway crying" (203). The child explains to Aslan that "Auntie's very ill" and "going to die" (203). Terminal illness was, obviously, a deeply fraught and emotional subject for Lewis; he would return to this theme more directly and more autobiographically a few years later, when writing about the illness of Digory's mother in *The Magician's Nephew* (1955). Thus, it hardly seems accidental that, at the climax of Aslan's triumphant liberation of Narnia, Lewis brings him to a house where a child is watching a beloved adult relative wasting away. Aslan heals the child's aunt, but when she sits up and declares she wants breakfast, it is Bacchus who supplies it:

> 'Here you are, mother,' said Bacchus, dipping a pitcher in the cottage well and handing it to her. But what was in it now was not water but the richest wine, red as red-currant jelly, smooth as oil, strong as beef, warming as tea, cool as dew. (*Caspian* 203–04)

Lewis associates Aslan's healing of the child's aunt with the miracle of water into wine. The image occurs not at the most significant moment of the plot but at a scene which perhaps had greater emotional significance for

the author. Yet, this does not seem wholly Christ at the wedding of Cana;[37] instead, the image becomes oddly Eucharistic. It further reflects Lewis's understanding of the Eucharist as containing the fulfilled τόπος of the corn-king, underscored by Bacchus assuming the role of a celebrant. Frazer, in fact, makes a point of connecting the Christian Eucharist with the feast of Dionysius, saying,

> [W]hen the god is a corn-god, the corn is his proper body; when he is a vine-god, the juice of the grape is his blood; and so by eating the bread and drinking the wine the worshipper partakes of the real body and blood of his god. Thus the drinking of wine in the rites of a vine-god like Dionysus is not an act of revelry, it is a solemn sacrament. (VI. xii 167)

Lewis's choice of this particular image suggests a deep connection between the Narnia books and his understanding of Frazer. In *Miracles*, Lewis classifies the miracle at Cana as one of Christ's "Miracles of *Fertility*," a significant term throughout Frazer's work, and associates it directly with Bacchus (221). The passage is worth quoting in full:

> This miracle proclaims that the God of all wine is present. The vine is one of the blessings sent by Jahweh: *He is the reality behind the false god Bacchus.* Every year, as part of the Natural order, God makes wine. He does so by creating a vegetable organism that can turn water, soil and sunlight into a juice which will, under proper conditions, become wine. Thus, in a certain sense, He constantly turns water into wine, for wine, like all drinks, is but water modified. Once, and in one year only, God, now incarnate, short circuits the process: makes wine in a moment: uses earthenware jars instead of vegetable fibres to hold the water. But uses them to do what He is always doing. The miracle consists in the short cut; but the event to which it leads is the usual one. (221, *emphasis added*)

Lewis's explanation seems to find embodiment in Bacchus's behaviour throughout the books. His miracles function as "the short cut" of natural process—growing leaf to vine to grape, for instance, or crumbling down bridges and buildings, or truncating the school year to bring an immediate summer holiday, or turning water into wine. In the Narnia books, Bacchus appears to exist as a personification of the fertility that Aslan brings; he gives physical form to the quickening of "the Natural order," and the fruitful renewal of the summer. His actions assume a priestly function, mediating to the natural world of Narnia and to the Narnian people the presence of

their corn-king, by making Aslan's fructifying power visible, even edible. He exists not as a separate deity but as a mediator pointing to the spiritual reality behind himself,[38] offering a miracle already present "as part of the Natural order." Thus, he transforms water to wine and offers it to a woman who has just been plucked from illness and death. In this sense, Bacchus's role in the Narnia books appears to be sacramental.

