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"Noble and Beautiful" – Universal Human Aesthetics in C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*

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Abstract: C. S. Lewis believed that the best Christian writing should not aim to be original but should rather focus on borrowing and adapting from previous works. Unsurprisingly, Lewis's most popular work, The Chronicles of Narnia, shows the influence of a wide variety of sources. Beyond the better known mythological and Christian influences, the series also draws from Rider Haggard's works and the Lost World genre more generally. Many of these influences have led to accusations of racism against the works. To better understand such claims, this paper seeks to analyze one of the key elements fueling to such accusations, namely beliefs about human and humanoid aesthetics, which have historically taken on racist implications. In The Chronicles of Narnia, *the narrator and characters alike treat questions of personal aesthetics as being objective assessments, and skin tone is shown playing a significant part in these judgments, with a certain variety of "fair" skin being ideal and deviations from this norm, whether becoming too red, too pale, too blue or too dark, being treated as unattractive. Aspects of the inner nature of characters is also frequently treated as being externally visible, and there is a strong, albeit imperfect, correlation between physical attractiveness and individual moral standing. Understanding these themes can lead to a better understanding of Lewis's works and serve as a warning for contemporary writers on the dangers of adopting themes uncritically.*

Keywords: Narnia, aesthetics, racism, Lewis, adaptation

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C. S. Lewis considered true originality to be "the prerogative of God alone" (Lewis "Literature" 21). Writers and other artists might, he conceded, be "original" in the very limited sense of not following in the footsteps of any human predecessors (23), but human creation, according to Lewis, is something that occurs only under divine direction. Even acting without human precedent, however, was something Lewis treated as essentially the last resort of those who could do no better (25). Better than to be original in any sense was for an artist to work "in an established form and dealing with experiences common to all his race" (25). Lewis saw building off the great works of the past as a noble enterprise, far nobler, in fact, than building from scratch. With this in mind, it is no surprise that Lewis was once amused to hear *The Chronicles of Narnia* criticized as being

unoriginal (Watson 90). To Lewis, this must have come not as criticism but as praise, for being unoriginal was his full intention.

In the construction of *The Chronicles of Narnia,* Lewis's adaptation of other works is so in depth and takes such a broad sampling from other works and places that the scholarship attempting to document it is difficult itself to fully catalog. Mervyn Nicholson, to cite one example, has written numerous articles in recent years, pointing out various influences to the series, including finding highly in-depth links to such writers as E. Nesbit ("Scholarship"), Walter de la Mare ("Fairy Tales"), C. R. Martin ("C. R. Martin") and James Stephens ("James Stephens"), among others, and has even linked as remote details as the naming of a minor animal character to a historic admiral in the Royal Navy ("Mole Admiral"). Influences, religious, literary and mythological, behind the works form the basis of countless other scholarly works since the release of the series, and examples of studies of this type continue to accumulate (for a few, more recent examples, see Brazier; Bruner and Ware; Downing; Duriez; Greggersen; Jacobs; Muth; Ward). These influences are so extensive, in fact, that of all the many fantasy races found within the works, Nicholson identifies only one as being truly original, namely the "Marsh-Wiggles" ("Mole Admiral" 485).

Beyond influences from many diverse classic works and genres that are still followed and read today, however, Lewis also borrows from sources that have not stood so well against the tests of time. A great deal of critical ire has been roused by Lewis's inclusion of elements of the Lost World genre, for example, a genre most famous now for its racism and colonial worldview. In particular, the writings of Rider Haggard have been found to have had a strong influence on a number of scenes, themes and characters (Nicholson, "Scholarship") (though certainly not all such elements can be attributed there), including particularly strong influences on the construction and portrayal of the White Witch and the Calormenes. This portrayal of the Calormenes, Lewis's "wise, wealthy, courteous, cruel and ancient" (*Chronicles* 452) race of dark skinned peoples who dwell across a vast desert to the south of Narnia, has been the favorite target of these attacks.

