

Emotional Deprivation of Children in C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

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Abstract

This paper is about the dangers that World War II imposed on the minds of children. During World War II, children were evacuated from their families and homelands for survival from constant air raids and war conflicts. World War I is not as traumatised as World War II as it did not concern women and children. World War II has had a greater impact on history and the mental status of children has become worse than in World War I. Children mainly suffer from war and civil and political conflicts. Most importantly, children who live in warzone countries have experienced pain and suffering due to the unpredictable fighting and air raids. The sudden and temporary evacuation from their families has affected them mentally and psychologically. C.S. Lewis has beautifully portrayed the calamities that children faced during World War II. The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe talks about the four Pevensie children—Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy—leaving their mother in London and travelling by train with other children who are being evacuated from London for survival. The paper talks about how strong the Pevensie children are and how they manage to accept the situation and run away from the great ruin in their city without their mother. The fear and anxiety soon make them battle against evil and give freedom and peace to another world that is beyond the world of reality.

Keywords: War-conflicts; evacuation; loneliness; fantastical world.

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe is one of the best-appreciated novels in the Chronicles of Narnia series. It is chronologically the second novel of the Narnian Chronicles and has captured a lot of attention among children and young adults. This novel is written in such a way that the fragments of World War II and the problems that each family faced in London during that time are well magnified by C.S. Lewis. From an historical perspective, World War II has tormented many, and children especially have had mental issues due to the war and air

raids. In reality, the continuous air raids caused psychological changes in children. The symptoms, such as fear, crying, trembling, nervous breakdown, lack of sleep, and aggressive behavior, can be found among children. A survey says that the younger children of five to seven have faced lack of sleep and sudden fear and sweatiness. The survey also says that most children are neglected by their own relatives and elders.

The psychologist Frank Bodman has investigated the trauma of children in the aftermath of World War II, and his investigations and direct interviews with the children of about one to twelve are well appreciated by the reporters and public. He felt so glad to talk to every child who had been evacuated from the Children's Hospital in Bristol due to sudden air raids. Thankfully, all the children were rescued from heavy bombing even though the hospital was heavily damaged. Children who had experienced and seen the incident were traumatised and their behaviours were somewhat different. Some jump, some urinate, and some have nervous breakdowns when they hear something about the war and air raids. Some felt so nostalgic and some had sleeping disorders. But all together, they are encouraged and have hope that they and their siblings will survive this war period. He spoke to the children and concluded his study on mental illness in them by praising "the extraordinary thoughtfulness of children and their flexibility in adapting to potentially threatening situations".

C.S. Lewis in his novel *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* The four Pevensie children—Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy are the main characters—are evacuated from London to a small village to live peacefully in the huge house of Professor Digory Kirke for a short while. During this time, they encounter a mind-blowing adventure in a fantasy world called Narnia, which is actually accessed through the wardrobe. This novel is a diversion for many children who have experienced the trembling reality of World War II. The story starts with the air raids and how the Pevensie children are evacuated from London to live in a shaggy big house in the country.

The Chronicles of Narnia is one of the bestselling high fantasy novel series, containing seven books. C. S. Lewis wrote this novel series when he was fifty years old. He wrote this novel series out of his own experiences with the combination of the societal issues in his period and of his ardent interest in mythology and fantasy. Each book in the Narnia Chronicles is adored by both young and old readers alike. It captures the attention of every age group, and it

magnifies the characters; when a reader reads it, he or she will find each character living with or in them. Lewis created the plot and the characters, and he wanted to express something mediaeval that would entice children and young adults to read his books and gain knowledge and interest in mythology and fantasy. Lewis generally was never fond of children, but he wrote this novel series after his household at the Kilns helped children who were evacuated from London due to air raids. During this time, Lewis practically understood the psychology of children who were stranded and forced to live without parental guidance. He had a thorough examination of children, and he learned the basic needs and interests of children, and that is how the Chronicles of Narnia were borne. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is the first novel he created for children, and it has become a favourite among all the other novels in the Narnian Chronicles.

