

THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE DISCOURSE: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION
OF GENDER AND RACE IN *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA* FILMS

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THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE DISCOURSE: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

My interest in *Narnia* began decades ago when I watched an animated adaptation of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, a fantasy adventure about four children who travel to another world in order to fulfill a prophecy to defeat the White Witch with the help of Aslan, the lion king of Narnia. I grew up in a family that took C.S. Lewis to be the foremost Christian writer, apologist, and theologian, so my childish desire to watch *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* over and over again was encouraged. My parents told me it was a story really about Jesus.

As my interest grew, I became personally attached to some of the characters, especially Susan, because, like me, she was the oldest sister in the family. Her brother was the High King, but she was not the High Queen. Also, she was not allowed to be in the main battles. I thought this was unfortunate because she could be just as good as the boys, maybe better. Wasn't I? They were all kids, barely older than one another, so what makes her so much less able? But these questions were at the back of my mind.

A few years later, I discovered there was a whole series of books. As I read through the books, I was terribly disappointed when I read my favorite character was too old to go back to Narnia, but I was consoled to know that she was growing up well. Then in the last book, when everyone was going to Narnia Heaven, the imagined afterlife parallel to Christian Heaven, I found that Susan was not going to be joining the rest of the Pevensies because she was no longer a friend of Narnia. Why?

The book said it was because she was too concerned about her appearance and wore too much makeup. She was being too girly. Aslan did not approve. A child's deduction may be simple, but that does not diminish the potential significance of the perceived discourse:

Aslan doesn't like girls as much as boys.

If Aslan is Jesus, then Jesus likes men better than women.

Jesus might not like girls.

And thus I discovered that even a seemingly innocent text is not always as wholesome and family friendly as it promises to be.

Film Overviews

The setting of the 2005 film begins in England during the Blitz of World War II. In the film, we see the Pevensie children, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy, hiding in a bomb shelter and subsequently leaving for the safety of the English countryside. Upon arriving to an English country manor house, the youngest child, Lucy, discovers the dazzling alternate universe of Narnia, to which she eventually leads her three older siblings. The children enter Narnia to find the world controlled by the White Witch, Jadis, but they soon discover that they shall be the saviors of Narnia with the direction of the good, but untamed lion, Aslan. They are escorted through the winter forest by the Beavers while chased by wolves. Meanwhile Edmund sneaks away. The three others find Aslan with his growing army. Though the younger of the brothers, Edmund, is deceived by the witch, Aslan redeems him through his own sacrificial death. All children embark in a final battle to conquer the evil of the witch and end the hundred-year winter. As spring and life blossom in Narnia, Aslan and the Pevensies vanquish death and the armies of evil, and then they establish a new Golden Age in the land of Narnia.

Like *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, *Prince Caspian* is also a fantasy adventure and a family film. The movie begins in the Telmarine castle (the Telmarines are the new ruling humans of Narnia) with the birth of a baby and the flight of Prince Caspian, because his Uncle Miraz wants to kill him to ensure the royal succession of his newborn son. Some of the creatures of Narnia who are thought to be extinct turn up with Susan's magic horn to help Caspian, and Caspian summons the Golden Age kings and queens, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy Pevensie. After Susan turns down a fellow schoolboy, these four main characters from the first film who are still in the midst of World War II, but are preparing to go back to school, are transported to Caspian's Narnia, 1300 Narnian years after the action of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* (2005). The Pevensies learn to navigate the changed landscape despite a lack of direction from Aslan, the Christ-like lion king of the Narnian world. Upon meeting up with the Narnian rebellion force, they must immediately prepare for battle despite internal conflict between Caspian and Peter, the new King and the old High King.

