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***CIRCE, LAMIA OR ERINYA –
THE IMAGE OF THE WITCH
IN THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA BY C.S. LEWIS***

SUMMARY: The aim of this article is to present a variety of inspirations and reception of ancient myths that affected the shaping of the Witches in ‘The Chronicles of Narnia’ by C.S. Lewis. Lewis purposefully mingled different traditions, believing that the most important classical myths carry a faint shadow of divine truth falling on human imagination. The most famous witches created by him: The White Witch and the Lady of the Green Kirtle, have a great deal of sources in the literature, but they derive above all from ancient patterns, combining the features of, among others, Venus, Ishtar, Erinyes, Lamia and Circe. A comparative analysis of the mythological witches and those created by Lewis will demonstrate not only the complexity of their characters, but also the manner of his reception of antiquity.

KEYWORDS: C.S. Lewis, The Chronicles of Narnia, children’s literature, reception of antiquity, Greek mythology, White Witch, Circe.

Abbreviations:

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe – LWW

The Magician’s Nephew – MN

The Prince Caspian – PC

The Silver Chair – SC

The Chronicles of Narnia are characterised by a mixture of various influences. Lewis willingly commented on his inspirations, especially

in the letters to children and essays [cf. Lewis 2000: 64]. First of all, there are the motifs taken from Christianity and the Bible in the Narnian series. These readers who heard about *The Chronicles of Narnia* as “Christian fantasy literature” are surprised to find fauns, nymphs, centaurs, Roman gods such as Pomona and Bacchus together with the whole retinue of Maenads and Silenus on the donkey in its world. Lewis believed that the most important classical myths result in the vague shadow of the divine truth cast on human imagination [cf. Downing 2006: 142]. Besides the elements of Greek and Roman mythologies (usually representing the good), there are also the elements from Arabic mythology such as genies, ifreets and ghouls (characterised negatively). Moreover, there are the elements from Irish mythology (goblins), northern mythology (dwarfs, ogres, orcs, giants, werewolves) and Celtic mythology (the white stag). Lewis gladly mixed various traditions and legends, which met with his friend’s, J.R.R. Tolkien’s opposition [Kirk 2006: 98; Gulisano 2006: 151]. Lewis appreciatively remarked with what freedom Medieval and Elizabethan authors connected classical elements with Christian ones in their works. The author of *The Chronicles of Narnia* had a clear vision of the book and wanted to bring old writers to life in children’s literature [cf. Downing 2006: 142]. The inspiration by Mediterranean culture is visible best, which makes *The Chronicles of Narnia* exceptional in comparison with other issues of *fantasy*, which usually draw from northern mythology.

One of the most distinctive characters of the series *The Chronicles of Narnia* is the White Witch: the beautiful, tall, cruel witch, who caused the one-hundred-year winter in Narnia and about whom Lewis wrote to an American, William Kinter, in the unpublished letter [Graham 2004: 32; Schakel 1979: 140] of 1954 “The Witch is certainly Circe” [Kirk 2006: 10]. Numerous references and literary inspirations can be found in her character. She is not the only witch in the series. The White Witch as Jadis in *The Magician’s Nephew*¹ is the owner of the Deplorable Word and the Queen of Charn. As the White Witch in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, she is the one who took over Narnia and caused the winter. She chases four children, who are to put

¹ Although *The Magician’s Nephew* was written several years after C.S. Lewis first began *The Chronicles of Narnia* with *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, he wanted it to be read as the first book in the series.

an end to her reign, she tempts Edmund with enchanted food and kills Aslan. Lewis definitely presented both characters as one and the same witch – the children read the letter in *the LWW*, in which the titles defining the White Witch are given: “Imperial Majesty Jadis, Queen of Narnia, Chatelaine of Cair Paravel, Empress of the Lone Islands, etc.” [Lewis 2005: 136]. This issue is doubtful for some researchers due to some inaccuracies and they interpret the White Witch and Jadis as two independent persons [Downing 2006: 83; Ford 2005: 334]. However, it is the same person for me and I will refer to her in this way in this article.