From non-scholarly sources, recent accusations of racism directed at *The Chronicles of Narnia* have been championed by Philip Pullman, one of Lewis's most vocal critics (Ezard; BBC; Pullman). Kyrie O'Conner has expressed doubts over *The Horse and his Boy*'s adaptability to film on the same grounds, describing the work as "anti-Arab, anti-Eastern or anti-Ottoman." Others have been likewise quick to acknowledge problems related to matters of race within the books (for an example, see: Miller, *The Magician's Book)*, and even while speaking in defense of *Narnia*, Gregg Easterbrook has described the Calormenes, whom he identifies as "the principal bad guys," as being "unmistakable Muslim stand-ins."

Although not giving as frequent or direct attention to such matters, the scholarly realm has been far from silent. Examples can be found such as James Russel's, who has seen the works as being an allegory of national and post-colonial myth, in which racial overtones are heavily applied (61–6), or that of Susan Rowland, who has seen even the Turkish delight as carrying an implicit racism of its own, while describing *The Horse and his Boy* as a "formidably anti-Arab story" (11).

Defenders of the works have likewise been found in both places. A keynote address offered by Devin Brown of Ashbury College, for example, offers a good close reading that comes far closer than most others in addressing the actual points that would determine the presence of racism in the works, and he argues thereby that the stories are not at all racist.[1] Mervyn Nicholon has also commented on accusations of racism directed toward Lewis, particularly with regard to *The Chronicles of Narnia*, calling them "at best an oversimplification and at worst a slander" ("Scholarship" 58). From my own study, and in terms of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, I would find

1 His point, for example, that there are both good and bad dwarfs successfully pins the question down to a matter of racial determinism, as well as getting past the common mistake of identifying racism as being purely a matter of cruelty directed based on skin tone. He fails to notice in his analysis, however, that while there *are* good and bad dwarfs, their moral dispositions are divided into good and evil according to distinct sub-races (Red Dwarfs and Black Dwarfs, respectively), confirming rather than refuting racial determinism.

the prior charge of oversimplification to be quite accurate, while as for Lewis himself, I would, with few reservations, declare the latter.

A comprehensive study of race and related concepts found in *The Chronicles of Narnia* would fill at least a book, if not several volumes, and I have previously offered at least a preliminary look at such themes (Wanberg), but as such are typically not the same themes addressed by most of Lewis's critics, and as my space is now considerably more constrained, I will not review them here. Rather, my intent now is to address one of the two issues that most of Lewis's critics really are talking about when they talk about racism in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, namely beliefs about human (or humanoid) aesthetics.[2] In particular, my concern is with addressing the apparent belief in a universal ideal for humanoid appearance as found in the books, as well as looking at two of the specific trends that ideal follows. As many, if not most, elements in *The Chronicles of Narnia* are borrowings from other places, it seems likely that such elements are also borrowed, and contrasts between some such ideas and some of Lewis's other writings seem to confirm this. Moreover, the rules that govern at least one sub-pattern, namely correlations between beauty and high moral standing, are less consistent, so it is not unreasonable to speculate that they may be the result of themes borrowed from other places (a general ideal of attractive heroes and hideous villains, for example), rather than a specific belief on Lewis's part about the natural workings of the world.

In support of these goals for this analysis, discussion will begin by looking at the origins of beliefs in universal human aesthetic ideals in society. This will be followed by a brief analysis proving the existence of such ideals in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, followed by analysis of how this ideal relates first to skin tone and then to the connection between outward physical appearances and characters' inner nature.

A History of Absolute Beauty

Beliefs in an absolute aesthetic ideal, as they concern us here, had their origins during the Enlightenment, and as responses to such themes in *The Chronicles of Narnia* imply, they were often understood to have racial implications. During this period, as the so-called "racial sciences" were gaining most of their driving force, it was said that "science and aesthetics influenced one another reciprocally" (Mosse 40). A belief in the unity of the body and mind meant, therefore, that mental characteristics would be mirrored by outward physical traits (40). These ideas were widely influential, finding a place not only in physical anthropology, but also in criminology and other fields. According to these beliefs, a man or woman who was intelligent, civilized and morally upright would naturally be more attractive as a result, while one who was the opposite (being unintelligent, primitive or morally degenerate), would be less so. This led credence to racist beliefs. Since certain physical traits were passed on genetically and therefore were more common in certain population groups, those traits could be directly correlated to beliefs about the underlying abilities, temperaments and moral standing of those groups. If appearance is tied to ability and nature, and certain groups share a similar appearance, those groups must naturally, therefore, have similar levels of ability and a similar nature. Phrenology and physiology would take this to a new level, allowing features to be precisely measured and quantified, in order that individuals and races could be judged and even ranked according to their overall worth (40).