C.S. Lewis wrote this particular novel full of his own imaginings and the pictures he saw in childhood that made him create his own story describing the picture. In this novel, the Pevensie children are taken to live in a huge house where they get to know that there are many rooms and stairs that go nowhere. They are very much interested in roaming into every room so that they can discover something new. Lucy, the youngest of the Pevensie children, once entered a room containing a single huge closet, which had been covered by a huge blanket. She enters the wardrobe and is astonished to see an entirely new world full of snow. The other Pevensie children, who do not believe Lucy's description of the new world, are influenced by her first encounter. The story revolves around the four Pevensie children entering into the wardrobe and seeing that the world which they see is called "the land of Narnia". Lucy's friendship with Mr. Tumnus the faun is the beginning of the great tumult that is going to happen in the land of Narnia.

C.S. Lewis explains so beautifully that both the world of reality and the world of fantasy are under war, and the four Pevensie children have to face the war that is going to happen in Narnia. We can understand that C.S. Lewis, through the Beavers pair, warns the Pevensie children that they are to be needed in the land of Narnia as the prophecy says that they are the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve and are going to relieve the curse that the White Witch has infused on the land such that the land will always be winter and never Christmas. *It's she who has got all of Narnia under her thumb. It's she who always makes it winter. Always winter and never Christmas...* (P. 25). Tumnus explains the situation in the beautiful land of Narnia to his new

and tiny friend Lucy, that the land has been cursed by the White Witch. Tumnus is a very soft character who is desperately in need of peace and freedom. When he explains it to Lucy about the land being cursed, it shows that he needs Lucy and her siblings to come into the land of Narnia so that they are the only chosen humans who can defeat the White Witch and her followers and bring back the peace and freedom that the Narnians are desperately waiting for.

At first, Lucy never thought the land of Narnia was cursed. She might be so pleased to see the snowy magical land where she can call her siblings to enjoy playing in the snow. She thought that her world was so busy fighting with each other, but this place is so beautiful to look at that she could spend hours there without seeing any fighting. But later, when she takes her siblings—Peter, Susan, and Edmund—to the land of Narnia through the wardrobe, she gets to learn through the Beavers that the land of Narnia is under a curse and they are the ones who can remove this curse from Narnia. It seems that the mental health of the Pevensie children is good, but they do have fear of what is going to happen to them in a new land, where they thought it would be amazing to spend some time while living in the huge house.

C.S. Lewis has shown the character Peter incredibly well. Though he is a teen boy, he is given a burden on his shoulders to take care of his siblings. He is the eldest of his siblings, so he has the responsibility of looking after them. Peter has been displayed as a courageous boy who is happy and proud to take care of his siblings. He is bold, and his sincerity in showing his love, care, and strictness to his siblings and how he handles the situation when his words are not respected by his brother Edmund is something other children can learn from. He has the kingly behaviour to take authority boldly and swiftly. But at the same time, he sometimes treats Edmund quite rudely because his brother is selfish and sometimes teases his younger sister, Lucy. But at last, he learns by sacrificing and looking after and taking care of his siblings, being crowned as the King of Narnia and called "King Peter the Magnificent."

Edmund has two different characteristics in this novel. At first he is a selfish and ambitious little boy who hates his brothers and sisters, and then he becomes a gentle, loyal, and lovable character who learns to fight the war and is willing to contribute himself to the war. Edmund's mentality changes after his father left him and his family to participate in the war. Edmund is a sweet boy, but he dislikes his brother Peter because of his rude advice and strictness towards him. He also does not like his sisters, Susan and Lucy, because they are girls. His character is

something to be bothered about in this novel. He is a headstrong and proud boy who wants to rule his siblings and wants others to treat him better than they do.

In this novel, Edmund is a character who can be compared to that of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus Christ in the Bible, and then Peter, who denies Jesus Christ but gets forgiveness from Jesus Christ for his sin. Edmund meets the White Witch for the first time, and he is very much captivated by her beauty and her authoritative role as Queen of Narnia. She wants him to bring her siblings with him so that the prophecy is not fulfilled. She wants them killed or to make them frozen statues through her magic. He does not know her bad intentions, but she asks him to bring his siblings so that he can sit beside her as a king and they can be his slaves. She gives him what he craved, Turkish Delight, while asking him to bring his siblings to her glass castle. She also tells him that he has stored more Turkish Delights in her castle so that when he comes again, she will crown him as King and he can eat as many Turkish Delights as possible. She learns that this is one of his weaknesses, and she uses this to tempt him so that he will come back again to her land.

