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Author: Macarena Vargas Peiret

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Lucy Pevensie, An (Eco)feminist Heroine: Girlhood and Nature in The Chronicles of Narnia

Macarena Vargas Peiret ¹

The Chronicles of Narnia are one of the most memorable pieces of children's literature. However, they have been criticised due to the apparent misogynist portrayal of female characters. Ecofeminism recognises that the oppression suffered from both women and nature are a result of the male domination of society, and this article presents how Lucy Pevensie is an ecofeminist heroine as she is able to connect with nature and use her "feminine" traits in her favour.

KEYWORDS: *Chronicles of Narnia*, ecofeminism, ecopedagogy, children's literature

¹ Macarena Vargas Peiret has a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature and Linguistics from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Her main interests lie within ecocriticism, animal studies, trauma theory and gender studies. She hopes to continue her studies in gender and representation, as she understands the need to challenge the current perspectives about gender in society.

Children's literature offers the opportunity to teach children about the world and open their imagination. For that reason, it is crucial to understand the underlying messages that those stories offer as they will shape the minds of young readers. Children look for characters that they can relate to, as it gives them a sense of closeness with the story; however, most of the time, as Roberta Seelinger Trites explains, children's books are populated with one type of protagonist: a white boy. This created a difference in the way girls could relate to the stories, and this departure was even bigger with children from different races (1). Feminist theory has created awareness of the need of having more diverse characters in stories written for children, and it has also offered a tool to analyse stories that were not written with feminist ideals in mind. For that reason, Trites claims that it is necessary to do a re-reading of well-known and loved books to look for new interpretations that differ from canonical ones, in order to reclaim those texts and present them to the new generations under the light of feminism (2).

Another influence in the analysis of children's literature is ecocriticism, as books that have children as protagonists tend to have nature as another character. Children travel through magical worlds, speak with animals, wander in forests or look for mythical creatures; children's stories have a deeper connection with nature than "adult" fiction has. For that reason, it is important to analyse the portrayal of nature in children's literature as it is a reflection of our treatment of the natural world in real life, which turns out to be an important matter in the light of the environmental crisis we are living in.

The Chronicles of Narnia is a series of books by C. S. Lewis that explores the adventures of children in the magical land of Narnia. The stories started in 1960 with the publication of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, a book that presents the Pevensie siblings for the first time. The adventures of these children continue in the books, and new characters are presented throughout the seven books that comprise the saga. However, there has been strong critique against C. S. Lewis,

and his representation of women. For example, Neil Ribe states that “[a] major part of a woman’s role is, for Lewis, the nurturing of children and the preservation of the values of the home against the often amoral world outside” (4), and particularly to *The Chronicles of Narnia* mostly because of Susan’s unfortunate fate at the end of the story. For that reason, an ecofeminist reading of *The Chronicles of Narnia* is significant since it will offer a different and novel perspective of the female characters in Narnia, as well as giving an argument against the criticism towards Lewis.

This paper will focus on Lucy Pevensie and how she can be understood as the ecofeminist protagonist of this story in spite of who she is; the smallest girl of the story. This aspect of her is not presented as a detriment but as the key to saving Narnia, since she has agency while having a sense of community with all sentient beings and nature. Furthermore, she proves to be heroic enough to align herself with nature in order to defeat the forces that are oppressing Narnia.

Ecofeminism is based on the premise that the environmental problem is a feminist issue. This discourse is a step forward from feminist discourse as it tries to identify the mechanisms that exploit both women and the environment, focusing on how the dominant model has oppressed them both while trying to challenge patriarchy. Alice Curry in *Environmental Crisis in Young Adult Fiction: A Poetics of Earth* explains that since its conception, this discipline has been a practical movement as well as a space to generate theoretical thinking, and for that reason, ecofeminism is present in theory and everyday actions (2). There are two primary positions in the ecofeminist movement. The first one is called “affinity” or “cultural” ecofeminism. This wave is based on radical feminism and focuses on a physiological connection between women and nature, arguing that there is such a connection because of the fact that women are able to give birth, menstruate and nurse, comparable to nature’s ability to sustain life. Therefore, women are imagined as having a propensity towards care, characteristics that men would not possess. Nowadays, this wave perpetuates cultural stereotypes regarding women as biologically inferior to men, as the characteristics mentioned before