For many, such as the Reverend Charles Kingsley, the connection between inner nature and outward appearance was primarily moral in nature. As Conlin puts it, speaking of Kingsley, "[t]he body was a faithful representation of the soul within it" (180), and many later writers, such as Herbert Spencer, Alexander Bain and Henry Maine (180) would share this belief. The character,

2 The other, as many of the quotes imply, being ethnocentrism, typically a question of whether Calormene culture is designed to reflect badly on some real world society.

Tom, in Kingsley's *The Water Babies* demonstrates this clearly, as Tom's various incarnations on the road back to humanity are earned only through degrees of moral development. According to this belief, one's level of ability, then, is less important in determining one's appearance than their moral standing. Of course, this has striking implications for its opposite, when failing to measure up to the supposedly universal aesthetic standard marks one not merely as incompetent but as morally defunct.

Any comparisons to a universal aesthetic standard must, however, assume that such a standard exists and must also be able to indicate what that standard entails. For this standard, most turned to the Ancient Greeks, so an individual's or race's worth was measured according to this standard of ancient beauty (Mosse 40). Victor Courtet de l'Isle specifically declared this to be a matter of comparing the faces of the members of various races to the statue of Apollo (Fredrickson 68). It should come as little surprise that a statue carved by a European man out of white marble should differ wildly in appearance from most individuals whose descent is geographically removed from that region, but it was taken for granted by many, nonetheless, that the ideal that this statue represented would be shared and appreciated by all, regardless of what features might be more common in their own region. This is far from an accurate assessment, of course, and even within Europe, the finer details of this supposedly universal ideal were frequently contested. Gobineau himself, hailed as the "father of modern racism," would go on to insist, for example, that in terms of physical beauty, it is those who are of mixed African and European descent who should be ranked highest (Biddiss 119), a far different standard than the one others sought after from the Greeks.

An Absolutely Beautiful Story

Qualitative judgments of personal appearance are common in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and they are never challenged except out of jealousy or conceit, but this alone does not prove that the standard of beauty found within the works is universal. After all, if those present when the appearance of any individual is remarked upon do not happen to disagree, this by no means proves that others, who are not present, might not disagree themselves.[3] To obtain the strongest possible evidence, instead, for a universal standard of personal aesthetics, it becomes necessary to look for cases where beauty or ugliness is declared when, if personal appearance were subjective, it should not be. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, two scenarios display this most clearly. The first is a case where the standard of beauty is portrayed as transcending cultural boundaries (such that both cultures agree that the fashions and phenotype found in one are more attractive than that in the other), and the second is a case where a qualitative question of appearance must be resolved by an appeal to authority (by a simpleminded people who must choose the voice of reason over pride), rather than left as a matter of opinion. The first is the matter of the Calormenes versus the Northerners (Narnians and Archenlanders). The second is the matter of the Dufflepuds.

The Calormenes' dark skin and mostly stereotypically Arabic fashion, architecture and culture (with other, clearly non-Arabic influences) form a strong contrast to the light skinned and generically European fashioned Northerners. The differences are such that one (who believed in a subjective aesthetic standard) would expect that individuals raised in the different cultures to have very different aesthetic tastes, but in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, this does not appear to be the case. Northern things are typically portrayed as being superior to their Calormene counterparts, not the least by the Calormenes themselves, despite holding their Northern neighbors in contempt, a pattern that becomes especially pronounced with matters of personal appearance. For example, Aravis, a Calormene by both birth and upbringing, once decides, for example, that "Narnian fashions (at any rate for men) looked nicer" (Lewis *Chronicles* 255). Beyond just their clothing, the bodies of the

3 This is less clearly the case when, as at times in the stories, it is the omniscient narrator who comments, rather than a character in the scene, but such is still not definitive.

