"A Dem Fine Woman": Female Artists and Actresses' Visual Representations of Beautiful Evil

The scene is iconic: a faun walking through a snowy wood holding an umbrella over him and his companion, a young girl. This evocative image has become the foremost visual representation of the beloved works of C.S. Lewis, his seven-book *Chronicles of Narnia.* Having grown up reading the books, beginning with my introduction to the seminal *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* at age eight, I can attest to the powerful influence these books, with their fantastical settings and characters, had on my life. While most readers are enthralled with the wonderfully good lion Aslan or the world found beyond the wardrobe, I was captivated by the titular witch. I spent hours looking at the illustrations of her in my books and shivering when I heard the commanding voice of Elizabeth Counsell's performance of the White Witch in the Radio Theatre broadcast audiobooks. My obsession has extended well into my adult life as I encounter new depictions of my favorite villain. The incarnation of evil, Queen Jadis the White Witch, has been visually brought to life by three women over the years. Pauline Baynes created the official illustrations for the Narnia novels, Barbara Kellerman portrayed Jadis in the BBC's 1988 TV miniseries, and Tilda Swinton took on the role for the 2005 feature film. The progression of the depictions over the years has illuminated the source of the Witch's power over other characters and readers alike. Baynes' original illustrations set the standard, while the following film adaptations either fail to meet the standard, in the case of Kellerman's melodramatic portrayal that undermines the character, or supersede the standard in the way that Swinton seamlessly reimagines the villainess to fit the 21st century.

One of the most widely used lenses through which to examine *The Chronicles of Narnia* is as Christian allegory, where the White Witch poses many possible biblical representations. Some scholars have said that she is Eve because it is her actions that ultimately cause humanity

to fall from grace, while others see her as Lilith, cast out of the Garden of Eden for demanding more power. Both allegorical readings are valid. Notably, Lewis describes her as the most beautiful woman ever seen. No matter which world she is first encountered in, the first thing the male characters notice about Lewis's female villain is her beauty: in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Edmund concludes after a long inventory of her appearance that "it was a beautiful face in other respects, but proud and cold and stern" (Lewis, 31), while many years earlier, in the prequel *The Magician's Nephew,* Digory attributes to her "a look of such fierceness and pride that it took your breath away. Yet she was beautiful too" (Lewis, *MN* 53). And while pre-pubescent boys are able to eloquently describe the White Witch's beauty, adult males become dumbstruck when confronted with her visage to the point where they can only manage a muttered "dem fin woman" here and there (Lewis, *MN* 202). Her villainous nature is also recognized by the characters and readers, and Lewis's consistent use of the word "beautiful" as the foundation of the White Witch's character connects her attractiveness with her wickedness. Her physical presence and her power have a symbiotic relationship, to the point that "you could see at once, not only from her crown and robes but from the flash of her eyes and curve of her lips, that she was a great queen" (Lewis, *MN* 58). When you deconstruct the character down to her three basic characteristics—she is female, she is beautiful, and she is pure evil—it logically follows that the source of the White Witch's power comes from its physicality or visual depiction rather than, say, her magical powers or her royal status.

Emphasizing the White Witch's beauty might cause readers unease if they don't understand the influences that shape this character. When asked what inspired the White Witch's character, C.S. Lewis's stepson Doug Gresham agreed that she could be seen as the antagonistic Satan to the Christ-figure of Aslan, but that she also represents "the character and nature of

Satan's favorite temptations…the devil dresses up his temptations in beauty, more often than not" (qtd. in Moore 216). The reading of the White Witch from a solely religious lens is too reductive for the character because the religious treatment only focuses on her as a female, while there are other lenses that take into account her beauty more explicitly. In "Women, Sex, and Power: Circe and Lilith in Narnia," Jean Graham points out that "the White Witch…possess[es] dangerous qualities--the qualities of female sexuality and power" that trace back not to biblical symbolism, but to ancient mythological female characters such as Circe and Medusa (32). Medusa and the White Witch share an affinity for turning their enemies into stone, and the addition of Circe makes them a triumvirate of women with the ability to "induce [their opponents] by nothing less than the utter fearsomeness of awesome beauty" that they possess (Dove 119). While some would argue that the most explicit form of the White Witch's power is her golden wand, they fail to realize that it is just an extension of her power, and that she remains powerful in its absence—she does not have it at all in *The Magician's Nephew* and it is destroyed during the battle in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*—which means that her power resides within her person rather than in an object.