are less valued than the ones that men, according to this line of thought, biologically possess. Hence male-domination would be a biological phenomenon, rather than a cultural one as it is considered in the second wave. The second wave, called “socialist,” “social” or “material” ecofeminism, acknowledges that there is no intrinsic connection between women and nature, rather social ecofeminists argue for a “material connection in the treatment of women and nature under current socio-political regimes” (Curry 3). Thus, under this perspective, patriarchy is a social, historical and material response to a specific context, as in the case of capitalist societies that focus on production and profit, relegating women and nature to a means of exploitation. It is social because patriarchy does not answer to a biological factor but to a common agreement in society; it is historical as this dominant model has been perpetuated throughout history by the dominant classes, and it is material because it has actual consequences in the lives of both women and men.

Moreover, the parameters that ecofeminism considers in its analysis have been extended beyond what Karen Warren calls the “logic of domination” (129). This logic of domination has three stages according to Warren. The first one is alienation: “the belief in a separate self-identity, individualism, autonomy,” as the individual starts seeing what makes them different from others, rather than what connects them. The second one is a hierarchy: “elevating the self-based on its unique characteristic,” pointing that the difference that the individual has makes them more important than others. Finally, domination: “justifying the subordination of others based on their inferiority and lack of the Self’s unique characteristic,” the assumption that the special characteristic an individual possesses allows them to be superior to others and dominate them (Gaard 12). This logic of domination allows us to see the steps in which any kind of “-ism,” (such as racism, sexism, speciesism, heterosexism, etc.) has been established by society. It turns out to have great importance while analysing Lucy Pevensie since she defies the three stages without changing who she is.

Ecofeminism has not gone without polemics regarding the risk of essentialising women and nature, as the “affinity” wave tried to portray, as it summons up images of women as “earthy mothers, as passive, reproductive animals” (Plumwood 20). However, Val Plumwood argues in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* that it is important to understand that these images are a product of the dominant logic that has understood the so-called “feminine” attitudes and values as a weaker manifestation of humanity. From her perspective, masculine power is still perpetuated as it denigrates women and nature, but what is important to understand is that within ecofeminism women “consciously position themselves with nature” (Plumwood 21) in order to make a claim for equality. This choice is not an acceptance of the identity imposed by patriarchy, but a response that challenges the binary. Women are part of both culture and nature, as well as are men. While standing with nature, women take a stance of recreating the concept of the human, claiming integration and recognition for everyone (Plumwood 39). The capacity women have to give birth is not seen as a disadvantage in ecofeminist discourse, but rather as an opportunity to become agents of life and change, creating a space where women have the choice to decide for themselves in every aspect of their lives.

These ideas proposed by Plumwood shed light on an eco-feminist reading of children’s literature. Roberta Seelinger Trites, in *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels*, explains that a feminist children’s story is the one in which the characters are “empowered regardless of their gender” (4). In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lucy Pevensie is not limited by her gender; even though she acknowledges the limitations imposed on her and others, those do not stop her from fighting against oppressive forces. She does not silence herself nor does she become submissive. Feminist characters are always aware of the restraints that are put on them, while recognising the power that they hold in their agency, as in the case of Lucy, who consciously fights against stereotypes.

In *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler defines gender as “an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (179). Therefore, gender is not static; it is not a set of traits that must be possessed or a set of roles that must be fulfilled; it changes according to the person who is performing it, and it has nothing to do with being “male” or “female,” but rather with expressing one’s own gender. Butler explains that “[g]enders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived” (180), and for that reason the conception of gender that patriarchal society has imposed is a sum of different expectations put on both women and men: women are seen as emotional and men as rational, as explained before.

In the same way, the construction of “the child” also imposes expectations for how a boy or a girl should be. Paraphrasing Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, one is not born a “child” but becomes one. There are a set of essentialist values imposed upon children, following the expectations of adults. Moreover, these values are even further framed when talking about girls, because the assumptions of how girls must act are more restrictive than the ones regarding boys. Girls have to fulfill “roles,” the one of the child and the one of the woman, leaving less space for self-discovery. For these restrictive reasons, Curry puts “the child” as a third category of analysis along with women and nature (6). Moreover, the child is placed in a sphere in opposition to the (white male) adult, while keeping the binaries that have “constrained critical thought in relation to issues of gender and ethnicity” (Jenks 3). This construction of the child has been dominated by patriarchy with the same force it has undermined nature and women, and therefore, as Curry states, a thorough ecofeminist analysis of children’s literature will occur only when these three categories have been analysed.