Narnians themselves are also glorified. Queen Susan's beauty is frequently praised, and Aravis's friend, Lasaleen, comments on this, saying: "I can't see that she's so very pretty myself.[4] But some of the Narnian *men* are lovely" (250, emphasis original). That this extends to people of both sexes is reaffirmed by Shasta, who although a native of the Archenland by birth, has been raised in Calormen by a Calormene fishermen since a young age and *should* be expected to have adopted Calormene social values, and who has never seen another Northerner before. We understand from Shasta's perspective that "all of them, *both men and women*, had nicer faces and voices than most Calormenes" (234, emphasis added). Those who derive from a different cultural context here show clear signs of respecting this aesthetic ideal, even when the traits prized by it are alien to them.

By far the best example of this relative estimation of appearance, however, is demonstrated by the Tarkaan Andarin in a statement he makes while speaking to Shasta's foster father, the fisherman Arsheesh. Speaking to him of Shasta, as one dark-skinned man to another in the midst of a country filled with other dark-skinned persons, he says: "The boy is manifestly no son of yours, for your cheek is as black as mine but the boy is fair and white like the accursed but beautiful barbarians who inhabit the remote north" (207). Note in particular the phrase, "accursed but beautiful." The "barbarians who inhabit the remote north" are, according to the Tarkaan, not only "accursed," but also "beautiful." Even coming from a cultural context which he is, in the same breath, declaring to be free of light skinned persons, and in the very midst of expressing his distaste for such individuals, some strange admiration seems to compel him to declare them "beautiful," even when such praise is completely inappropriate to the context.

The Dufflepuds display this from another angle. Transformed from "common little dwarfs" (502) into single-footed "monopods" (502) by the magician Aslan has appointed to be their caretaker, the Duffers/Monopods/Dufflepuds seem at first glance to oppose the notion. While both Lucy and the Magician, at the very least, find the transformation amusing, and as absurd and impractical as the transformation seems, only the Dufflepuds themselves (at the urging of their Chief), claim to find the new form ugly. The Magician and even Lucy (who never saw the original form at all) both insist it is an improvement.

When it is first encountered, this differing of opinions appears to be a break with the belief in the universality of an aesthetic ideal for what are, or at least once were, humanoids. If there is a universal standard for beauty held and accepted by all, there should be no disagreements over whether or not someone or something is beautiful. If there is a disagreement, the standard must not be universal. Our first impression of the Dufflepuds, however, quickly proves deceptive. It is tempting to dismiss the disagreement as the result of differing objectives on the part of the two groups, since the Dufflepuds are concerned mainly with their beauty or ugliness, whereas the Magician says their old form was boring and finds their new form amusing, but even this doesn't seem to be the root cause of the disagreement. As we are constantly reminded, the Dufflepuds are incredibly stupid. They are, we soon find out, wrong. The Magician suggests as much when he says: "it's only they who think they were so nice to look at before. They say they've been uglified, but that isn't what I called it. Many people might say the change was for the better" (500). When asked if they were conceited, he answers: "They are. Or at least the Chief Duffer is, and he's taught the rest to be. They always believe every word he says" (500). According to the Magician, the Dufflepuds' change was purely for the better, and the Chief Duffer denies this only out of pride, instructing his followers to do the same. That Lucy accepts this explanation without questioning seems to indicate that the reader should do likewise, even though we cannot see the Dufflepuds to

4 We have substantial evidence to suggest that Queen Susan was, in fact, very attractive and that Lasaraleen is merely being petty by denying it, although it is a sort of pettiness that does not set her apart from some more sympathetic female characters, who are also prone to this same sort of behavior. A similar reaction is found, for example, in Polly's assessment of Jadis (Lewis Chronicles 34), where Polly claims not to have thought Jadis was attractive, contrary to the opinions of all other characters (Aunt Letty calls Jadis a "shameless hussy" (51) for daring to go around with bare arms, but she does not actually describe her as unattractive per se). Aravis's only being willing to concede superiority to male Narnian fashions, but not to female, may be seen in a similar vein.

judge for ourselves. By the chapter's end, in fact, as the group prepares for their final departure from the island, we see signs of the Dufflepuds overcoming their leaders' reservations and learning to appreciate the advantages their new form has to offer. The moral, in the end, is revealed not to be about the Magician having to learn to respect that others might have opinions that are different from his own, but rather it is about the Dufflepuds having to learn to respect the wisdom of those who know better than they. The story does not, therefore, turn out to be a challenge to the existence of a universal aesthetic ideal, but rather it bears another moral entirely, one which takes the universality of such an ideal for granted, which, in fact, relies on the existence of such an standard rather than opposes it.