Apart from the White Witch, in the Narnian series there is the Queen of Underland/of the Deep Realm, also called the Lady of the Green Kirtle. Her real name is not provided anywhere. She comes from the same group as Jadis and is a bad witch. Like the White Witch, she wants to rule Narnia. She tempts Prince Rilian with her beauty and magic. Her venomously green dress forecasts her ability to change into a snake. Also, other witches (hags) appear in the series beside the main witches and the so-called LeFay plot referring to the witch from the Arthurian legends [cf. Downing 2006: 55-59], the analysis of which, however, goes beyond the theme of this article.

The motif of the witch is known from a lot of folk beliefs. It is a woman who often practices the black art (the White Witch is wrongly associated with the white magic, not connected with the devil. Here, the white colour symbolizes death and winter [cf. Ford 2005: 337-338]), connected with the work of the devil. The characters of witches appear in mythologies and legends as well as in European culture of various periods. They personify destructive powers usually taking the character of a stepmother or a witch. They pose a threat to heroes and to children – young readers who identify with these heroes and transfer a projection of a witch to real persons, mother, grandmother, etc., in order to free themselves from their own fears [cf. Bettelheim 1996]. The witch appearing in a child’s imagination wants to eat them, and a stepmother wants to humiliate or kill them. At the beginning, a witch can give a friendly impression like in the known fairy-tale about *Hansel and Gretel* or in *Rapunzel*, a stepmother can be beautiful like in *Snow White*. All of them tempt a child with sweets or an apple (it is the

character's mother in *Rapunzel* who covets fresh lamb's lettuce, growing in the witch's garden), planning their doom. The character of the witch is a fundamental element for a child's development. As long as a child believes in a witch and is afraid of her and they give their fears a human figure, they need stories, in which they can free themselves from figments of their own imagination [Bettelheim 1996: 263].

The witches appearing in *The Chronicles of Narnia* are characterized by similar attributes. Lewis himself, describing a character of Jadis in the letter, defines her as an archetype identical to the one which is in fairy-tales. "Indeed, we are born with knowledge of a witch, aren't we?" he answers with the question to the issue why such a creation came to the author's mind. Apart from the fairy-tale, the literary fable, *The Snow Queen* by Andersen, with which the author was familiar, was a clear inspiration for him [cf. Anderson 2008: 17]². Both characters, Jadis and the Queen, are pale, cruel, and both of them capture boys. Both are beautiful and both seduce in the magical way – Jadis feeds Edmund with enchanted food and drink, the Queen icily kisses Kay's forehead, which makes him lose memory and the icy dagger runs through his heart. Similarly Edmund after meeting Jadis becomes worse and more unpleasant for his younger sister. The Snow Queen moves in the sledges and resides far in the north in the castle made of ice. Jadis proclaimed herself to be the Queen of Narnia and caused that the country is seized by a one-hundred-year winter. She also rides the sledges, similarly her house is situated far away between two hills. The parallels are distinctly visible and they could be further listed, scrutinizing both works. What is interesting is that Lewis started to appreciate Andersen only just when he was creating Narnia. The apparent aversion to the Danish writer in early letters can be surprising³. Another writer, whose influence on the apologist's works is evident, is H.R. Haggard, the author of *SHE – A History of Adventure*⁴. Lewis believed that Haggard wrote poorly and he was at a low level in terms of his intellect [Lewis

² Moreover, see: Lewis 2000: 249; 958; 1119.

³ See note 2.

⁴ C.S. Lewis mentions Haggard in his letters. See Lewis 2004: 120; 144; Lewis 2000: 959.

2000: 109-113; Anderson 2008: 333], but he possessed an incredible mythopoeic gift and could make up good stories⁵.