As explained before, in the same manner as women, children are under the ontological-representation paradox that ecofeminism acknowledges since they both share an “ambivalent space”

between their different constructions (Curry 9). Greta Gaard presents “ecopedagogy” as a step forward from ecofeminism. While ecofeminist literary critique criticises different forms of oppression, ecopedagogy shows a path to challenging them. The latter could not have been possible without the work developed by the former, and for that reason, it is possible to come across the term ecofeminist pedagogy. Ecopedagogy seems to be a useful tool for analysing the children in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and in particular Lucy, as ecopedagogy looks for specific aspects regarding the agency children have in the stories in order to fight the dominant model: as a girl and a child, Lucy challenges oppressive structures. Gaard makes an important contribution proposing three questions that must be considered while analysing a children’s book from an environmentalist perspective. These questions will guide the analysis of Lucy in *The Chronicles of Narnia* as they will show how she subverts the logic of domination.

Considering Lucy as an ecofeminist/ecopedagogical heroine might seem unlikely when taking into account the well-known Christian discourse behind *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the critical judgement against C. S. Lewis’s portrayal of women². Nonetheless, Lucy Pevensie embodies the characteristics that (eco)feminism and ecopedagogy aim for. She is a small girl, but that does not stop her from being her own character. Following Trites’s exploration of what constitutes a feminist children’s character, Lucy is empowered regardless of her gender. Even more, connecting Lucy’s character with Curry’s representation of ecofeminism in children’s stories, she is empowered through nature and through her girlhood, as she aligns herself with nature symbolically and literally.

² Barkman, Adam. “‘All is Righteousness and There is No Equality’: C. S. Lewis on Gender and Justice.” *Christian Scholar’s Review*, vol. 36, no.4, 2007, pp. 415-36, Bartels, Gretchen. “Of Men and Mice: C. S. Lewis on Male-Female Interactions.” *Literature & Theology*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2008, pp. 324-38 and Burrus, Alicia D. “Gender Differentiation and Gender Hierarchy in C. S. Lewis.” *University Honors Program Theses*, 2014, Paper 14.

In the first two pages of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, two things can be perceived about Lucy: she is the youngest and she has a curious mind. She hears a sound and she is the first one to ask where it comes from (5). These two characteristics determine Lucy's nature not as a limitation, but rather as an invitation to explore what a young curious girl may achieve. Lucy Pevensie is the protagonist of the story; without her, there would be no *The Chronicles of Narnia*, given that she is the one who goes into the wardrobe first, alone and following her curiosity. It is important to note that there are three chapters in the book series that have her name as the title, in contrast with her siblings; Edmund's name is in the title of one chapter, the one that shows him betraying his family. Therefore, C. S. Lewis puts Lucy in a special position and considering that the book is dedicated to Lewis's goddaughter named Lucy, the idea appears to be reinforced. Thus, Lucy personifies any girl or boy who is open to adventure and fantasy. Importantly, a girl in the centre of the story echoes Curry's analysis of children as an Other just like nature and women are; Lucy becomes the embodiment of the three categories (child, woman, nature), since she positions herself with nature, despite the fact that this nature is part of a parallel fantasy world.

The relation that has been attributed to women and nature has much in common with the relationship attributed to children and nature, as this one is a repositioning of the "natural" child as Curry says. There is a "shared ontological purity" that has developed from Romanticism until today (7). The child has something that is missing in adulthood that connects them to a more natural state of "innocence, imagination, harmony, embodiment" (7). In order to analyse the figure of the child, three categories are proposed by Curry following three tenets of the new Social Study of Childhood³ that will be helpful to understand and examine Lucy Pevensie. The first category is the authentic

³ Ryan, Patrick J. "How New is the 'New' Social Study of Childhood? The Myth of a Paradigm Shift." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2008, pp. 553–76.

child; this child is natural⁴ and biological, meaning that it is a representation of children and their behaviour delimited by their biological characteristics, without giving them a positive or negative value. The second category is the political child that is cultural and historical. It analyses children as the result of a particular time in history in a particular place, taking into consideration their experiences. The last category refers to the conditioned child who embodies an ideology and who becomes a symbol in themselves of an idea that does not represent them, but it reflects adults. The current path followed in childhood studies focuses on the political child, as this category allows for “moral and social action” (8), creating a space for children to express themselves.