"Fair and Beautiful"

If there is a universal standard for human or humanoid appearance within the stories, then it raises the natural question of what standard, exactly, is used to make such a judgment. Attractive characters are given many different, sometimes contradictory traits, such that many of them can be ruled out as being part of the ideal,[5] as well as demonstrating that, likely, no single trait alone would account for it. One trait, however, does occur frequently and reliably enough in conjunction with such judgments to be worth discussion. Much to the indignation of Lewis's accusers, that trait is skin tone. Unlike a simple black/white dichotomy, however, the ideal for an individual's skin tone seems to assume a default, unmarked shade, what might be referred to as "fair" skin, and skin tones that vary from this default shade, whether from birth or more immediate, environmental factors, are portrayed as being less attractive, regardless of the way they vary from it. Characters can be *too* white, just as they can be too much of several other shades. In at least two cases, an individual can be found to still be counted as attractive, even when their skin tone is not ideal, but in each case, their skin tone is described a point against them.

One need not hearken back any further than the aforementioned case of the Tarkaan Andarin and the Fisherman Arsheesh to see one example of this (and certainly the most problematic of them). The sole trait used to distinguish between Shasta and Arsheesh and between the Calormenes and the "beautiful barbarians" is that Shasta and the Northerners do not have black skin but are "fair and white." Given that the barbarians are described as beautiful and the most significant way they can be distinguished is by skin tone, it is very difficult to find an interpretation of this line that does not imply an equivalence between the Northerner's beauty and their skin.

Other references to the same can be found that are not as individually troubling. When Jewel recounts Narnian history for Jill, for example, he lists only one queen by name, who seems to be famous only for her beauty ("so beautiful that when she looked into any forest pool the reflection of her face shone out of the water like a star by night for a year and a day afterwards" (716)). The woman's name, tellingly enough, is "Swanwhite" (716). Likewise, references to Narnians having "nicer faces . . . than most Calormenes" (234) or Uncle Andrew's fingers being described as "beautifully white" (16), may raise similar images.

One should bear context in mind in the cases of Uncle Andrew and Swanwhite, however. Being "beautifully white" does not, in context, imply "beautiful because they were white" but "white in a way that was beautiful," implying that the whiteness in question *possessed* a beautiful quality, rather than that it *was* a beautiful quality. Since the story, by the point of Uncle Andrew's description, had not introduced any non-white characters, the latter meaning in his case would be

5 For example, Queen Susan is described as having long black hair (Lewis Chronicles 194) and Queen Lucy as having golden hair (195), but both are described as being sought after as the potential brides of many kings and princes, suggesting that hair color, at least, does not factor in to the standard. That Susan is sought after by "kings" and Lucy by "princes" is most likely just a reflection of their relative ages, not status or appearance. Numerous attractive characters may be tall, blond, deep chested or any number of such things, but these traits are not mentioned together with appearance frequently enough to draw clear conclusions, although something might tentatively be suggested about squinting and having freckles (434).

absurd. Likewise, for "Swanwhite" to be a name denoting beauty in Narnian society, which was universally white, with only dark-skinned guests and not residents (679–80), it would imply that the beauty was found in whiteness of a particular type, not necessarily in whiteness itself (otherwise how would her beauty be different from that of her subjects?). To dismiss the name as a meaningless coincidence, however, would be to ignore Lewis's fondness for carefully chosen and particularly apt naming in general (Nicholson "Mole Admiral" 485), so the significance must be presumed intentional. Comparisons to Calormenes reflect unfavorably on blackness, but this does not mean that whiteness in general is necessarily desirable, only a particular type of it.