The character of She, Ayesha, and her features undoubtedly reflect in Jadis in the MN. Lewis himself, commenting on mythicalness of She, wrote “If his [Jung’s] view were right, the myth ought to function only for those to whom Ayesha is a powerfully erotic image [...] To myself, for example, Ayesha or any other tragedy Queen – any tall, crowned, stormy, deep-breasted contralto with thunder in her brow and lightnings in her eye – is one of the most effective anti-aphrodisiacs in the world” [...] Haggard [...] surrounds the lonely she-Prometheus with terror and misery” [Lewis 2000: 112]. Exactly the same description characterises Jadis – a lonely, tall and beautiful goddess, however deprived of Venus’s features. Both seduce, aware of their beauty, but they stay cold and asexual. The issue of Venus and her impact or lack of impact on the creation of Narnian witches will be addressed further below, however it is worth mentioning at this point during a discussion of She. Both queens also try to flee – Ayesha looks for an escape from death, desires to gain immortality, while Jadis escapes from the dying world of Charn, the destruction of which she herself brought about by using the Deplorable Word, then, after the creation of Narnia she flees far to the north, and finally, after seizing power in Narnia, she escapes from Aslan’s roar. She does not seek immortality, as she gains it in the garden, where the Tree of Life grows (MN). Jadis picks one apple and to the dismay of Digory eats the fruit – nonetheless, she does not achieve a satisfactory result and condemns herself to eternal life in despair. Ultimately, she is killed in battle (LWW), defeated by Aslan. However, in *Prince Caspian*, the hag and the werewolf, while trying to revive her, say that no witch really dies: “[...] who ever heard of a witch that really died? You can always get them back”. The traits of Ayesha, She, or even literal reference to her name can be seen in the second Narnian witch, the Queen of the Underland, called “She of the Green Kirtle”. A charming, beautiful woman, dressed in a venomously green dress, seduces prince Rilian in order to gain power over Narnia. Similarities to Jadis can also be found in the Maid of the Alder Tree from

⁵ See the letter to Arthur Greeves from 1931 (Lewis 2000: 959). “I recently re-read [...] both She and the sequel Ayesha, and found the story good in both [...]”.

Phantastes by George MacDonald. The Maid of the Alder Tree is also white, beautiful and cold and similarly to faun Tumnus, who initially planned to kidnap Lucy, the Maid invites Anodos to his cave and puts him to sleep, planning a horrible fate for him [cf. Downing 2006: 50; Lewis 2004: 169-170].

The intrusion of Jadis into our world in MN evokes a similar image from *The Story of the Amulet*, by Edith Nesbit, Lewis's favourite author of his childhood, when the Babylonian queen appears in London, causing chaos and destruction [Lewis 2004: 680; 923; Downing 2006: 83, cf. Nesbit 2010: 144-171]. This is a very interesting synthesis of literary images, especially when one notices the features of the Babylonian Venus, Ishtar, in Jadis. The issue of Aphrodite will be addressed later; at this point I wish to emphasize how many sources of creative inspiration there are for only one character, the Narnian witch, Jadis, let alone the whole Narnia⁶.

The Snow Queen, Ayesha, the Maid of the Alder Tree – who else is Jadis, the White Witch? In LWW she is described as the daughter of Lilith [Lewis 2005: 147], the first wife of Adam, who, according to a Jewish tale, has become a concubine of Satan and the killer of newborn children – Jadis chases the children in the LWW and desires their death, fearing the fulfilment of the prophecy according to which these children will end her control of Narnia. Lewis, in the unpublished letter from 1954 [Kirk 2006: 10, Downing 2006: 53], identified the White Witch with Circe. He stated that she is the same archetype, which can be found in fairy tales, and that there is no point in asking why this crossed the author's mind, since we are born with knowledge of a witch. Lewis, borrowing a term from Jung, maintained that “the fairy tale releases archetypes living in the collective unconscious mind”, that all readers carry inside themselves the deeply rooted ideas and contents that are undertaken in myths, legends, stories, even dreams [Downing

⁶ Interestingly enough, Lewis was an opponent of the so-called source criticism, because he thought that such speculations are usually unsuccessful and lead to omitting the core text. However, he stressed himself that creative ideas do not come from nowhere, and often in the letters or commentaries he left traces of his inspirations. About the sources of Narnia he was particularly keen and clear, especially in letters to children [Downing 2006: 51-52].

2006: 53]. Where the writer took the character of the witch from – the answer to this question is suggested by the author himself.