After Lucy’s first adventure in Narnia, she goes back to tell her siblings what had happened there and that a magical world was inside the wardrobe. She finds them only to realise that no time at all has gone by, even if it seemed she had spent hours in Narnia. Her siblings are sceptical at her narration and they dismiss it as a child’s game. Her face turns red and she tries to reply to the comments of her siblings to stop playing games but nothing comes out of her mouth and she starts crying. Lucy feels miserable for the next few days but decides to maintain her story because she knows everything she said is true. She is described as a “very truthful girl” (*Lion* 26) and she does not dare to change her story even if it would make amends with her siblings. She does not let others influence her opinions or decisions, and this shows her as an agent as she moves from the representation of the “authentic child” that has only one dimension, to the lines of the “agential political child capable of moral and social action” (Curry 8) and as she decides to stand up for what she knows and what she believes in; she does not silence herself nor does she allow others to silence her. Following Curry, this departs from the view of “the child” fulfilling an ambiguous position where they are constructed as potential adults and therefore lack the agency adults can have (8).

⁴ The term “natural” is controversial in ecocriticism. However, Curry uses it to refer to the innate characteristics a child can possess.

Lucy is seen crying plenty of times in the books, but that does not make her a weak character since her sensitivity is precisely what makes her an empowered girl. Her girl-like characteristics are curiosity, tenderness and intuition, which make her a complex character unlike the traditional portrayal of girls as the sidekicks of their male counterparts or as a boy-like girl, which would be a male protagonist in disguise. Her emotionality does not interfere negatively with her actions; rather, it enables her to have a unique and complex point of view of the situations she encounters.

Following Plumwood's line of thought, Lucy reclaims "feminine" values, since she works with them as if they were her own tools to destroy the proposed logic of domination. Different activities have been classified as "women's work," but the traits that are "valuable" to society are the ones linked with masculinity, as Plumwood explains. Men are perceived as rational while women are emotional; men are impartial and objective, while women are subjected to their feelings. This negation of the possibility of women to be rational or of men to be emotional is far from the conception of performative gender, where gender is unique to every person performing it, as Butler explains in *Gender Trouble*. In order to connect the polarised positions that put "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics in extremes, an ecofeminist ethics of care appears as a bridge. In this ethics of care, "feminine" characteristics are reclaimed by women, not because those are the only possible characteristics, but because characteristics such as tenderness and compassion, among others, have been undermined. Those characteristics have been seen as synonyms of weakness, but an ecofeminist ethic of care elevates them, empowering women who possess them. Moreover, this reclamation cannot occur within a gendered and sexualised hierarchy, as it will only perpetuate the current model that only relates caring with females; men can also be caring and forgiving, and such performance defies the patriarchal structure that has disconnected them from their emotions.

In the case of Lucy, her "feminine" traits, such as kindness and compassion, help her with her mission as a healer when she is given a diamond bottle with a special liquor to cure any physical

wound (*Lion* 109). This gift was carefully picked by Santa Claus, who could perceive her caring nature, and prompts her to be at the service of others; after the battle against the White Witch, she is the one who cures the injured (*Lion* 179).

In the light of ecopedagogy, Lucy answers positively the basic questions proposed by Gaard in order to see if the logic of domination is confronted by the characters. The first of these questions asks: “how does the text address the ontological question, ‘who am I?’ Is the human self-identity constructed in relation or in opposition to nature, animals, and diverse human cultures/identities? In other words, how does the narrative/text provide an antidote to the first step in the logic of domination?” (Gaard 15). In order to answer this question regarding alienation, it seems necessary to refer to Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas and their contribution to animal studies, because Lucy finds the Other in the animals that live in Narnia, and this echoes Derrida in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*; he states without doubt that the Other is the Animal. The Animal with a capital A. This figure of the Animal is a recollection of the different things that humans are not, and therefore it has always been put in opposition to humans, alienating one from the other. Lucy Pevensie’s self-identity is constructed in relation to nature, animals, and diverse human cultures. This allows her to defy the influence of alienation, enabling her to sympathise with others easily, no matter if they are human or nonhuman beings.