This is further demonstrated when circumstances occur, whether environmental effects, internal changes or so on, that result in a character's complexion straying from this idealized variety of whiteness. Whenever a character's complexion changes, it is treated as being unattractive. One place this is demonstrated is when Edmund is being seduced with Turkish delight by Jadis. "His face had become very red and his mouth and fingers were sticky. He did not look either clever or handsome, whatever the Queen might say" (Lewis *Chronicles* 126). Having a sticky mouth and fingers contributes to his not looking "clever or handsome," but this is not all. Having a red face is listed among his unattractive (and not clever-looking) features, suggesting that the change of skin tone is also undesirable. Similarly, when Jill and Eustace enter Harfang after their journey through the cold, their faces have a bluish tint. This prompts the giant who greets them to say: "Blue faces . . . I didn't know they were that colour. Don't care about it myself. But I dare say you look quite nice to one another. Beetles fancy other beetles, they do say" (598). While the giant immediately attempts to cover for his misstep in having drawn attention to what is, apparently, an unattractive feature, saying that he doesn't care about it and suggesting in his assessment that beetles "fancy other beetles," he clearly reveals his own opinion on the matter. The phrase, "But I dare say you look quite nice to one another," despite its intent, nonetheless betrays the fact that they do not look nice to *him*.

Similar judgments are made, interestingly enough, upon two of Jadis's transformations, in the *Magician's Nephew*, first as she enters the Wood Between the Worlds and second when she partakes of the forbidden fruit. Firstly, when she enters the Wood, she becomes physically weak, is deprived of her magical powers and is later unable to recall the events of that time. As this happens, we're told that she "looked different. She was much paler than she had been; so pale that hardly any of her beauty was left" (44). Becoming pale is portrayed as unattractive here, but more significantly, it's portrayed as *so* unattractive that someone as beautiful as Jadis can be said to have "hardly any of her beauty . . . left" simply on account of that paleness. Secondly, Jadis's second transformation, as she partakes of the forbidden fruit, is portrayed as having a similar effect. She becomes more powerful and immortal but gains an aversion to the smell of the fruit, and as she does, Diggory notes that her face becomes "deadly white, white as salt" (93). When Jadis appears again, a long time later at the beginning of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, this paleness remains, and as before, she is described as being "quite beautiful," but her beauty exists *in spite* of her paleness, rather than because of it (123).[6]

It seems, then, that if there is a trait which can be picked out as part of the universal ideal for personal appearance found within the books, skin tone seems to be the primary candidate, and the ideal favors fair skin over dark, but also fair over pale, reddish or bluish. The ideal, however, must entail more than skin tone. This is demonstrated in at least two ways. For one, judgments about appearance can be made when skin tone is not visible. An excellent example of this is provided by Aravis, who during *The Horse and his Boy*, views "[g]reat statues of the gods and heroes of

6 It does not seem possible that Jadis was any paler in the first case than the second, but she is described as retaining more of her beauty with the latter change than with the prior. This may be a coincidence, or it may be further evidence that her beauty is somehow artificial, stemming from her powers rather than a reflection of her natural state. See the speculation in the following section.

Calormen – who are mostly impressive rather than agreeable to look at" (230). Cast as statues, the skin tone of these heroes is probably not apparent,[7] and therefore they must be unattractive for other reasons. For a second, two characters manage to be attractive in spite of their skin tone, even though, in each case, their skin tone is counted as a point against them. The example of Jadis has already been given, as she, despite being pale, manages to be otherwise "quite beautiful," at least in the second incident, and may have some small trace of her beauty left in the first. If she can be beautiful despite being pale, other factors are clearly at play. The second character to do this is Emeth, who is described as being "rather beautiful in a dark, haughty, Calormene way" (728). One might read Emeth's description out of context as being "beautiful in a dark. . . way," suggesting that there is another, dark way to be beautiful, different but equal in value to some supposed "white way." This would imply, however, that "haughty" and "Calormene" would be seen as positive, or at least neutral, aspects of beauty, when the context of *The Chronicles of Narnia* suggests they are definitely not. Haughtiness is not portrayed as desirable, so to be beautiful in a "haughty way" would be to be beautiful *in spite* of haughtiness, not *because* of haughtiness. The same is implied for the "Calormene way," as Calormene portrayals are almost always strongly negative. Any "dark way" to be beautiful must, in this context, be read similarly, as being beautiful in spite of one's darkness, rather than by drawing on it. Regardless, Emeth's example, like Jadis's, suggests that one can be beautiful (even "quite" or "rather" so) without having the necessary skin tone, making it clear that skin tone, while important, is not all that matters for beauty in the stories.