An internal power struggle ensues along with the Narnia/Telmarine struggle as the Narnians raid the Telmarine castle fortress. This raid ultimately fails, and the Narnian alliance almost turns to black magic with a reincarnation of the White Witch, Jadis, from the first movie. Having won this internal moral crisis, though, the protagonist men decide upon single combat between Peter and Miraz as a course of action to delay outright battle. Meanwhile, Susan and Lucy delve into the woods in search of the still absent Aslan, but they are being followed. Caspian saves Susan from a band of Telmarines and brings her back to lead the archers in battle while Lucy goes on to discover Aslan who finally awakens the spirits of the earth, the tree and water nymphs and gods, to bring the

Narnians to victory just at the moment single combat has failed and outright battle is upon the Narnians.

Narnia emerges victorious and Caspian becomes reigning king with Aslan's blessing. The dissenting Telmarines are offered a new life out of Narnia and back on an island in our world. The Pevensies return as well, but Peter and Susan are told they will not return to Narnia. Before they go, Susan shares a passionate kiss with Caspian.

The Christian Connection

In an interview combined with a movie review, the director, Andrew Adamson, said of his film: "To me it [religion] was something that was never an issue. I wanted to do a movie that was true to the book... Basically, I like to say, 'Whatever you got from the book, I do think you'll get from the movie'" (Adamson). But that did not stop audiences and critics alike from seeing the religious allegory. This review in general was focusing on the way religious allegory is or is not seen in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005). One of the more supportive, "pro-Narnia" reviewers, Chris Monroe who writes for the *Christian Spotlight on Entertainment*, points out that "C.S. Lewis himself said that his book was not a "Christian book" and that he never intended the *Narnia* stories to be allegorical, but even so many Christian reporters maintained, with almost a wink-wink, 'sure, he didn't mean it... (but he did)' attitude (Monroe). C.S. Lewis never intended to write a second Gospel, and audiences should not regard the *Narnia* stories as such, but they do, and so the dominant discourses are more reinforced by association with religious devotion than they would perhaps be in a secular film.

Nevertheless, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* continued to be reviewed as a good moral choice for families. Monroe reviews the film online as "A wonderful adventure. An illustrious biblical metaphor. A beautiful Christmas story. A captivating

fantasy. From the very heart of renowned Christian apologetic C.S. Lewis,” clearly indicating to his (Christian) audience that this movie is on their side (Monroe). Even secular Hollywood did not contradict the Gospel rhetoric. The marketing for the movie did not contradict the praise from the Christian community, and indeed it was a huge financial incentive to take advantage of the willingness many Christians had to spend their money on multiple viewings of *Narnia* rather than other more secular movies. According to *Christian Spotlight on Entertainment*, “there are changes, but ardent fans that have cherished these books for decades can rest assured knowing that these filmmakers remain faithful to its origins. The characters, storyline, themes and creativity all remain intact from the original charming children’s story” (Monroe). But this certainly belies definite changes when it comes to some roles, including the main two female protagonists.

Statement of the Problem: Sexism and Racism

As with just about any strongly positioned film, *Narnia* has some ardent critics, even naysayers. Alison Lurie, who writes for the *New York Review of Books*, is not a fan of the conservative religious agenda she too perceives in the movies. Lurie points out:

Disney publicists have shrewdly mounted two advertising campaigns for the film, one secular and one sacred. They did not want to scare away other paying customers, but they knew that the Christian overtones of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* could make the film tremendously popular with the religious establishment, especially in America. (Lurie)

Lurie feels that *Narnia* and its message can be rather anti-feminist. Lurie would prefer a more neutral story that recognizes the subversive potential of such a widely accepted film. Alonso Duralde points out that “the production company is owned by a Christian

conservative billionaire with an agenda to make “moral” movies... in which that metaphor is ladled on all too directly” and goes on to point out his issue with “the crush-the-swarthy-infidels message” (Duralde). He acknowledges that the movie is very likely to appeal to audiences, but what he does not directly connect is the troubling fact that audiences are embracing much of the racism as a part of their moral beliefs, and this may even extend to Christian audiences embracing discrimination as part of their religious beliefs.