Her relationship with Mr. Tumnus is one example of how she does not put herself above others. Mr. Tumnus is the first being she meets in Narnia and their interaction starts with a polite greeting from her (11). After confirming that she is indeed a Daughter of Eve, he invites her to have tea (13). They walk arm in arm toward his house “as if they had known one another all their lives” (14). She never fears the Faun or is surprised by the presence of a creature that does not exist in her world; moreover, she is open to becoming acquainted with him and finds that his house is nicer than any place she had been before (14). She realises that she has to go after he starts playing a little flute,

but he stops her and starts crying. This act worries Lucy and she starts questioning him about what is wrong, only to be answered with more tears. She asks one more time what is the matter but this time with a decided tone, and afterwards he tells her that he is a bad Faun and explains his plan to kidnap a girl and take her to the White Witch. She implores the Faun not to take her to the Witch and he promises her that he will not because he did not know before he met her how humans were, implying that now that they have seen each other face to face and established a bond he cannot betray her. Mr. Tumnus accompanies her to the lamp post where they met hours ago and asks for her forgiveness, doubtful that he will get it. She forgives him immediately and even wishes that he gets in no trouble and goes back to the wardrobe (22). She even refers to Mr. Tumnus as a “nice Faun” while talking about him to her siblings (57). The above summary of the chapter called “What Lucy Found There” shows Lucy being able to sympathise with another being, a nonhuman being who she takes as a friend, and even more important, she is able to empathise with him and his distress.

When Mr. Tumnus starts crying, Lucy worries deeply for him and accepts his apology as a truthful one because she is able to see the face of this Other. In *Infinity and Totality*, Levinas presents his impression of the Other, and even if his discourse does not refer to animals, Atterton states that Levinas and his theory can be used to analyse our relationship with animals, even if it was not part of the theory of its author (Atterton 2). Following Atterton’s analysis of *Infinity and Totality*, the proposal of Levinas regarding the Other refers to his “infinite alterity.” According to Levinas, different levels of alterity, meaning otherness, do not exist, and for that reason humans and animals alike can be under this category; one being cannot be more Other than another, as otherwise alterity would be nullified, and for that reason animals and humans present the same degree of otherness when they are put in that position (Levinas 194). Levinas explains that the Other has a subjective or “inner life” that remains “closed” as a person cannot directly share or live another’s experiences. It is

impossible to see oneself from the outside, without this subjectivity affecting one's own judgement. In the same way, seeing the Other from their own subjectivity can only be possible through what Levinas calls "the face." The face is what allows us to identify the Other, as it reveals that the Other also has a subjectivity and experience, but it does not allow another to enter this subjectivity or actually share these experiences (212).

The face is an indispensable element in our relating to others as the Other; it allows for a relation while maintaining the separation between each other. Levinas uses the word "speech" to refer to how the face expresses itself. However, it is not only delimited to spoken language, as he also refers to non-linguistic signs: "[t]he face, preeminently expression, formulates the first word: the signifier arising at the thrust of his sign, as eyes that look at you" (178). Those eyes that look back can also be the ones of an animal; eyes that communicate with the effectivity of spoken language. As Derrida explains with the gaze of the animal, they are able to look back at us and it is then when we may realise that they have their own subjectivity and their own world.

It is possible to recognise how Lucy acknowledges that there is more than what she can perceive from her point of view and does not judge Mr. Tumnus for subjugating himself to the Witch, and for that reason, their relationship is a complex one. She is able to see through him, sympathising with his situation, and not limiting her judgement with what only concerns her wellbeing. What she finds in Narnia, as the chapter's title suggests, is the face of the Faun, a face that makes itself explicit through speech and, more important, through actions. The Faun's decision to spare her life and Lucy's forgiveness allows them to connect deeply, even if they have nothing in common but their mutual esteem. The Faun is half goat and half man, and therefore, like Lucy, he is also in an ambivalent space, as Curry presented. He is nor one nor the other; he is half human. Being a mythical creature pushes him further toward the position of the Other, since there is not a degree of otherness, as Levinas explains. Even if he is half human, he is not half Other; and his relationship

with Lucy allows him to gain agency in the same way she finds her own. He decides for himself to spare her life in the same way she decides to forgive him, putting their relationship in symmetry, as there is reciprocity in their relationship.