While both witches, the White Witch and the Green Lady, have a great deal of sources in the literature, the qualities of their female sexuality and magical powers come from Circe. Lewis, as a researcher, was familiar with the Circe of Homer, Virgil and Ovid, as well as the reception of her character through the ages, including Dante's, Spenser's and Milton's work. Circe appears in his earlier writings – in *Dymer* the hero is seduced by a witch after drinking from a flagon [Lewis 1979, canto II, 18-19], while the title *The Nameless Isle* belongs to Circe – “She has a wand also, that woman there; Whom she chooses to change, she'll choke the voice in his throat” [Lewis 1979: 116]. Lewis devoted more attention to Circe in a short poem *Vitreia Circe*, in which he describes the witch as pale and proud (“Each moment paler/ With pride”), disgusted by the guests who arrived at her *snake-green island* (reference to Lamia). Though not looking for love (“She used no beauty/ For man's beguiling,/She craved no suitor”), she remained a woman nonetheless. A love affair with Ulysses uncovers her weakness and breaks her [Lewis 2004: 794-795]. She is pictured in the extremely delicate way; her image reminds more the divine Ayesha, in love with Leon Vincey, rather than Jadis who is full of contempt for the world. Jadis, although stunningly beautiful and attractive to men (women perceive her as repulsive and vulgar) [cf. Lewis 2005: 39; 48-49; 51 et al.] also does not seek love. However, in the MN, when she learns who sent the children to her, she shows her vain nature and assumes that her beauty was the reason: “[...] he has seen the shadow of my face [...] and for the love of my beauty he has [...] sent you [...] to ask my favour and to bring me to him” [Lewis 2005: 43].

Circe and Jadis share many similarities. Both do not have a single drop of human blood. Circe, according to the sources, is goddess, the daughter of Helios and the Oceanid Perse [Homer 10.135; Hesiod 956, et al.] or Hecate, goddess of witchcraft [Diodorus Siculus 4.45.1]. Jadis comes from Lilith⁷, the first wife of Adam, who is supposed to belong to the race of jinn. On the other hand, she comes from the giants (hence

⁷ Lilith was also identified with Lamia; in other sources the Empuses were to be her daughters (called Lilim, that is “children of Lilith”) [Graves 1968: 180].

her superhuman height): “She comes of [...] your father Adam’s first wife, her they called Lilith. And she was one of the Jinn. That’s what she comes from on one side. And on the other she comes of the giants” [Lewis 2005: 147]. Both dabble in magic. Circe is able to brew magic potions, convert enemies into animals, and uses the wand. When she receives the companions of Odysseus, she adds some intoxicating herbs to the meals that cause them to forget about home. After the feast, she touches them with her wand and turns them into pigs. Then, when Odysseus comes to her, warned earlier by Hermes, she seats him on the seat studded with silver nails and regales him with wine from a golden bowl [Homer 10.135 – 12.156]. Jadis feeds Edmund enchanted food – conjures up out of nowhere a cup full of steaming drink and a box of Turkish delight. The food is not taking away Edmund’s memory, but causes the boy to think only of enchanted dishes and his want to eat more. Jadis has a wand with which she can convert enemies into stone. She can also change her own form. As for the chairs studded with silver – the equivalent is the titular silver chair from the sixth part of Narnia chronicles. Rilian, Prince of Narnia, is a slave to the Green Lady and is released from her spell only once a day for an hour. Then the witch attaches him to the silver chair, from which the prince cannot move – like Pirithous and Theseus are imprisoned in Hades when they come after Persephone. Hades, seemingly friendly, seats them on the Chairs of Oblivion. As soon as the heroes sit, snakes – that is the true figure of the Green Lady – entwine them and they forget who they are and where they came from [Colbert 2005: 150-152]. In the SC thanks to the magical furniture the Prince recovers his memory, but remains immobilized. The Green Lady takes memory away by a different method – she pours a magical powder into the fire, plays the mandolin and sings, imposing her own thinking on the heroes⁸.

Circe inhabits the deserted island of Aeanea, which, according to later sources she then leaves (sometimes even destroys) and moves to Italy. Jadis comes from the world Charn, which she destroyed herself by

⁸ What is interesting, in this fragment Lewis allows the Green Lady in sophistic argumentation deny the idea of Platonic philosophy: “You have seen lamps, and so you imagined a bigger and better lamp and called it the sun. There is [...] no sun.” The witch denies the existence of the idea [Lewis 2005: 631].