At one point in *The Magician's Nephew*, Queen Jadis is defending her decision to use the Deplorable Word, which kills everyone in the world except her, thus giving her the victory that she desired: "what would be wrong for you or for any of the common people is not wrong in a great Queen such as I. The weight of the world is on our shoulders. We must be freed from all the rules" (Lewis, *MN* 68).[1] Digory notices that his Uncle used the same line of logic to justify his actions earlier in the novel, but that his words were not as believable as when Jadis spoke them because Uncle Andrew is not as powerful and beautiful as Jadis is. This is an example of the standard which depictions of the White Witch must meet to be successful. She must be

charismatic enough to be able to make other characters vulnerable to her from just the sight of her beauty. According to Bryan Dove, the key element of the White Witch's character is the relationship she has with others, specifically because "what makes her evil is not only that she does evil things, but also that she makes us like her even while she's doing it" (122). Essentially, any portrayal of the White Witch must be able to influence not just the characters that she is interacting with, but also the readers. The recipients of any portrayal of the White Witch must be put in the same position as Mr. Tumnus and Edmund, in that they were aware of the dangerous power that the Witch possessed but were still swayed by her beauty to agree to kidnap children or turn over siblings. When confronted with the image of the White Witch, audiences should be reminded of the words of Mr. Beaver used to sum up the Witch to the Pevensie children: "there may be two views about humans. But there's no two views about things that look like humans and aren't" (*LWW* 81). And these views of humans and non-humans that Mr. Beaver is talking about are greatly influenced in the minds of the readers by the illustrations that accompanied the words.

Pauline Baynes was only a 28-year-old emerging artist when she began her lifelong collaboration with Lewis. *The Chronicles of Narnia* books have never gone out of print since 1950 and Lewis later "admitted that the popularity of the Narnia stories was due in no small part to their illustrations" (Hammond & Scull 1). Baynes now is thought to be one of the most talented illustrators of the twentieth century and "by her hand, the invented worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis first came visually to life" (Hammond & Scull 1). She created not only all of the official Narnia artwork for the original books and future editions, but also the iconic 1969 map of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth as well as work for over a hundred other books. In 1968, Baynes won the Kate Greenaway Medal, the British award for children's literature

illustrators, for her work in Grant Uden's *Dictionary of Chivalry.* However, Baynes's other works has been overshadowed by her illustrations for *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a fact that, regardless of how she felt about it, did not deter her from dedicating much time and creative effort to the books until her death in 2008. In a 1990's interview, Baynes said that she did not become aware of the Christian allegory in *The Chronicles of Narnia* until a long time after she first was exposed to the story and that "at the time, I thought they were just marvelous stories" (qtd. in Smith 52).[2] Overlooking the religious elements of the saga when translating it into illustrations is a peculiar circumstance, but "one has to admire Pauline for her concept for such [a] unique character [like] the White Witch" (Yates 8). Because Baynes' illustrations are free of the limitation that a focus on religious allegory only might pose on them, her drawings of Queen Jadis in *The Magician's Nephew*, in addition to the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, showcase her physical representation of power.