Beautiful on the Inside

While turning blue from the cold or red from drinking unspecified beverages accepted from strangers might seem perfectly mundane, the changes experienced by Jadis have more fascinating implications, for in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, there is a strong link between one's inner nature and one's personal appearance. This is seen in outward manifestations of internal changes, the treatment of aspects of one's temperament as externally visible traits, and in a strong correlation between appearance and moral standing.

Jadis's appearance changes correspond to the loss of her magic or the effects of eating the fruit, it is true, but in fact, throughout the stories, whenever the inner nature of a character is altered, particularly by magic, their outer appearance always changes to match. Individuals becoming royalty show strong evidence of this, with noted changes to their voices and appearance after assuming royal status (something that, in *The Chronicles of Narnia* is administered "by the will of Aslan" [654]). King Frank, for example, talks differently (82) and has a different look to his face (97) both within the first two days of being selected by Aslan, Peter's return to kingship on his second trip to Narnia is detectable from a quality of his voice (328), and Caspian takes on a "kingly look" (354) after assuming command of his armies, to name a few cases. Likewise, even the talking beasts, when they are transformed from normal beasts by Aslan, cannot simply gain the ability to speak, but they undergo changes in size as well, the larger becoming smaller and the smaller becoming larger, as gaining human-like intelligence also entails becoming more human-like in size to match.

When described later, talking beasts are said not only to look "larger" than normal beasts, but also to actually *look* "friendlier and more intelligent" (346) than their non-talking counterparts. This use of non-physical attributes as part of physical descriptions runs all throughout the books, and characters are frequently described with such traits as "wild," "cruel," "proud," "fierce" or "solemn" together with the more obviously physical aspects of their descriptions. Nor is this limited to animals, and examples can be found with humans, dwarfs, centaurs and even statues.

7 It also makes a profound statement on the degree of the difference between Calormene and Northern appearance, when even Calormen's most idealized representations of their best- gods and heroes immortalized in art- are still not "agreeable to look at."

When Lucy sees the monsters of Jadis's army by daylight for the first time, for example, she even describes them as looking "stranger and *more evil* and more deformed" (191, emphasis added) than they had appeared in the dark. This cannot be mistaken as bearing or expression, as it shows up even on sleeping characters, as seen in the case of Time. When the sleeping Time is viewed by Jill and Eustace in the Underland, he is described as being "far bigger than any of the giants, and his face was not like a giant's, but *noble* and beautiful" (616, emphasis added).

Furthermore, being both evil and deformed or both noble and beautiful, in the case of the monsters and Time, does not appear to be a coincidence. There is a strong correlation, throughout the stories, of good characters being attractive and evil characters being ugly. As one who follows the commands of Aslan (748–53), we can only assume Time to have a good moral disposition, and there is no doubting the villainy of the monsters. Just as the Calormenes are, on average (note the use of terms like "many" and "most" among the citations earlier), less attractive than Northerners, so are they also, on average, more evil.[8] The heroes, to the contrary, are never described in anything but flattering terms (at least while they are heroes), and Emeth, the only dark skinned character to be described as attractive, is also incontrovertibly good.

The correlation is strong, yes, but it is not perfect. Skeptics might wish to point to the case of the good giants, for example. Good giants are described such that, on his first encounter with them, Shasta could "hardly bear to look at them" (287). This could be read as their being unattractive, making for a race that is hideous, yet good. Context (that this inability comes "though he knew they were on the right side" [287]), however, suggests that his response derives more from some natural repulsion to evil creatures than a reaction against their appearance, and we are not elsewhere given a clear indication that good giants are actually as unattractive as the evil varieties. Alternatively, two of the most evil characters in the stories (short of Tash himself), are clearly quite beautiful. Jadis and the Lady of the Green Kirtle are both witches of some similar variety (the nature of the link between them is unclear, but the link is explicit), are both evil and are both beautiful.[9] Their beauty, however, may be unnatural. Jadis, it is true, is cursed with an unattractive paleness, and the Lady, when her true nature is revealed, transforms into a giant snake, but the deception seems deeper than that. Jadis was not always pale, for example, but her evil is much older than her paleness (although this origin was not planned until long after Jadis's first introduction). Rather, it is worth noting Lucy's experience when she is tempted by the magician's book to use its magic for evil. One of the temptations she faces is to use a spell to make her "beautiful . . . beyond the lot of mortals" (495). If this is to be a standard abuse of magic power, it would certainly explain the two witches' deviation from the norm. Indeed, it would explain why, when her power is lost to her, Jadis's beauty vanishes also, as well as why the loss of beauty with the paleness that accompanies the loss of her powers is portrayed as more severe than when she becomes pale later but retains and even enhances her abilities. Perhaps Jadis and the Lady are not naturally beautiful, only feigning such through the use of magic.