saying the Deplorable Word. Before this world completely ends, Jadis escapes with Digory and Pola and along with the heroes she moves into our world [cf. Nesbit 2010], and then to the world of Narnia. Both universes she desires to possess. Circe lives in a castle surrounded by animals, victims of her spells – likewise Jadis' house, courtyard and all the stairs and chambers are filled with stone statues of satyrs, wolves, bears, dryads, there is also a petrified centaur, pegasus, dragon and a giant. Both castles are located in remote places – Circe's house in the woods, deep in the island, Jadis' in the north, between the two hills. The witch's castle seems to be the Narnian land of the dead – this is where those turned by Jadis into stone statues are taken. It brings to mind the Olund castle, belonging to the Queen of Niflheim, deathly pale Hel, goddess of Norse mythology. Entrance to her palace was defended by a big dog or a wolf, like the wolf Maugrim in the *Chronicles of Narnia*. Jadis' stone statues are set as a warning, and the animals at Circe, though terrifying, are tame and greet unwary, trusting visitors with fawning.

All Narnian witches wield enormous power, not just magical. Their weapon is femininity. Circe, similar to the goddess, has fine hair, can also beautifully sing and weave. The Green Lady seduces Rilian, she is his mistress, and he is her knight. She plays the mandolin and sings, only her venomously green dress may reveal who she really is. Jadis makes a great impression on men, just like Ayesha, though she is not trying to seduce Edmund, but rather pretends to be his mother – spoils him with sweets, praises and promises his dreams come true. She is tall, beautiful, though deathly pale, with a bloody mouth and fierce features. She has no great impact on women, including Edmund's siblings, who immediately recognize her as a wicked witch – similarly to Euryloch, companion of Odysseus, who senses danger and does not enter the palace of Circe, avoiding terrible fate.

Jadis and the Green Lady resemble in their seduction also the mythological Lamia, queen of Libya and lover of Zeus. Jealous Hera brought death to Lamia's children, due to which a distraught mother turned into a monster, grabbing and killing human offspring. In another version, Hera kidnapped Lamia's children, who lost her senses and began to steal other children and devour them (in some versions Hera

even forced Lamia to devour her own children [Horace 1.340]). A continuously repeated nightmare turns her over time into a monster. Jadis wants to kidnap and kill four siblings. Having met Edmund, she tells him that she does not have her own children and in my opinion gives the impression as if she wanted to adopt him. The Green Lady kills Rilian's mother and kidnaps him. Diodorus of Sicily [Diodorus 20.41] mentions that because of the hatred and cruel conduct, Lamia's face turned into a horrible mask. In other versions of the myth, she had a serpent's tail from the waist down, and in folklore she took the form of a vampire or succubus who seduced young men and sucked their blood. The appearance of Lamia, often snake-like, had a lot of causes – the wrath of Hera, grief and pain, madness, or even being a result of origin – Lamia sometimes is said to be the daughter of Hecate, so according to the rare sources she is a witch and can change her appearance [Homer 12.124 and scholia, noted by Kerényi 1951: 38 n. 71]. The Green Lady in great fury finally takes the form of a giant green snake with a forked tongue and attacks prince Rilian, when the Narnians come to his aid. Heroes manage to defeat the monster by cutting its head, which brings to mind the defeating of Medusa by Perseus. Lamia also took the form of a snake. Later she is said to join the Empuses and likewise seduce young men and suck their blood in their sleep [Graves 1968: 180-181; 193-194]. The Green Witch kidnapped Rilian and took away his memory, so that he would remain with her forever. Moreover, she wanted to use him in order to gain power over the lands of Narnia. Like the Lamia, she took the form of a snake, which, combined with the kidnapping of young men has erotic, or even perverse connotations.

According to Homer, Circe, while saying farewells to Odysseus, advises him which route he should choose, recommends venturing down to the Underworld and instructs how to summon the souls of the dead. Thus she has some other knowledge, not just magical. Similarly, Jadis shows an awareness of the Deep Magic from ancient times, due to which she has the right to Edmund's blood, as he is a traitor: "You at least know the Magic which the Emperor put into Narnia at the very beginning. You know that every traitor belongs to me as my lawful prey and that for every treachery I have a right to kill" [Lewis 2005: 175]. She does not know, however, the Deeper Magic, according to which

a voluntary victim killed instead of a traitor rises from the dead – as is the case with Aslan.