This ability to connect with others in spite of the differences or similarities is also seen in *Prince Caspian*. After listening to Trumpkin's narration of the problems Narnia faces, so many years since their adventures in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the children decide to meet Caspian at the Stone Table. They go to sleep but Lucy is restless and decides to wander around (*Caspian* 116). She finds herself walking into the forest and is pleased with the sounds and smells that follow her. In spite of that, she longs for the Narnia she saw as a queen: "'Oh Trees, Trees, Trees,' said Lucy (though she had not been intending to speak at all). 'Oh Trees, wake, wake, wake. Don't you remember it? Don't you remember *me*? Dryads and Hamadryads, come out, come to me'" (117-8, emphasis in original). She has the need to speak to the trees even if they are not able to reply to her because they have been asleep for so long; she knows what those trees are able to do and it hurts her to see them like that, like the ghosts of what they were. She encourages them to remember their past lives, to wake up, to remember her because, in the same way that she was able to see through the faces of the creatures of the forest, they were able to see her face. As the story progresses, it is possible to see that her pledge was not in vain: the trees slowly start to wake up until they join the celebrations in honour of the victory against the oppressor, King Miraz (138, 196).

Following the order proposed by Gaard, the second question interrogates if the novel tries to defy the hierarchy that has led to ecological problems: "how does the narrative define the ecojustice problem? Does the narrative conclusion offer an appropriate strategy for responding to the problem posed in the story, rejecting hierarchy in favour of community and participatory democracy? Are children left alone to solve ecojustice problems originally created by the adults?" (16).

Lucy's relationship with Aslan defies the second step of the logic of domination, hierarchy, since Aslan is the most prominent figure in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. However, their relationship does not put Lucy under his power. Moreover, there is a reciprocity in their relationship that can be understood as part of the "cosmic holism" proposed by Gary Steiner in order to have a "cosmic justice". Cosmic holism relies on accepting "the fundamental *sameness* of all sentient beings" (Steiner 198). This sameness is based on the fact that life and death are in essence the same for animals and humans. However, what is fundamental in order to achieve "...a theory of justice that is not simply about *social* [human] life but encompasses all of *sentient* life" (Steiner 194) is to realise that asymmetrical duties are accepted: for a being to have rights it is not necessary that they can respect those rights back or have duties. Moreover, because not all sentient beings can reciprocate this justice, as there is a difference in the way the world is grasped, it is even more necessary that we, humans, respect all sentient beings and their rights as living creatures (Steiner 177). Asymmetry is not seen as a means to create a hierarchy, but as an opportunity to create a common ground for everyone, especially animals.

Lucy is limited by death and destruction, which was brought by the White Witch to Narnia, in the same way that Aslan and all Narnians are; there is no difference in how far the Witch can go. And this is exposed as the Witch kills Aslan. However, the big Lion, as Aslan is called, offers himself in sacrifice in order to release Edmund from the power of the Witch because he became a traitor, and every traitor belongs to the Witch. Aslan takes his place, showing humility and selflessness, and he is killed in a macabre ceremony that involves cutting off his mane, as a representation of taking his power away. All this is witnessed by Lucy and her sister, Susan. This holds special significance as the girls, and not the boys, are the ones who accompany the Lion before his death and are close enough to see him be brought back to life by a magic greater than the one the Witch knows about, creating a closeness that will only grow deeper (*Lion* 163). The girls, and especially Lucy, are now in

a different position than the boys since they are the ones who saw Aslan in a moment of vulnerability and are able to empathise with his suffering. Thus, even if Aslan broke the limitation of death, he is not in a superior position as he allowed himself to be seen helpless.

Lucy and Susan ride on Aslan, after he is resurrected and has gotten all his strength back (163). This scene, one of the most memorable of all the books, shows the unity between Aslan, Lucy and Susan, and it holds great symbolism since it shows how the girls who cried and suffered with the Lion are now allowed to ride on him. Aslan positions himself as a servant whilst they travel to the castle where the White Witch lives. Thus, they are all ready to defeat her; because no matter what strengths they have as little girls, they are equally important to save Narnia as the talking animals, the mythical creatures and Aslan himself. Everyone is valued in Narnia for what they are, and the girls find themselves not having to betray who they are in order to battle for Narnia. In fact, Susan will be remembered as Queen Susan “the Gentle,” a title that reflects her caring attitude towards others, while Lucy will be known as “the Valiant,” as a reflection of her bravery, a virtue often attributed to males, in spite of the fact that Lucy is a small girl (*Lion* 184).