Precisely because of this film’s connection to Christianity and morality, I wanted to uncover undertones that unconsciously reflect and reinforce dangerous power structures with undertones of sexism or racism. Although this thesis is not meant to indict the religion, the parallels between *Narnia* and religion creates a stark example of how morality is produced, reproduced, and unquestioned by trusting audiences.

Furthermore, as Susan Bromley and Pamela Hewitt explain, “film reflects societal standards” (19). The reception of *Narnia* among U.S. audiences was positive. The films grossed approximately 433 million dollars in the U.S. and Canada. This popularity may be due to its special effects and beautiful scenery, but at least in part the success is due to the encouragement surrounding the films in certain Christian communities. For example, Roger Moore of the *Orlando Sentinel* said, “Lewis’s Christian allegory fantasy [is] a worthy challenger to the far more popular *Harry Potter* pictures” (Moore). The marketing and reception both support the fact that this film was trusted as an innocent and even ethical film for audiences of all ages. Jeffery Overstreet of *Christianity Today* was most concerned with fidelity to Gospel parallels in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, and as such, represented “Lewis’s countless fans who worried about a faithful adaptation... the anxious faithful [who] can relax, as Adamson has done no serious injury to the

narrative's basic outline of sacrifice and redemption” (Overstreet). The “fans” are even called “devotees” at several points. He goes on to mention that one of the lessons for Susan to learn was “that logic and ‘too much thinking’ can prevent her from apprehending miracles” (Overstreet). This is a rather troubling position to take and frankly a rather sexist way of putting it. This view, however, represents the problematic acceptance of sexism by the audience. The critical analysis offered in this thesis reveals racism, as well.

The Method: Critical Discourse Analysis

In the field of rhetoric and composition, scholars are consistently striving for social justice, specifically in the writing classroom. As Huckin et al. explain, “rhetoric and composition has always been concerned with the power of spoken and written discourse” (109). The discourses in the *Narnia* films and the media in general are the same types of socially produced discourses that inform the students and teachers of composition. The culturally produced power of creating racial and gendered identities is something about which teachers and practitioners in rhetoric and composition must be aware.

Critical discourse analysis by design reveals sexist and racist underpinnings that are otherwise largely unobserved. As T.R. Muralikrishnan explains, dominant discourses can unconsciously persuade audiences because they work “to exercise power through the manufacture of consent or at least acquiescence towards it... one which makes the beliefs which one wants people to hold appear to be “common sense,” thus making it difficult for them to question that dominant ideology.” The goal of this thesis is to use critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyze the two most current adaptations of C.S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia* series.

Depictions of race and sexuality reflect the current issues facing most of today's media, especially in terms of perpetuating certain stereotypes for women, maintaining the White dominance in character representations, and characterizing bad and good characters through linguistic and ethnic difference. Critical discourse analysis brings to light underlying social issues in media and society. CDA offers a mode of analysis to examine a text ranging from the societal level to the verbal level.

Research Questions

The guiding questions for this thesis are

1. How can films represent both a culture and a subculture?
2. What religious significance is interpreted into the film?
3. What social injustices exist in the world and reception of these films?
4. Is religion used to justify racism or sexism?
5. How can recognizing discrimination lead to more equitable representations in the future?

These guiding questions concerning film, media studies, religious and secular culture, social power structures, and critical theory highlight points of interest within the chapters.

Thesis Outline

Chapter II explains the CDA methodology in depth. After reviewing the critical scholarship informing critical discourse analysis, the chapter will provide an overview and explanation of the major theorists and functions of CDA. Issues of discourse and ideology that inform this analysis will be discussed. Finally, elements of CDA will be defined and explained in the context of *Narnia*.

Chapters III and IV focuses respectively on the 2005 film, *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* and the 2008 *Prince Caspian*. These critical discourse analyses will

look at social contexts and then use CDA tools such as genre, omission, framing, agency, insinuation, and labels (as described by Huckin) in order to dissect the discourses and ideologies of the films as they relate to issues of race and gender.