Such explanations delve into the realm of speculation, however. More appropriately, looking outside the text, the Lady can be seen to derive from Jadis, while Jadis can be seen to derive from the titular character of Rider Haggard's *She*. *She* was attractive, therefore Jadis is also. Jadis was attractive, therefore the Lady is. That Lewis felt it was more important to stay true to the borrowing than the pattern of morality and aesthetics has strong implications for the nature and origin of that pattern.

8 Although there are Telmarine villains, the Carlormene nobility, if not all Calormenes, are literally descended from Tash (the devil) (Lewis *Chronicles* 221), and sympathetic Calormenes are extremely rare.

9 To put it as Uncle Andrew says, speaking of Jadis, she is a "dem fine woman, sir, a dem fine woman. A superb creature" (Lewis *Chronicles* 49).

Conclusion

The Chronicles of Narnia, then, contain strong trends in humanoid aesthetics. The ideal for personal appearance is treated as universal, shared across cultures and phenotypes, and it treats individual skin tone as being significant to overall appearance, though the existence of other factors cannot be ruled out. Additionally, there is a connection between outward appearance and inner nature, with many inward traits being immediately visible as part of characters' physical descriptions, and at no point is the inner nature of any creature magically altered without some form of outward transformation to go with it.[10] A correlation can be found between quality of personal appearance and moral standing, but it is imperfect, as at least the two northern witches fail to follow it.

This latter deviation can be treated as stemming from the same source that many of these themes likely derive from, being stylistic and thematic borrowings rather than bearing any sort of didactic intent. After all, while C. S. Lewis at least once suggested the possibility of beauty being as universal as he believed morals to be, transcending not only culture but humanity itself, he does so citing the ideal of a beautiful landscape, not a beautiful person (Lewis "Futilitate" 96–7), and he is otherwise keen to account for differences of taste throughout his writing. It seems unlikely that these themes appear in the stories on account of Lewis's own beliefs, therefore, but rather, they are another borrowing among many. If Lewis were trying to present aesthetics to the reader the same way he intends to present moral or Christian themes, one would imagine he would not allow his desire to accurately imitate his source to override that lesson, but he does allow it to be overridden, when the conflict occurs,[11] so borrowings must be assumed at play.

Understanding such themes can help to enrich our understanding of C. S. Lewis's most popular series, but they should serve as a warning to us, as well, and a call to greater awareness, both as readers and writers, urging us to caution in the sources we draw from and the themes we uncritically adopt. While it seems reasonable that few writers today would equate black skin to ugliness without serious consideration, themes of racial determinism have become the stock of much fantasy and even science fiction literature since, particularly among "non-human races." The borrowing of these or any other conventions from other stories or genres should be done with careful scrutiny. Where and to what extent any themes are appropriate to borrow is a question every writer must answer for themselves, but it is a question that must be asked, not a standard to be imitated blindly. Will our elves, centaurs and aliens behave in certain ways simply because they are elves, centaurs and aliens, and that's what such creatures do? If so, can we, as readers, continue to heed the ever-pressing call to avoid making such judgments about actual people? These are important questions, and they must be allowed the gravity they deserve. If such a great work as *The Chronicles of Narnia* can draw such critical ire a generation later from its own choice of borrowings, there is surely reason for caution in ours, lest the judgments of future generations also find us wanting.

10 Non-magical changes in appearance, of course, are not shown to influence inner nature.

11 Even if Jadis and the Lady's appearances are artificial, the stories were not planned far in advance, and Jadis was introduced as an attractive-but-pale character two books before the idea of magic to make one beautiful was ever introduced. The decision to make her both evil and beautiful likely occurred in the absence of such mitigating factors.

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