Aslan’s relationship with Lucy will only be strengthened as they come back to Narnia in the following books. In *Prince Caspian*, Lucy is the first one to see Aslan after they return to Narnia, while for the others he is invisible (125). She is able to see him because her mind and senses are open to the cues that nature is giving her about the return of Aslan. She listens to the trees and the air and that leads her to the great Lion. When they meet, Lucy asks Aslan if he has gotten bigger, but the Lion replies that he has grown only because she has done so too. This exchange shows the evenness of their relationship, as one grows with the other there is no opportunity for Aslan or Lucy to be superior, but rather they grow together, and as Aslan explains, he will keep growing as long as she grows (141). Aslan later refers to her as a “little one” with tenderness and gives her the mission to bring her siblings to him to reach Caspian (143). Yet, Aslan calls her “little one” not in a

condescending manner, since their relationship is based on affection and they trust each other deeply. It is precisely this quality, her being the youngest, what makes their connection so unique. She could be presented as inferior to her siblings, but on the contrary, she is the one who is able to truly trust the Lion because she is innocent and does not think of what could go wrong, and he trusts her as well for the goodness of her heart. All the characteristics that Lucy possesses can relate her to the Romantic innocent child. Nonetheless, she steps aside that convention as she is in control of herself and her actions, and that is something that Aslan values in her.

Lucy is a mediator for cosmic justice; she recognises the sameness of all beings and looks forward to protecting their rights. As explained before, her relationship with Mr. Tumnus is a complex one; however, it can also be argued that it is a simple relationship between two beings that respect and care for each other. Lucy is the one who argues to go back for him after all her siblings go to Narnia to find that the Faun has been captured after letting her go. Susan wants to go back after finding that this world is not as safe as her little sister made it look, but Lucy persuades her and her brothers to try to rescue the Faun as it was her fault that “the poor Faun has got into this trouble” (*Lion* 59). Her use of the adjective “poor” is not in an arrogant and patronising manner, but only because she truly feels compassion for this creature and gratitude that he spared her life; her life is in no way more important than the Faun’s. Her principal motivation and what engages her in the fight against the White Witch is saving Mr. Tumnus. Everything that will come afterward is a product of her appreciation for the Faun’s life and her gratitude toward him, and for that reason it is not strange that the first thing she does when she, Aslan and Susan arrive at the Witch’s castle is to look for him so the Lion can wake him up from his stone-like state (171). Lucy is able to defy the second step of the logic of domination as she is an intermediary for cosmic justice; her relationship with Aslan and Mr. Tumnus proves her ability to connect with two different beings that in any other context are not at the same level, but that for Lucy are both as important as her own life.

In her last question, Gaard asks about agency in the following way: “what kind of agency does the text recognize in nature? Is nature an object to be saved by the heroic child actor? Is nature a damsel in distress, an all-sacrificing mother, or does nature have its own subjectivity and agency?” (18). This agency can be seen in the power that animals have through the story, but also in the quest to free the land from the oppressors, as it is seen in *Prince Caspian. The Chronicles of Narnia* present an anti-colonialist view, as Nicole DuPlessis explains while referring to C. S. Lewis’s “appreciation of the beauty of nature and his concern for the transience of nature” (115), since Lewis warns against the ecological problems that colonialism brings through the expropriation and exploitation of the land as well as the erasure of native peoples and their voices.

Analysing Lucy’s character under the light of Gaard’s last question is not as simple as the analysis of the other two because this question refers to the agency given to nature in order to break with the dominant model of exploitation and does not refer directly to human participants. However, it can be said that Lucy does not act as an interference to nature’s agency in any of its forms in the story, even when it is oppressed by the deadly and cold force of the White Witch or the colonial exploitation of the Telmarines and their king.

Lucy does not act as the knower of all the answers or the hero the Narnians need; a hero that can fight directly against the Witch or King Miraz, but as a girl who is open to hearing and learning what animals, other creatures, and nature itself have to tell her. After finding that Mr. Tumnus has been taken away by the White Witch, the Pevensies do not know what to do next until Lucy points out that a robin seems to be trying to tell them something. Lucy, not knowing if birds speak in Narnia, asks the robin if he knows something about the Faun and her question starts with “please” (*Lion* 60). She asks for help with kindness to the bird, knowing that maybe she will get no answer, but this does not stop her from treating the bird with the same respect with which she has treated every other living being before. The robin is the one who leads them to Mr. Beaver who

takes them to his house after showing the handkerchief Lucy gave the Faun as proof of his reliability. While in the house the Beaver shares with his wife, Lucy listens attentively to what they have to say, since they are the ones who really understand the situation they are facing under the dominion of the White Witch, and only interrupts to ask for details but not to add her input about what they should or should not do. She trusts the beavers and their plan to meet Aslan, even if at that moment she has not met the Lion yet. These examples show how Lucy listens and follows the advice of animals, recognising in them a knowledge that she does not possess, and does not try to interfere with their plans; she puts herself at the service of Narnia and its inhabitants. Another example of this is the scene that was analysed previously in which Lucy summons the trees to wake up. She speaks softly to the creatures that live in the trees, reminding them of better times when they were agents of change in Narnia.