For this examination of the visual codes of Baynes's illustrations, I will be looking at the full-color Collector's Edition of the books published by HarperTrophy in 2000[3]. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* was the first Narnia book to be published, in 1950, and *The Magician's Nephew* was the last, published in 1956. *The Magician's Nephew* is essentially the Genesis story of Narnia, but more interestingly, it tells the origin of the White Witch, whose real name is Queen Jadis of Charn.[4] In contrast with her approach to the character in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Baynes does emphasize the beauty of Jadis—which means "once" or "in former times" in French—in the illustrations for *The Magician's Nephew,* so that she becomes "a figure of dynamic energy and frightening power, far less domesticated than in her later incarnations [in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and the other books in the series] as the White Witch...surrounded by the imagery of death, she is a figure of anti-life" (Crago 42). By drawing

Jadis's body as taking up more of the space in the illustration, Baynes leaves herself enough room especially with Jadis's facial features to be able to emphasize different emotions. The first

illustration of Jadis features her with quirked eyebrows that serve to transmit her haughty disposition (59), and when she has jumped up on the carriage and is driving the horse on with a whip, the readers see the most relaxed, singularly happy facial expression that Baynes ever bestows on her (94). The illustrated Jadis thus has the potential to be happy, demeaning, angry, frightening, and even scared. The decision to illustrate Jadis with more emotions on her face is crucial to the division between the illustrations of the character in *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. By making Jadis appear more human from her emotive facial expressions, Baynes sets up her illustrations of the White Witch to be more stoic and drastic.

Baynes continues to use effective placement strategies to convey the power that Jadis has. In the frontispiece, the carriage illustration, and the tree of life illustration, Baynes situates Jadis next to strong vertical lines: the dais where the bell hangs is about half her height, then the lamppost reaches the same height on the page that she does, and then finally the tree that she leans against greatly surpasses her height. Picture theorist Molly Bang argues that "vertical shapes… imply energy and a reaching toward heights or the heavens...vertical shapes are monuments to kinetic energy of the past and the future, and to potential energy of the present"

because they are working against the earth's gravity (44).[5] The vertical lines associated with Jadis serve as Baynes's way of enhancing the "size" of her power in the three different worlds. In Charn, she dwarfs the vertical line because she is the most powerful being there. In England, where her magic does not work, the lamppost is the same height as she is to represent her being brought down from the pedestal on which she has placed herself. Finally, in the newly created Narnia, she is brought low by the purity of the new life associated with Aslan's resurrection and the laws of magic she does not understand, which allows for the emergence of her new self as the White Witch, after she has eaten the forbidden fruit in order to integrate herself into this new world.

While Baynes took the time to draw Jadis with a more complete anatomically-correct face in *The Magician's Nephew*, she opts to emphasize other aspect of the White Witch, especially her relationship to her surroundings. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the first illustration of the White Witch is of her initial encounter with Edmund in the forest, where she is depicted in the upper right half of the page, seated in her sleigh but still elevated above the other characters in the illustration (32). In his essay "Introduction to Picturebook Codes," theorist William Moebius postulates that "height on the page may be an indication of an ecstatic condition or dream-vision or a mark of social status or power, or of a positive self-image" while the right side of a page usually suggests that a character may encounter "risk or adventure" (149). The fact that the White Witch is not only in the upper half of the page but that she is the highest placed character lends to the visual representation of her power. Placing her on the right side of the page has two possible meanings: she herself is the "risk" that Moebius is addressing, furthering the amount of power she has on the page, or it could be a foreshadowing of the risk

that the White Witch now faces because the Pevensie children are about to fulfill the prophecy and bring about her doom.

In the Jadis illustrations, the character sported golden-brown skin and richly colored clothing. To illustrate how eating the forbidden fruit drained Jadis' life, the White Witch is completely desaturated. The primary color of the illustrations of her in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is white, with the biggest area of color assigned to the gold used for her sleigh and her crown. Bang points out that "against white or pale backgrounds, bright colors often look washed out. There is a physiological reason for this: since white light is made of all the colors, all the color receptors in our eyes are activated and become 'bleached out' when we see white" (69). Baynes thus is able to facilitate the effect that the Witch needs to have on readers by making it so that looking at the Witch has a physical effect on the readers' eyes. Another component of the color white that Bang mentions is that things in nature that are white possess the same duality that the Witch has in that they are beautiful yet lifeless: "white bones…white sea foam and clouds…white pearls, white snow" are visually pleasing to look at yet still hold a negative connotation (69). Essentially, in the same way that white can represent both purity and death, the White Witch can visually attract us while also repelling us with her actions.