"I am sure you would like it. There are whole rooms full of Turkish Delight, and what's more, I have no children of my own. I want a nice boy whom I could bring up as a prince and who would be King of Narnia when I am gone. When he was a prince, he would wear a gold crown and eat Turkish Delight all day; and you are far and away the smartest and most handsome young man I've ever met." (P. 45).

This is how he gets tempted. His mental status is to become an authoritative person and be superior to his siblings, to rule them and make them sit under his feet. Edmund's notion has not been known by his siblings, who thought he was rude, but he is a good and innocent brother to them. The novel revolves around Edmund's betrayal for the throne, for which the White Witch deceived him. When he tries to betray his siblings, he is betrayed by the White Witch, and he is locked as a prisoner in her castle. He is a proud, gluttonous, and jealous boy who wants to be above all others and who wants to see his siblings down. Edmund then realises his mistake and gets forgiveness from his siblings-Peter, Susan, and Lucy-and then Aslan crowns him to be the King of Narnia. He learns how to fight and he gets his sword and a horse of his own. He grows stronger and wiser, more loyal to Aslan and his army, and more loving and

caring toward his siblings. at last crowned by Aslan as the King of Narnia and called "Edmund the Just".

The story is created in such a way that the characters are not of the king's blood but simple commoners who want to get settled in their life with their family. Susan is a character who is selfish and sometimes rude. She is not an important character in this novel, but she too plays well, as she is at last crowned as the Queen of Narnia by Aslan. She is nerdy and strict. She wants her house to be in peace, but when they enter into the land of Narnia, she is found out to be not to be involved in others' matters. She loves her siblings, and out of concern, she wants them to be at peace with her. She is a gentle soul, but yet she is very much attached to her siblings and wants them to be safe rather than go and fight in a war. But later, she becomes a different person. She learns the art of archery and she contributes to the war, participating and encouraging her siblings to be strong and courageous and fight for the good and destroy the bad. She was then crowned as Queen and called "Queen Susan the Gentle".

Lucy is the sweetest character who is so good and gentle towards everyone. She is innocent and willing to share her love with everyone. This is the girl that C.S. Lewis prioritises in this novel. C.S. Lewis was literally being very honest by taking this character to reassure from the Bible, *"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3)*. This girl, Lucy, can be defined as innocent and that is what he makes an example of a little girl's innocence, which will take her to Heaven. It is to be noted that C.S. Lewis gives importance to this little girl, who is the first person to enter into the land of Narnia. The Biblical verse predicts that only those with an innocent quality will be able to enter Heaven. This character does not like to hurt anyone. The childish characteristics of Lucy are adored by Aslan and he is very much fonder of her than any of her siblings. So, at last, she is crowned by Aslan and called "Queen Lucy the Valiant".

The Pevensie children become the Kings and Queens of Narnia because of their boldness and courage. They get rid of their fear and anxiety and take a prominent role in the war between good and evil, and through them, good triumphs over evil. It is natural for children to be neglected by the elderly during wartime, as there is more concern for survivalism than love and care for children. It is up to children to overcome the battles of fear, depression, anxiety, and neglect in their lives, and these four characters are the best examples of optimism and

hope. They are evacuated from their city to a small and peaceful country for survival. They are brought to Professor Digory Kirke's huge house to live peacefully and to learn more things there. When Lucy finds a magical world through the wardrobe and, after that, her siblings too, enter into it, they think it is a place to wander and enjoy playing in the snow. But they find out that the world they are in is not a peaceful place. Both the realistic world and the fantastical world have wars and battles, but it is children's duty to accept the situation and condition of the environment around them and to patiently tackle everything by hoping for positivity so that they can win the battle. Emotional problems might come to everyone's life, but it is in their hands to either take it in their hearts or to strike it off by overcoming fear and anxiety and winning the battle. This novel is a clear examination of positivity in children's minds; they believe they can face anything if they are loyal, bold, patient, and courageous.

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