Finally, conclusions are drawn about the relevance of this thesis to the field of rhetoric and composition. Because the field is invested in issues of social justice, this study informs the cultural ideologies that inform composition students and teachers.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL LENSES

The theoretical framework used for this research project is critical discourse analysis (CDA), a study focused on social discourses and the ideologies that inform them. CDA has its roots in another form of scholarship known as critical linguistics. Linguistic, sociological, political, and psychological interests inform this methodology. The major CDA theorists include Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk, Lilie Chouliaraki, Roger Fowler, Gunther Kress, James Paul Gee, and Thomas Huckin. Critical discourse analysis is a useful tool for dissecting the *Narnia* film and both the subtle and blatant social messages it portrays about groups of people including those in power, women, and people of color.

CDA is based upon the work of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu. These scholars established the basic understanding of social power systems, modes of discourse, linguistic dominance, and the interconnections of language, discourse, and social power.

Critical Scholarship Informing CDA

Althusser discusses the nature of ideology as socially constructed. Ideology does not spontaneously exist, but is rather a product of the national and historical context in which it exists. Ideology is a social product that affects the actions, identities, and

mindsets of individuals. Althusser is considered part of the school of Marxism. Marx's theories about power structures and social hierarchies is at the root of much of today's "critical" theories. He was highly critical of oppressive dominant classes and the ideologies by which the power structures were supported. Similarly, Bourdieu theorizes about power structures, discussing how sociopolitical authority parallels with authority to speak and be heard. "Bourdieu... [examines] the relationships between authority to speak and the appropriation—those in authority simply have more capital at their disposal" (McKerrow 454). Gramsci was also a Marxist. He is concerned with confronting and deconstructing hegemonies, which relate to the invisible ways power is created and maintained in a society in which the structure seems natural. Theories about hegemony are concerned with power imbalances that the disempowered classes are coercively persuaded to agree. The power structures therefore become social norms. In recent decades, Gramsci's work is frequently mentioned in American rhetorical theory and critical media studies.

Habermas likewise theorizes about the coercive consensus necessary to establish power hierarchies as social norms. If a disempowered class did not participate in what was considered socially normal, the class system would collapse. Thought patterns that are established and reinforced prevent this from happening, however. Similarly, Foucault's ideas central to this topic concern the structure and maintenance of power relations and "the pervasive effects of power in daily life" (McKerrow 446). Discourse, in this case, has to do with the authority to speak, which represents a position of social power within a hierarchy. The social power that is agreed upon, either to the benefit or detriment of a respective person, influences and is influenced by social norms that are

created and agreed upon by society more generally. Existing power hierarchies become the expected norm through language, discourse, and transmission of ideas.

CDA Scholarship

Critical discourse analysis uncovers and analyzes discourses and social power structures that exist within a culture and are transmitted via the media. As Thomas Huckin says in his article, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” “by unmasking such practices, CDA scholars aim to support the victims of such oppression and encourage them to resist it... [by] acknowledge[ing] the fact that authentic texts are produced and read (or heard) not in isolation but in some real world context with all its complexity” (95-96). Context shapes discourse and vice versa. This thesis aims to expose social issues in *Narnia* as a symptom of larger systemic issues using CDA.

Society and social influence are factors to using CDA methodology. Texts do not appear in isolation. They are influenced by culture but may also influence society in return. The *Narnia* movies “do not appear in isolation to an otherwise nonracist [or otherwise non-problematic] society, but rather are a reflection of the historical and ongoing” discourses (Pimentel and Sawyer 100). Huckin et al. point out that “CDA [can] reveal specific ways in which language use reflects power inequalities” (113). The power inequalities are not necessarily overt or meant to be seen as the focus of the film. Indeed, with media like film, power structures may not be consciously intended, but they are rather imbedded in society and are thus perpetuated by texts. CDA aims to interrupt this continuation that intentionally or unintentionally promotes inequalities.