The color white continues to be a prominent aspect of Baynes's depictions of the White Witch, especially when it comes to her illustrations of the sacrifice at the Stone Table. While the previous illustrations of the White Witch have been dominated by the color white, in this illustration the primary color is a reddish orange color to represent the firelight—and to symbolically represent the malicious act that is about to happen to Aslan—while the Witch, standing centered on the Stone Table at the highest point in the illustration, is pure white, with no shadows or reds at all on her person (Lewis, *LWW* 152).[6] While the magnitude of the color white

is abated, it still succeeds in drawing readers' eyes to her. The White Witch's station on the Stone Table is particularly interesting in the context of Moebius's idea about height on the page and Bang's belief that "Smooth, flat, horizontal shapes give us a sense of stability and calm" (42). The White Witch's height gives her that status of power while her centeredness on the strong horizontal line of the Stone Table is a representation that her power is coming from the Deep Magic. In this image, there is an alignment of the two opposing forces of good and evil that is satisfying a balance of order in the world. Although there might seem to be a minimal visual emphasis on the White Witch in this illustration, the focal point becomes the influence that she has over others. As Dove points out, "it is not simply the existence of evil—troubling enough—but the human compliance and cooperation with it that predicates its nature and significance as a catastrophe" (114), and this illustration is a visual depiction of that compliance. While her illustrations of Jadis in *The Magician's Nephew* emphasized the connection between the beauty and power of the character, Baynes's White Witch illustrations in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* depict the influence her power has on others through effective placement on the page and color association.

Even though Baynes used different picture book codes to illustrate Jadis and the White Witch, there is one consistency between the two characters: the depiction of her crown. In *The Magician's Nephew*, Jadis wears a Mesopotamian-style crown that has four curved lines in the front and three higher spikes in the back, while the White Witch wears a simple tall gold crown

with five spikes in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.[7] One of Bang's ten principles about illustrations is that "we feel more scared looking at pointed shapes; we feel more secure or comforted looking at rounded shapes or curves" (70). Having Jadis's crown contain both curves and spikes reminds readers that Jadis is a dangerous character, but that she is capable of more emotions and moral reasoning than Lewis's textual portrayal of her might allow, while the White Witch is fully dangerous because she has eaten the forbidden apple of the garden and has become an anti-life figure. The crown is the aspect of the character to consider because "to remain recognizable, a character need only reveal a few signal traits...these metonym[ies] of… character type…play a role in action, as the main character undergoes an identity crisis related to the presence or absence of a primary feature" (Moebius 143). The only time that Baynes does not give the character a crown is in the Tree of Life illustration in *The Magician's Nephew*, where the branches of the tree obscure the top half of Jadis's face. Baynes makes this choice because she is depicting the moment of transition for the character, where Jadis is becoming the White Witch after eating the forbidden fruit. Here lies what is remarkable about Baynes's illustration of the White Witch: she creates a visual representation of Lewis' villainess that embodies the "terror and amazement" that he associates with her in the text (*LWW* 177).

While Baynes is successful in creating an empowered and nuanced visual representation of the character, not every attempt to bring the White Witch to life has been as effective. In 1988 the BBC premiered a three hour live-action television production of *The Chronicles of Narnia.* The White Witch, played by actress Barbara Kellerman, makes her first appearance on the screen in the second episode, which begins with her initial encounter with Edmund in the forest. While the script for the miniseries is the most faithful to Lewis's text of all the film adaptions, Kellerman's portrayal of the White Witch fails to convey the beauty and charisma that the