Conclusion

In the mid-to-late-1950s, Lewis's interests seemed to diverge from his work during the war years and just after. This may possibly by related to Lewis's romance with Joy Davidman; whatever the reason, there is a shift in timbre and theme in the *Narnia* books as the series progresses. The later books, written alongside *Till We Have Faces* (1956), seem to reflect different spiritual and mythological concerns than the books written alongside *Miracles*. But this apparent change of interest does little to negate the ideas that informed the series' conception. So, when Mr. Beaver identifies Aslan as "the King of the wood," this claim seems more ponderous than it first appears. By this direct allusion to Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Lewis appears to be identifying Aslan as a dying God and corn-spirit akin to Balder, Adonis, and Bacchus. This in itself is not surprising: Aslan is the Narnian Christ, and in Lewis's understanding Christ was, at least in part, a corn-king—among many other things. This aspect of Lewis's Christology may be attributed to his era; although Lewis did not appear to find Frazer's theories readily manifest in the biblical text, he does seem to have found them in the Eucharist. For Lewis, as an Anglican, this would position Christ's role as corn-king at the deep spiritual centre of his Christian practice. When writing for children about Christ incarnate in another world, it would be natural for him to employ the metanarrative framework provided by Frazer and to attach sacramental significance to it. Certainly, throughout the 1940s, as he studied and spoke on the miracles of Christ, and wrote *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*, the dying gods and corn-spirits of Frazer seem not to have been far from his mind. It is perhaps not unlikely that by the time he began developing the story of Narnia, he had so deeply internalized Frazer's narrative that adopting it proved both intuitive and effortless. It remains to be seen how fruitful this suggested critical approach may prove in other aspects of Lewis's work. Certainly, careful analysis of *The Chronicles of Narnia* from the perspective of *The Golden Bough* appears to offer some critically curious readings and may elucidate some otherwise perplexing aspects of the text.

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Notes

[1] Doris Myers devotes several pages of analysis, in fact, to the importance of fur and Aslan's furriness in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* but admits that, "Lewis apparently did not think out consciously the manifold significance of furriness" (Myers 131).

[2] Cf. Lewis's own statements in *Letters to Children* 45, 76, 92–93. These may be simplifications, but it would be uncharitable, to say the least, to assume them total fabrications.

[3] Cf. Downing 64–65, Manlove 6, Ryken and Mead *Wardrobe* 62–66. The advent of a new film version in 2005 produced a crop of explanatory guidebooks, which have here been consulted; however, the tendency to treat Aslan devotionally occurring in nigh-innumerable books is irrelevant to a scholarly article.

[4] Cp. Manlove 27.

[5] An entry in Lewis's diary dated Thursday, 4 January 1923 mentions Lewis reading "Frazer's *Golden Bough* in the new abridged edition" (Lewis *Diary* 170). We know, from other comments and his letter to Arthur Greeves, that this is all but assuredly a re-reading. Thus, the unabridged third edition is referenced throughout this article as the most likely version of the text that Lewis read. However, few, if any, of the arguments presented here hang on the identification of the edition. Frazer has been cited by part, chapter, and, when present, section followed by the page-number; the multi-volume parts are through-numbered by chapter.

[6] While perhaps not the best textual practice, citations are to *God in the Dock* for the reader's convenience. Those interested in the textual history of the articles should consult Hooper's preface.

[7] The modern skepticism vis-à-vis Frazer's work has no impact on the argument presented here, which is based on Lewis's own Christological beliefs. P.H. Brazier, in his concern for the orthodoxy of Lewis's theology, musters a sustained attack on the validity of *The Golden Bough* but whether those in our era believe Frazer's arguments has no impact on whether those of Lewis's era did. Cp. Brazier 199–202ff.

[8] Lewis, for instance, mentions a fascination with the dying god motif in Balder as a child (*Surprised* 17).

[9] Ford notices this interest but does not connect it to Frazer specifically (Ford 295). Her interest being primarily Lewis's criticism, Kuteeva makes a few cursory observations about Lewis's fascination with such mythologies but does not perform an in-depth analysis (Kuteeva 279). Cf. Hart 13–14. Tom Shippey, while noting that Frazer underlies some of Lewis's thought, is interested in developing a historically-centered

idea of magic across the Inklings. His elaborate schemata have very little bearing on the textual analysis presented here. Cf. Shippey 30–44.