Gee’s *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis* has greatly influenced the field of CDA. His work theorizes discourse in two forms: “discourse” (little d) and “Discourse” (capital D). While “discourse” refers to speaking and the way that words are simply put

together to communicate messages, “Discourse” refers to the larger social modes of communication and is tied to ideology and power; this is the type of discourse that is typically under consideration in CDA. The “big D” form is understood as socially constructed since “situated meanings don’t simply reside in individual minds; very often they are negotiated between people in and through communicative social interaction” (80). “Discourse” can also affect identity formation, either individually or collectively. Perceptions of self and others are influenced by popular messages heard about particular groups of people. Gee states that “discourses are always embedded in social institutions” and identity is derived from this type of discourse (18). This identity may be personal or collective, but either way it is understood to be highly socially constructed. Outcomes of identity formation, such as docile femininity, may seem constant and natural because that is what dominant cultural discourses uphold.

With the power of discourse and discourse analysis in mind, Teun van Dijk writes about social and socially construed ideologies. He then describes how “since people acquire, express and reproduce their ideologies largely by text or talk, a discourse analytical study of ideology is most relevant” (115). His “Ideology and Discourse Analysis” begins with defining how he views ideology as widely held systems of belief. Language is public and shared, and ideologies are transmitted through language. Ideologies are socially shared beliefs, and they are changing and can be acquired. Furthermore, ideologies can be so widely held that they become seen as “common-sense” (116-118). Social groups share ideologies, and different groups may be defined by differences in ideology (119-120). Some of the specific ideologies he points out are sexism, racism, feminism, liberalism, and conservatism. These are all able to emerge in discourse in conscious and unconscious ways.

Teun van Dijk further discusses how language can be understood in a hierarchical model when “language users strategically produce and understand talk and text, on line, word by word, sentence by sentence, turn by turn” (123). CDA is often used in a hierarchical model, looking at broader issues such as social context first and working down to the individual words. Teun van Dijk connects ideology, culture, discourse, and power structures, saying, “at all levels of text and talk we may thus witness the influence of the ideological ‘bias’ of underlying mental models and social representations based on ideologies. ... [and] All depends on the context (139). The context of a text, or representation of discourse illuminates the cultural significance of that instance of discourse. This discourse, again, is multifaceted. The whole text may be broken into levels to see how each step works to characterize the whole discourse.

Since power structures are embedded within social structures, they are culturally understood. Visual media, like television, film, and advertising, are defining features of U.S. 21st century society, is a unique way of understanding popular culture as it is broadcasted and consumed by audiences. While noting that “different cultures in different social arrangements have produced different kinds of texts, and use these texts for often different purposes,” Kress expands upon the complexity that new media has made upon studies of discourse (443). Kress emphasizes the need to combine linguistic and image analysis to provide an appropriately thorough level of insight into critical media studies. His ideas combine text and image, looking at the “modes involved: at one level linguistics of the appropriate form, and image analysis of the appropriate kind, both integrated into and brought together in a semiotic theory” (445). The demands of the audience and the expectation of the consumer, built upon their existing experiences and ideologies, create a media message along with the product actually consumed, as the

“media both demand and permit certain forms of activity and engagement, and that has direct effects on the texts that are produced” (Kress 445). Thus, what is seen in the media can be considered public discourse, a way of thinking, speaking, and knowing, that contains ideology and is agreed upon by a society.

Public discourses like those in film are shaped by society, but shape audience perceptions as well. In fact, as Kress and Chouliaraki, explain, “language can be used to persuade audiences about important public issues” (Huckin et al. 109). Public discourses are as much able to be persuasive as they are reflective. Thus, if audiences perceive and accept inequalities in media, the consumers become part of the unseen system continuing those discourses. CDA is by name and practice critical of this process through examination of language and what text and images reveal about social messages.