character has in the text thanks to her overarching eyebrows, wide eyes and open mouth smiles. A letter that Lewis wrote to a colleague of his at the BBC in 1959 states that he was “adamantly opposed” to the idea of his Narnia books being adapted for television because he believed that “anthropomorphic animals, when taken out of narrative into actual visibility, always turn into buffoonery or nightmare” (qtd. In Gibson 1). This lack of faith in filmmakers’ abilities to bring to life a story that already has a high level of visual power is echoed by scholar Hugh Crago. Yet he spends more time in his essay “Such Was Charn, That Great City” pointing out that the BBC series blundered over an obstacle that Lewis himself perhaps hadn’t thought of 30 years prior: a visually drab White Witch played by Barbara Kellerman, whose “overplaying [of Lewis’s] existing dialogue… results in melodrama” (44). When Kellerman’s White Witch learns that Edmund is a Son of Adam, she leaps up and raises her wand to strike him, after the dwarf makes the comment of “He’s only one, easily dealt with,” but immediately after she lets out her ecstatic growl the dwarf stalls her action, saying, “Yet, he might know something” (Fox). Kellerman’s visually drab White Witch might have been forgiven if the character had retained her power of influence over others, but in this introductory scene, the audience is left with a White Witch that takes advice from her servants. In fact, Edmund in the television series does not look like he is at all attracted to the White Witch’s beauty but instead has a confused facial expression. Kellerman’s portrayal does give viewers the sense that they shouldn’t get near her, but the impression is less that she exudes power and evil than that she makes viewers uncomfortable. Because of this, the character’s agency is dissipated on the screen.

Visually, Kellerman’s White Witch does draw the audience’s eye, but not in a powerful way. In the book, the White Witch is first described as “a great lady, taller than any [other] woman…covered in white fur up to her throat… [With a face] not merely pale, but white like

snow… except for her very red mouth" (Lewis, *LWW* 31). The first thing viewers see when they look at Kellerman's White Witch is the absence of white: her fur coat is mostly gray and the costumes she wears in the other episodes fall into an off-white category of color. The color palette of Kellerman's White Witch matches more closely with the overcast grey sky than with the white snow on the ground, making her blend in with the background rather than standing out and visually intimidating viewers, as with Baynes's White Witch. The makeup for the character is also ineffective, giving her blue eyeshadow and dark lips that look black rather than red. The entire series falls short in creating a believable fantastical world but Kellerman's portrayal is especially disappointing because the White Witch is the catalyst for the drama of the story. She can't possibly inspire agency in the plot or other characters if she herself doesn't have any to begin with.

The production's visual misfires continue throughout the episodes, even through the iconic Stone Table sacrifice scene. When the fifth episode depicts all the evil Narnian creatures gathered around the Stone Table, viewers have to look for the White Witch in the middle of the crowd. Part of this gaffe comes from the recurring mistake of not having the Witch be white enough to stand out in a film that is shot with dark and monochromatic cinematography, but it also comes from her being not being elevated above her subordinates. Unfortunately, the horned creatures standing next to her are taller than she is, which further diminishes her power over her subjects. And even though Lewis wrote that during this scene that the White Witch's face "was working and twitching with passion" (*LWW* 155), Kellerman's facial expressions and gestures lean more toward ecstatic abandon, again evoking Crago's description of melodrama. The only time in this scene—and arguably the entire television series—that Kellerman's White Witch looks unsettling and powerful comes after Aslan has been muzzled. The White Witch is centered

in the frame and her face is relaxed and void of any discernable emotion. She is staring down to the left side of the screen at the off-screen Aslan. While the impression is fleeting, lasting two seconds before Kellerman reverts back to melodramatic facial expressions and gestures, it is enough evidence to support the idea that she does have the potential acting ability to pull off a true depiction of the White Witch in all her beauty and power. This leads us to postulate that the responsibility for this subpar portrayal of the White Witch could, and possibly should, be attributed to director Marilyn Fox, costume designer Judy Pepperdine, makeup designer Sylvia Thornton, and other persons who participated in the creation of the 1988 version of the White Witch.