Knowledge of the law governing Narnia, proclaiming that if the traitor will not be killed, the whole land shall be destroyed by fire and water, liken Jadis to the Erinyes, punishing goddess of vengeance. The Erinyes became the guardians of the inviolability of blood relations. For a crime committed in the family they were chasing a criminal not only on land but also in Hades. Furies in the play by Aeschylus want to punish Orestes for the murder of his own blood, however they do not care about the fact that earlier Clytemnestra killed her husband – in the light of their rights it was not a crime, since the spouses are not bound together by blood [Aeschylus: 202-212]; Jadis wants to punish Edmund for treason, even though it was not directed against her. She wants the justice to be done, but she does not care about maintaining order in Narnia – it is to serve her own ends. Jadis wants the traitor's blood, that is Edmund's, because when she kills him, the prophecy concerning the rule of children over Narnia cannot be fulfilled. Aslan defends Edmund, because he did not betray the witch, just his siblings. When Jadis does not give up, Aslan offers his life for Edmund's. Jadis is satisfied with the deal, because Aslan was her worst enemy. The witch does not know however, the Deeper Magic and does not realize that Aslan will return to life. Jadis is not mollified as the Furies in *Eumenides* but suffers complete failure and is defeated by Aslan.

Jadis' death, however, seems not to be definitive, since in the PC the hag and the werewolf meet to revive her. The hag stresses that no witch really dies, indicating Jadis' immortality. This is confirmed in the MN, where Digory witnesses Jadis eating the fruit of the Tree of Life and probably gaining immortality thanks to that. Circe, being a goddess and a witch, is also not affected by death. After Odysseus' funeral, the witch makes their son Telegonus, Penelope and her son Telemachus immortal, according to a lost poem by Hesiod. According Lycophron's *Alexandra* (808) and John Tzetzes' *Scholia on the poem* (795-808), Circe used the magical herbs to revive Odysseus after he died at the hands of Telegonus. In the *Odyssey*, the companions of Odysseus leave the island rejuvenated and refreshed, and in *Argonautica* she is able to, though reluctantly, perform the ritual of purification over Medea and

Jason for killing her brother, Apsyrtos [Apollonius Rhodius 4.557] The ritual, which requires blood a young pig, reminds of the Jadis' ritual, who wants to cleanse Narnia by the use of Edmund's blood. Circe is a relative of Medea, who was also a witch, which shows a clear relationship between women dabbling in magic. In Narnia witches are also identified as coming from one line.

The character of Jadis can also be traced back to two other sources: Ishtar, the Babylonian Venus, worshiped by the people of Nineveh (Jadis defines Charn as "the great city", which echoes the description of Nineveh in Jonah [Jon. 1.2; 3.2]; and Venus Infernal, derived from Lilith. Jadis, although beautiful as a Greek goddess, does not have the fertility of Venus. Her love of death, shown in destroying Charn, unites her with the Underworld. Jadis comes from Lilith and her beauty is constantly emphasized. More than that, she is vain – proudly speaks of "my beauty and my Magic" and when children mention uncle Andrew, she immediately assumes that he admires her beauty. Lewis explains that in his poem *The Planets*: "Venus's breast and brow, and her breath's sweetness/ Bewitch the worlds" [Ward 2008: 178]. Jadis, Infernal shadow of Venus, can actually charm and deceive. Her biggest victim is the aforementioned Digory's uncle, Andrew Ketterley. Like his nephew, he is completely absorbed by contemplation of the beauty of Jadis and constantly thinks about her. He imagines that the witch will fall in love with him, and even at the end of the book, after many adventures, uncle Andrew is still obsessively preoccupied with her. The last words of the volume belongs to him: "Dem fine woman". Jadis of course has no time for him and as soon as it turns out that he is worthless to her, she completely loses interest. In contrast, the celestial Venus enjoys the company of male company [Ward 2008: 179]. Uncle Andrew's fixation on Jadis shows the influence of Venus on bodily instincts, but the comical form in which it is presented illustrates Lewis' opinion that it is not good to be too serious in the issues concerning Venus [Lewis 1991: 91]. In the Narnian cycle, as well as in the other works of this author, there are many venereal elements, like the creation of Narnia, when everything grows in front of the characters, who witness the festival of fertility of the earth. However, due to the child recipient, as well as the attitude of the author, this is not erotic love.