[10] A brief section addressing Christ specifically is included in some editions of *The Golden Bough*, but due to controversy, Frazer removed the section in later printings, particularly the 1922 abridged edition. Since it is not included in all editions, it has not been considered in this article as we cannot be certain Lewis read it.

[11] According to the church website, C.S. Lewis spoke at St Jude on the Hill on Sunday, 15 April 1945, "as part of a series called 'The Voice of the Laity'. […] these talks followed Evensong, so it is strictly speaking inaccurate to describe them (as some have done) as 'sermons' or to say the speakers 'preached'." The talk was later published in the St Jude's Gazette. It was Lewis's second visit to the church; on both occasions he spoke about miracles. The first is collected in *God in the Dock* as "Miracles" and the second as "The Grand Miracle."

[12] Williams briefly notes the sacramental convictions in the Narnia books but not in the context of Aslan's death and not in any great detail (Williams 134–35). Dorsett discusses Lewis's evolving regard for the Eucharist, chiefly through letters and personal reminiscence, noting that "[t]hroughout the 1940s and 1950s Lewis, to use the words of his long-time friend, Alan Bede Griffiths, increasingly acquired 'a deep reverence for and understanding of the mystery of the Eucharist'" (Dorsett 83). The overlap of these dates with the composition of the early Narnia books is tantalizing but not conclusive.

[13] A full exploration is beyond the scope of this study, but thoroughgoing critical analysis of the influence of Lewis's Anglican identity on his literary works is overdue. Critical attention to Lewis's Anglicanism has, indeed, been curiously sparse. Bray's largely documentary article, though necessarily brief, provides a helpful starting point for discussion but is almost wholly biographical and makes little attempt to gesture toward any interpretive implications in her findings (Bray 20, 32–33). Dorsett's discussion of Lewis as an Anglican is helpful but constrained by its brevity; like Bray, his interest is largely biographical rather than critical (Dorsett 40–41, 64, 77–78, 81–83, et al.). Wolfe offers a more wide-ranging discussion but situates it within a broader discussion of Lewis's views on interdenominational relations; his interest is predominately theological rather than literary-critical. He thus generally limits his analysis to doctrinal considerations; after making the common but arguable assertion that Anglicanism "holds relatively few distinctive doctrines", he seems to accede that Lewis's Anglicanism remains generally, and intentionally, concealed (121, 124f). Wolfe does not, however, examine the question of a distinctively Anglican orthopraxis and phenomenology, despite acknowledging the importance of such to Lewis himself (121ff). Even noted Anglican thinkers such as Rowan Williams and N. T. Wright have been oddly taciturn on the subject of Lewis's Anglicanism, opting instead to identify Lewis with what Williams calls "a wide swathe of Christian tradition, East and West" (135). This, indeed, was the view that Lewis was keen to cultivate of himself, yet certainly Bray's research, to say nothing of the broader formalities of due diligence, provides adequate grounds to re-examine that self-portraiture with a level of scepticism. Pearce, admittedly, goes so far as to claim the concept of "mere Christianity" as a "straitjacket" on Lewis's thought, but his rather florid claim that "Lewis often flowered into the fullness of [Roman] Catholicism, or at least the blushing bloom of near Catholicism" seems tendentious (Pearce 133).

[14] Lewis here seems to be thinking of 1 Corinthians 15.

[15] "Myth Became Fact" first appeared in World Dominion, vol. XXII (September-October 1944), pp. 267–70.

[16] At the risk of just the sort of biographical criticism Lewis loathed, cf. his own comments in *Surprised by Joy*: "Life at a vile boarding school is in this way a good preparation for the Christian life, that it teaches one to live by hope. Even, in a sense, by faith; for at the beginning of each term, home and the holidays are so far off that it is as hard to realize them as to realize heaven" (*Surprised* 36).