In the same way that Baynes drew a different type of crown for her depiction of the White Witch in *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Kellerman's White Witch has a unique crown as well. The crown that Pepperdine provides for the White Witch in the TV series is silver with four thin prongs extending out of the headpiece, which features bird heads coming out of the filigree. Not only does the aesthetic choice to make the crown silver further emphasize the character's monochromatism, but the inclusion of the birds into the artwork of the crown is incongruous with the White Witch, who has no animal affiliation because she dominates all the animals. In explaining why people tend to feel more scared when they are confronted with pointed shapes, Bang explains that we associate the point with the potential it has to puncture and hurt us (70). While the spikes on earlier versions of the White Witch's crown definitely played to that association, the spikes of Pepperdine's crown appear to be too brittle and of a disproportional vertical length to the horizontal headpiece to cause any damage. They seem more likely to break in half than pierce. All in all, the crown summarizes how subpar this reincarnation of the White Witch is; technically, it has all the

elements that should make her an imposing force in the story, but because there is an imbalance between visualization and the dialogue, the performance falls flat.

The most recent rendition of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is the two-hour 2005 feature film directed by Andrew Adamson and produced by Walden Media. Adaptation from text to film poses different advantages and hindrances than adaption to a television miniseries, one of which being that there may be a shorter window of time to establish a character's believability, which is one of the reasons why the director and producers decided to cast Tilda Swinton as the White Witch. Executive producer Perry Moore mentions that "when Tilda met with Andrew [Adamson] for the first time, he was very impressed with her take on a small role she'd just played in the movie *Constantine*. She'd played the role of the angel Gabriel" (92), and Swinton approached this religious figure in an unconventional way. Instead of playing what is typically expected of the archangel, Swinton turned the character into a subversive, avenging angel that tried to raise the anti-Christ in order to intimidate humankind into following the righteous path. This out-of-the-box approach was exactly what director Adamson was looking for: "one of my big concerns with the witch is that she had become a cliché. When C.S. Lewis wrote her, the character was somewhat original. But others have borrowed his idea. I was conscious of avoiding the cliché" (qtd. in Moore 127). The cliché to which Adamson is referring to may be the representation of the White Witch merely as the embodiment of pure evil. The solution that Swinton eventually reached for this problem of portraying a beautifully charismatic villainess in a new and modern way was to create a character of "incisive authority and ambiguous allure," that is to retain the character's beauty without necessarily emphasizing femininity and to place extra emphasis on the "white" aspect of the character (MacSweeney 1).

The most startling visual aspect of Swinton's White Witch comes when the camera finishes a full body pan during the Edmund encounter scene and rests on her blonde dreadlocks. In an interview with *Vogue* magazine, Swinton explained that "I wanted her to be an Aryan. As far as I'm concerned, she's the ultimate white supremacist. And I wanted to make the character somewhat modern. I felt it a little irresponsible, particularly at the moment, to dress up the epitome of evil either as a Jew or an Arab" (qtd. in MacSweeney 4). Two years after the United States invasion of Iraq and amidst a worldwide epidemic of Islamophobia, adhering to Lewis's textual description and Baynes's original depiction of the White Witch as black haired might have been a disastrous aesthetic choice[8], even if the blonde White Witch is a bit jarring on the first viewing. In addition to the aesthetic decision to make the White Witch go blonde, Swinton's skin is a pale Caucasian skin color instead of the original pure white translucency, and her eyebrows are so pale blonde that they are nearly invisible.

The end product of all these aesthetic choices is significant. As Moebius explains, "what we refer to as the 'blank face' of the picture book character might as well also apply to the carefully managed 'blanchissage' of the world in certain illustrations" (143). Without softly arching eyebrows, Swinton's face is made up of strong lines and chiseled curves that dance between what is found in aesthetically pleasing female and male facial structures. Swinton's ability to utilize her androgyny to her advantage is a testament to her dedication to her performance: Adamson says that "Tilda can do more with a glance, a simple modulation of the lip, a subtle shift of her eyebrow than anyone I've ever seen. We were constantly in awe of her talent and ability" (qtd. in Moore 103). When compared to the original depictions of the villainess, Swinton appears to have found a balance between Baynes' Jadis and White Witch in her performance. She is able to be at one moment the cold and emotionless as the witch drawn

on the pages and then the next she is so alarmingly emotional that it reminds us of the great Queen of Charn who used the Deplorable Word. In order for the androgyny aspect of Swinton's White Witch to truly be successful, she had to integrate female qualities with masculine ones; she had to seamlessly go from the cooing maternal figure who welcomes Edmund into her sleigh and gives him chocolate to the towering monarch condemning him when he fails to deliver his siblings to her.