Mice are one of the animals that are shown with their own subjectivity and agency in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, exploring a different path from the one of the beavers that are presented from the beginning as talking animals. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* mice are only present after Aslan's death (159). Susan tries to fright them away as she thinks they are trying to hurt the lifeless body of the Lion, but Lucy realises they are trying to free him and she thinks them silly for not realising he is dead. Nevertheless, Lucy will learn later that they knew something she did not and from that moment she will learn to trust the mice's instincts.

In *Prince Caspian*, cherishing that lesson, Lucy meets Reepicheep, a talking mouse. It will be explained later that only after being unchained by the mice, Aslan gave them a voice, and it could be argued against this situation as they have to deserve to be talking animals as if it was not a right animals have in Narnia; Aslan is the one who makes the decision and can be interpreted as a hierarchical order. However, this essay deals with Lucy's relationship toward others, and Aslan himself can be analysed in another occasion. What is important to point out from this scene is that

Lucy learns about the bravery of mice and is able to respect Reepicheep with the love she shows for everyone else, as is shown in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* when she meets the mouse again and holds back her urge to hug him because she knows how well-mannered and honourable he is (15). Only after gaining his friendship and before he crosses the waterfall that would take him to Aslan's County, Lucy fulfils her dream of hugging him (244). Lucy, therefore, is able to learn and care about animals no matter their size or shape. She is able to listen to and learn from them and recognises their agency as she gives them space to act according to their rules and thoughts, proving that her eco-heroism is based on her acceptance and respect toward nature as a whole.

Children's literature has a profound impact on children, as it shows them how the world works, even when the story is set in a fantastic world because, in a way, literature is a reflection of the dynamics of the world in a particular time in history. Feminist theory has presented new tools to understand the power relationships presented in children's literature, while the ecocritical field has offered new perspectives on the treatment of nature in fictional texts. Ecofeminism arises as a field taking into consideration the different powers that oppress both women and nature, as well as extending its parameters to any "–ism," as sexism, racism, speciesism, classism, etc. that are creating an imbalance in social relations.

Children's literature presents nature as another character among humans, and therefore, ecofeminism is an appropriate tool to understand children's books that are published today as well as traditional ones, like *The Chronicles of Narnia*, since nature and animals are characters in their own right. As the protagonist of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Lucy Pevensie distinguishes herself from her siblings because she is the one who fosters the connection with this strange land. She is an ecofeminist hero given that she is empowered through nature, and her "feminine" traits are the ones that give her agency and put her under the service of nature and all sentient beings. She defies the logic of domination as she is constructed side by side with nature, and not in opposition to it. What

is important is that Lucy does not change her essence because others want her to. She stands for what she believes in, she keeps being curious, and tender, and she understands that her agency relies on those qualities. She does not trouble herself thinking that these “feminine” characteristics are weak or in need of replacement.

Lucy’s relationship with the Faun shows her ability to see through him and understand his otherness, allowing him to shape her. Moreover, she is able to see the land of Narnia and its living beings with the same respect she has for everyone else. She begs the trees to wake up because she knows how powerful they are. She is able to feel compassion for the oppressed.

Her actions position her inside a community, shaking the hierarchy that has been presented by the figures of the Witch and the Telmarines. She positions herself within nature, at its same level. Aslan, who is the figure that everyone respects or fears, is presented as an equal to Lucy, though she looks up at him as a wise figure and is able to follow him and grow with him. Lucy Pevensie is a small girl who understands what it means to be overlooked; for that reason, when she encounters other animals she is able to listen and learn from them. She realises that in Narnia they are the ones with knowledge as the true inhabitants of the land, and she puts herself in a position of service to them. Lucy Pevensie is an ecofeminist hero because even if this idea might not have been in C. S. Lewis’s mind when he wrote *Narnia*, the protagonist’s decisions and actions plea for a connection with nature and all sentient beings, as she understands that the oppression she faces is the same as the one plaguing the world she found in the wardrobe.

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