

ENG 260

Spring 2021

Dr. Angela Fulk

Class notes—Week of Mar. 22, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Chapters 1-9

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is part of a seven-book fantasy series called *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Though it is listed as Book Two of the series in our edition, this was the first novel of the series to be written and published, and I recommend it as the best starting point for a new reader of the series. (If anyone wants to know in what order I'd recommend reading them all, I can tell you.)

The book was written in 1950 in England by C.S. Lewis, a professor of medieval literature and amateur Christian theologian. The second sentence of the first chapter tells us that the four children who are our principal characters have been “sent away from London during the war because of the air-raids.” This is a reference to WW II, during which there was a mass evacuation of children from London into homes in the British countryside because the Luftwaffe (the Nazi air force) was conducting regular bombing raids over London. (The most recent movie version of the novel stresses this backdrop of war much more than the book itself does.) Living away from home is not a new experience for the three older children, however, who have all spent at least one year in boarding school (the “school” they occasionally reference, to which Lucy will also go next year).

In Chapter Four, the White Witch feeds Edmund his favorite food, Turkish Delight. This is a type of candy with a gel consistency. It's usually fruit-flavored and often contains nuts. It was originally made in Turkey. Given wartime rationing, these children were probably not eating much candy in their own world.

Mr. Beaver explains in Chapter Eight that the Witch (whose name is Jadis) is not actually human. She springs from a union between a giant and, in Mr. Beaver's words, “your father Adam's first wife, her they called Lilith” (81). Adam and Eve are the first man and woman created, according to the Judeo-Christian Bible, and they are therefore seen as the ancestors of all humankind. (Their story can be found in the opening chapters of the Biblical book of Genesis.) Lilith does not appear in Genesis, but there is an old tradition in Jewish folklore that she was some sort of demon who was Adam's original wife until she refused to obey him and ran away. In this narrative, Eve was created to be a more submissive partner for Adam.