While Swinton is able to meet the standard of White Witch portrayal through her acting, the 2005 production staff may have learned from the mistakes of the 1988 miniseries in order to do the character justice. While they are quick to praise Swinton's ability to utilize her beauty as the source of her evil power, she believes that "the costume takes care of 90 percent of the part and she takes care of the other 10 percent" (qtd. in Moore 201). And on closer examination of the costumes of the White Witch in the feature film, they do indeed add to the overall originality of the character and aid Swinton in her endeavor to perform her reimagining of the White Witch. In the *Vogue* interview, Adamson states that "it was [Swinton's] idea to wear the corset throughout the performance because she didn't want people to think the White Witch as having a body" (qtd. in MacSweeney 4). Beyond having corsets though, the dresses that the White Witch wears in the first part of the film are structured so that they do not conform to her body. There is an emphasis on the shoulders through the way that the collar flares out to broaden them. And at the end of the film, she wears the mane of Aslan which she has cut off as a collar, which again adds bulk to her shoulders. As costume director Isis Mussenden points out, "It's as if she's telling these people, I'm your Queen and you've lost your king, and how irreverent I am to wear his fur" (qtd. in Moore 207). The unapologetic displays of power and dominance that are connected to

the costumes that Swinton wears during her performance as the White Witch emphasize how powerful and malevolent she is.

The epitome of Swinton's acting and Mussenden's designing comes at the poignant scene at the Stone Table. Adamson and Moore confess that after watching that clip they were terrified by her performance and believe that "her shriek when she declares her enemy dead will go down as one of the most bone-chilling sequences in film history" (qtd. in Moore 99). Swinton's Stone Table performance diverges from the interpretation of Baynes and Kellerman: she wears a black outfit instead of pure white like Baynes, and she is standing alone atop the Stone Table, isolated from her minions unlike Kellerman. While the black dress lacks the iconic color association that Baynes used to convey the Witch's power, the design adds a "collar rising dramatically above the White Witch's neck [which] is actually a taxidermied black rooster woven into the costume, a chilling flourish that reveals so much about the character's malevolence" (Moore 207). And while during the rest of the film, the color of Swinton's costumes are in harmony with her overall complexion, at the Stone Table the White Witch's coloring shows off a harmony between her dress and her eyes. In the *Vogue* interview, Swinton explains a unique detail about her White Witch: her eyes are normally green but change to "black, when her power starts to wane" (qtd. in MacSweeney 1). During her harrowing shriek that "the great cat is dead" (Adamson), the camera focuses on the White Witch's completely black eyes. This small detail exceeds the standard of using the Witch's beauty to signify her power because it allows for a visualization of the White Witch in flux.

Of all the crowns that the White Witch has worn over the past fifty years, the crown designed for the feature film is the most organic and complete symbol of the Witch's power. Mussenden collaborates with renowned macabre artist Hope Atherton to create an ice crown, and

a unique aspect of this crown is that when “the White Witch’s powers wan and the frozen winter thaws to spring, her crown gradually melts” (Moore 206), again complementing the idea of the Witch’s power being in a constant state of flux. While previous crowns could only serve as means to convey the idea that the Witch is powerful, this crown has the ability to show that she is capable of losing that power. Unlike Kellerman’s crown, the vertical ice shards that make up Swinton’s crown do look like they could impale small animals and people quite easily and the complicated knotting of the White Witch’s dreads make up a horizontal surface that is proportional to the vertical lines and “give a sense of stability and calm” (Bang 42). Having the horizontal and vertical line balance on the White Witch’s head gives viewers the sense that this version of the character is completely at ease with power and personality. Even at the end of the film, when the White Witch has to don a substitute crown, the audience is always aware that the power to which the crown was symbolizing has and always resides within the Witch herself, thus giving this female incarnate of evil interiority and a fully fleshed out agency.