While referring to the Infernal Venus, one woman, to whom Narnian witches can be compared, still remains – Persephone. In the SC a significant role is played by the aforementioned witch, called Lady in a Green Kirtle, the Green Witch, or the Queen of the Underland. Far to the north of Narnia, in her underground kingdom, she detains Prince Rilian. One day she plans to conquer Narnia with the help of her subjects and the prince himself, who, being enchanted, is willing to do anything for her. The Lady plans to marry him and thus gain power over Narnia. She can change her form into a poisonous snake. Mythological Persephone did not kidnap anyone, but she herself was abducted by Hades, her future spouse. Her myth is a naturalistic one, explaining the order of the world. Persephone symbolizes the vegetation, fertility, is also combined with spring. Similarly, the Green Lady represents spring or the green summer, if only by the color of her dress⁹. Although she is the queen of the grim Underworld, Green Lady can sing and play, knows how to enchant with her personality and literally enchants her victims. Persephone in the ancient tradition, next to the joyful, corresponding to the spring Cora, is the grim goddess and queen of the dead, whose name was not allowed to be uttered. This tradition stems from its connotation with a very old, chthonic deity, Despoina, whose real name was known only to initiates in the mysteries [Pausanias 8.37.9]. In *The Chronicles of Narnia* the real name of the Queen of the Underland is never mentioned, in contrary to the clearly stated name of the White Witch – Jadis. The Queen of the Underworld, like Persephone, who had many nicknames, is known also by two other names – the Green Witch or Lady of the Green Kirtle. Persephone Praxidike, or Exacter of Justice, as the queen of Erinyes, and even according to some of their mother, reminds once again Jadis, demanding respect for Deep Magic; also Persephone Daeira, or Knowing One, corresponds to the character of the witch. As the wife of Hades, she also dabbles in magic – necromancy; moreover, she deals with the prophecies (oracles). John Chadwick speculates on combining her name with Oceanid Perse, mother of

⁹ In contrast, the White Witch symbolizes winter, she can also control it. She is cold in manner, harsh and dangerous, like a severe winter. Both witches, however, symbolize the primordial forces of nature.

Circe¹⁰. By the Orphics and Platonists she is portrayed as the goddess of all-pervasive nature that both creates and destroys (again, a reference to Jadis and her penchant for havoc – the destruction of Charn) and is joined with, among others, Hecate, goddess of witchcraft. Moreover, a pre-Greek Persephone in the Syro-Mesopotamian mythology is Ishtar, whose features were already recognized in Jadis earlier.

Similarities between Jadis and Kirke are very clear and the author himself admits his inspirations. However, after a more thorough analysis it can be seen that the reception of myths and ancient culture by Lewis is much broader. No singular goddess wielding magical powers is behind the characters of the Narnian witches, but they combine the features of many mythological heroines. First of all, it is Circe, to which Lewis directly referenced in the quoted letter. Moreover, one can find features of the two Venuses – Ishtar and Infernal, traits of Persephone, Lamia, as well as references to the vengeful Erinyes. Surprisingly, few elements reminiscent of the mythological Hecate, goddess of witchcraft and magic. Existing references, as examples of the reception, are usually a prefiguration, but also reinterpretations [cf. Stabryła 1980: 3-8]. Lewis, who was a broadly educated scholar, had vast knowledge and often referred to antiquity, transforming the particular motif, changing its meaning and connotation, arguing with it or giving it new meaning. In *The Chronicles of Narnia* changes are often caused by addressing the child recipient and are always conscious. Neither the Green Lady nor Jadis use their sexuality as a weapon or do not directly seduce nor literally devour characters and usually remain close to the type of fairy-tale witch/stepmother. In addition to the reception of antiquity, there are also references to the Middle Ages, Morgana Lefay and the magicians of the Arthurian cycle, however that was not the subject of this study. The conducted analysis clearly points to the diversity of sources from which the author derived and highlights the richness of the motifs. Not only ancient ones, but mostly so, in the *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

¹⁰ J. Chadwick comments about the goddess pe-re-*82 of Pylos tablet Tn 316, tentatively reconstructed as *Preswa: “It is tempting to see... the classical Perse... daughter of Oceanus...; whether it may be further identified with the first element of Persephone is only speculative” [Chadwick 1974].

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