[17] An exploration of class distinctions and prejudices in Narnia is beyond the scope of this study.

[18] Curiously, Mr. Beaver's phrasing implies that Aslan remains "the Lord of the whole wood" continuously; it is, rather, the acting authorities—those ruling Narnia in his absence—who are changing (78). It should be remembered that in Frazer, the animating spirit of the King of the Wood was considered to be continually reincarnated through each change of the physical office-holder; the priests in the grove would come and go, but the reign of the King of the Wood was unbroken.

[19] Brown conducts an extended discussion of the complexity and general critical perplexity of Father Christmas's appearance including the general tendency to explain his appearance as a gaff by Lewis (Brown 148–56). Cf. Ryken and Lamp Mead *Wardrobe* 74–75.

[20] A fuller discussion, far too lengthy to quote, is found in Frazer IV.vi 302–08.

[21] A cultural echo of the puritanical cancellation of Christmas during the Interregnum may be present, but the exploration of such is outwith the scope of this study.

[22] The spiritual implications of the lamia motif, the predatory mother figure which the Snow Queen exemplifies, remain largely unexplored. Manlove mentions the Andersen connection several times but never explores it (Manlove 6, 33, 38–39). Filmer's feminist analysis is curiously vague on this point as well (Filmer 109). Colbert performs a great deal of exposition on the Snow Queen and other sources but concludes that the White Witch is simply a Satan figure (Colbert 19–30). Cf. Lindskoog 58–61, Ryken and Lamp Mead *Wardrobe* 165. This latter interpretation tempts Manichaeism.

[23] Needless to say, this places the White Witch as having fixed Narnia at the winter solstice.

[24] Manlove notices the discrepancy, but his explanation is unconvincing (Manlove 37). He later glosses over it entirely (39). Cf. Sammons 87–89. Colbert is at a loss to explain the differences between Aslan's passion and Christ's but decently admits it (Colbert 35–9). Schakel notices the discrepancies but only uses this to argue against allegorizing (Schakel 44–45). Cf. Hannay 57–58. Christopher indicates the importance of the dying-god mythologies to Lewis in his discussion of Aslan's death and resurrection but performs no exposition—a side-effect of his work's brevity (Christopher 114).

[25] Downing, among many critics, ignores any discrepancies between the biblical story and Narnia (Downing 77). Cf. Lindskoog 43–46, Manzalaoui qtd in Lindskoog 207.

[26] Ryken and Lamp Mead imply such in their discussion of this chapter (Ryken and Lamp Mead *Wardrobe* 82–87).

[27] A lion is associated, oddly, with the Diana of the wood in the first chapter of *The Golden Bough* (I.i.1 7), and feline corn-kings are not unknown to Frazer. Cf. Frazer V.viii.5 280–81.

[28] Cf. "Sometimes in the popular customs of the peasantry the contrast between

the dormant powers of vegetation in winter and their awakening vitality in spring takes the form of a dramatic contest between actors who play the parts respectively of Winter and Summer. Thus in the towns of Sweden on May Day two troops of young men on horseback used to meet as if for mortal combat. One of them was led by a representative of Winter clad in furs, who threw snowballs and ice in order to prolong the cold weather. The other troop was commanded by a representative of Summer covered with fresh leaves and flowers. In the sham fight which followed the party of Summer came off victorious, and the ceremony ended with a feast." (III. viii.7 254)

[29] Cf. "the tale which links the damask rose with the death of Adonis points to a summer rather than to a spring celebration of his passion" (Frazer IV.ix 226).

[30] This is not without British antecedent, as in Burns' "John Barleycorn" which Frazer quotes. Cf. IV.ix 230–31. Lindskoog quotes a redolent passage out of Lewis's *Dymer* about Balder and the return of spring (Lindskoog 19–20). Dymer, though, was written almost twenty years earlier and so can tell us very little about Narnia other than that such themes have long been on Lewis's mind.

[31] Cf. note to Frazer IV.ix 226.