It would be understandable for some readers and viewers of *The Chronicles of Narnia* to disagree with my sentiments towards the White Witch. Some may believe that the source of her power comes from something other than her sexuality and presence, and some might even argue that the only beneficial examination of the White Witch comes from a religious lens.[9] My response to this is to concur with Dove, who argues that “if a character as deliciously *bad* as the White Witch can entice us to check our ethics at the door, then this is a demonstration of exactly what makes her evil” (italics in original, 122). Readers and viewers tend to be in a state of detachment from the narrative or visuals that they are consuming, but every now and then, some aspect of the book or film will affect them on a much deeper level. This is what the White Witch does. She tempts audiences with her stunning beauty to the point where they are cognizant of

how evil she is but are too enthralled to want her to stop. Viewers are aware of this, whether consciously or subconsciously, as evidenced in the poor reviews that the 1988 version of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* received, in part because the White Witch did not match up to the beauty and prowess of the original Baynes illustrations. The differences in the productive depictions of the White Witch by Baynes and Swinton illuminate the fact that even though standards of beauty and the contexts of power change throughout the decades, the symbiotic relationship between the two are what make the character so memorable and terrifying.

Notes

[1] Not only does Jadis' disregard for her subjects' lives solidify her role as the villain, but she uses the Deplorable Word to defeat her sister in their war for the throne, fulfilling the trope of female villains being "less isolated and more related to others than their male counterparts"; however, their relationships are, more often than not, "characterized by strife, manipulation, and a constant struggle for control" (Veglahn 111).

[2] This circumstance is ironic because over the years, Baynes developed "a significant reputation as an illustrator of other religious works" (Smith 52). The illustrations that won her the Greenaway medal are heavily influenced by Christian medieval artwork and one of the last projects she worked on before her death in August of 2008 were illustrations for the Koran.

[3] The first time that Baynes added color to her Narnia illustrations was in 1998, for the new editions that celebrated the centenary of the birth of C.S. Lewis.

[4] For the sake of clarity of this paper, when I refer to Jadis I am writing about the character in the context of *The Magician's Nephew,* and when I refer to the White Witch I will be referencing the character in the context of the book and film adaptations of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. While they are essentially the same person, simply at different points in her life, the White Witch is in a state of paralysis between life and death because she ate the forbidden fruit without permission.

[5] Bang bases the majority of her observations of illustrations on gravity because it "is the strongest physical force that we are consciously aware of, and we're subject to it all the time" (42).

[6] It bears mentioning that for the majority of the last 50 years, the illustrations in The Chronicles of Narnia were in black and white. Regardless of the absence of color, the White Witch remains prominent in the Stone Table illustration due to the lack of shadows being cast upon her, almost as if she is the source of light.

[7] Baynes cleverly connects her two versions of the villainess with one small design detail: a necklace emblazoned with an eight pointed star is worn by the newly awakened Queen Jadis in the first illustration of her in *The Magician's Nephew,* and the Stone Table illustration of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* also features the design of an eight point star on the front of the pure white dress that the White Witch wears. It is interesting to note that both of these illustrations depict the villainess at the height of her power in each of the books.

[8] This aesthetic choice concerning the race of the White Witch is very much influenced by the cultural context of the adaptation. Made two years before the Gulf War began, Kellerman's White Witch could have black hair, accent her vowels and roll her r's, and just generally give the character a foreign vibe because there were no prominent cultural implications to this depiction. Swinton intelligently decided to make evil appear commonplace by making the character the product of Western civilization ideals, rather than blindly following the stereotypical depiction of Eastern/Oriental characters as evil.

[9] The most popular religious allegory for the White Witch beyond the obvious Satan option is Lilith. Lewis sets this canon when he has Mr. Beaver explain the ancestry of the White Witch to the Penvensie children, how “she comes of your father Adam’s…first wife, her they called Lilith” (Lewis, LWW 81), and this also extends to *The Magician’s Nephew*, in that “like Lilith, Jadis ‘opposes life and growth,’ having turned her own world into a tomb, and hating the living, creative world of Narnia” (Graham 38).

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