[32] Given the quotations from "Myth Became Fact" above et al., Lewis obviously had no compunctions about mingling fire-festival imagery (Balder) with corn-king (Adonis) motifs.

[33] It is possible that Lewis is inverting Frazer's idea of the human representative of the Corn-spirit (V.vii.4. 251) by having the corn-king die for his representative, but this is difficult to differentiate from the Christian allegory definitively, and Lewis might simply have not made the distinction.

[34] At the risk of pointing out the obvious, Lewis confirms this to be the Greco-Roman deity by having all involved shout the historical cries of the cult of Dionysus, εὐάν and εὐοῖ (Lewis *Caspian* 159–60). This detail was noticed independently by Ford, although he asserts that εὐάν is a title for Bacchus, a meaning not attested in Liddell, Scott, and Jones (Ford 71). It is common to think Euripides' *Bacchae* as the source, but the word εὐάν does not actually appear in that play, only the distant verbal form εὐάζω. However, these two (quite rare) Greek words occur together in line 326 of Euripides' *Trojan Women*. The lack of other words commonly cited as being in bacchanal chants—for instance, σαβοῖ as in Demosthenes *Orationes* xviii. 260—suggests this to be the source. The context in Euripides implies a further compounding of Bacchus with Hymen whose explicit presence would probably not have been appropriate for the intended readership of *Prince Caspian*. As a note, all editions of Euripides are cited in that of Lewis's Oxford professor Gilbert Murray.

[35] Ryken and Mead in their guidebook expound on the initial difficulty of Bacchus in a sidebar but offer only a cursory interpretation which is similar to those of Schakel and Myers discussed below (Ryken and Lamp Mead *Caspian* 79). Colbert tackles the issue of Bacchus but asserts that "Tumnus," and by extension Bacchus, "is a pagan figure from the nature worship that Christianity displaced" (Colbert 10). Recognizing the difficulties, he devotes an entire chapter in his book to Bacchus, but his explanations are characteristically glib. Cf. Wood 50, Lindskoog 133. Manlove, even in his summary-heavy chapter on *Caspian*, never mentions Bacchus. Cf. Hannay 30–31. Downing cites his existence in an appendix but does not address his presence even in his chapter on Classical allusions (Downing 168). Schakel asserts that Bacchus dismissively is used as a symbol of freedom and joy (Schakel 58). Cf. Sam-

mons 20. Myers, similarly to Schakel, insists that Bacchus is designed to contrast true Christian freedom from "uncomfortable Sunday clothes, long-faced piety, and self-denial" (Myers 139). We simply do not agree that encouraging people "to get in touch with the natural energies within themselves" is a theme of *Prince Caspian* (Myers 138–39). Likewise, Louis Markos elides the difficulty of the presence of Bacchus and the maenads by somewhat puzzlingly aligning their appearance with that of the Ents in T*he Lord of the Rings* and assumes both are simply anti-industrial, "creative" forces, leading to an unnecessarily reductive reading of both texts (Markos 58–59). Cf. Shippey 29. While his analysis is focused on *Till We Have Faces*, Joeckel most astutely recognizes the difficulty posed by Bacchus's presence in *Prince Caspian* (226–30). Cf. Manganiello, Montgomery 64.

[36] It is possible, and not contradictory to our argument, that Lewis is using Bacchus like the medieval/classical daemons described in *The Discarded Image* (40–42), but that book is temporally rather far from the writing of *Narnia*, and there is little apparent evidence for other elements of the medieval worldview, but the matter demands more study. Both Mary Zambreno's article and Shippey's chapter begin their own attempts, but their respective brevity and other interests undermine their relative usefulness.

[37] *Contra* Markos 59.

[38] This is emphasized by the rather editorializing conclusion of the first Bacchus episode in *Prince Caspian* when Susan comments, "'I wouldn't have felt safe with Bacchus and all his wild girls if we'd met them without Aslan.' 'I should think not,' said Lucy" (*Caspian* 160).

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