Norman Fairclough, Phil Graham, Jay Lemke, and Ruth Wodak write in their “Introduction” to *Critical Discourse* about the methods and purposes of conducting this examination of social messages in language and text. One of the highlighted critical goals is intervention to prevent further social injustice. They explain that CDA focuses on “the most pressing social problems of the day, those aspects of the structure, organization and functioning of human societies that cause suffering, injustice, danger, inequality, insecurity, and self-doubt... [which are assumed to be] products of human invention and can therefore be changed through human intervention” (1). Wodak et al. go on to describe how CDA is used by researchers to “analyze their research material and data more systematically and in more detail from a discourse perspective” (3).

To restate, CDA is a hierarchical method of research grounded in ethics and can “investigate those ideological aspects of place that might bear on personal and group identity, such as class, cultural practices, religious affiliation, and educational system”

and then reverse some of the power imbalances CDA recognizes (Huckin et al. 120). Discourse as ideology may encapsulate more than text, but text and textual analysis is an important part of the scholarship leading up to and including discourse analysis. In his “Discourse and Text,” Fairclough discusses textual analysis as it informs discourse analysis. His stated goal is to make this form of analysis an “interdisciplinary” form of study (195). He presents “an argument for systematic textual analysis as a part of discourse analysis” and notes, “intertextual analysis shows how texts selectively draw upon orders of discourse” and is in “particular social circumstances” (193, 194). Roger Fowler further discusses Fairclough’s work and expands on how CDA is conceived. He points out three components of the methodology, describing “analysis of language texts... analysis of discourse practice... and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practices” (421). Acknowledging the influence of Foucault and Bakhtin on CDA, Fowler states, “Critical discourse analysis is... designed for exposing the achievement of hegemonic power through discourse, for demonstrating ideological processes that may not be heeded on the surface, and for educating people in ‘critical language awareness’” (422).

Within this thesis, CDA will be used to study the cultural ideology and hegemonic power permeating *The Chronicles of Narnia* films with the goal of educating people on these processes of which they might not be aware. The state of unawareness should not go unnoticed. Teun van Dijk brings up “intentionality,” referring to whether or not participants in the discourse consciously mean what they say, and determines that “what counts are (foreseeable) social consequences, and not (good or bad) intentions” (127). Participants in discourses are often so enmeshed in their culture that they do not realize they are actually participating.

One influential CDA author who discusses the ethics and morality seen through discourse is Chouliaraki. She has published on the methodology both individually and with others such as Fairclough. “The Media as Moral Education: Mediation and Action” is particularly relevant to this thesis due to its emphasis on the media. Fairclough poses “questions about the textual quality of mediation and the moral power of representation” (831). She discusses the ways in which media can influence morality and empathy in viewers both passively and actively. She is influenced by Habermas’ ideas on “the political and economic relations of power through which media technologies operate today” (835). Chouliaraki describes a “pedagogic function of mediation that renders contemporary media texts an effective form of moral education” and a media with “possibilities of manipulation turn the image into a floating element in a network of relations that continually re-combine and circulate it (832, 834). More simply, this author believes that the media has the power to teach audiences, especially through the manipulation of images available to most of new media. This is not far from the idea that discourses shape audiences’ identities and lives; it is simply narrowing the lens of study to the discourses available in the media. She goes on to say that the media’s power “should be understood more broadly in terms of the options of moral agency the media make available” (838). This influence on morality directly relates to one of the primary motives of this thesis; that is, analyzing the moral interplay between *Narnia* and moral decisions of audiences.

Chouliaraki makes a direct connection with critical analysis and social change, saying, “My argument is that, unless we turn to an analytical language that shows us just how these hierarchies are created in media representations, we will not be able to challenge these hierarchies and change the symbolic conditions for action” (845).

Without the type of intervention and awareness that CDA provides, audiences are likely to be unaware of the manipulation of ethical and moral messages they consume. The audience members are not completely passive consumers; they do have awareness and choice in their beliefs, but media manipulations may be deceptively convincing.

Chouliaraki's main idea assigns the audience agency in deciding their own morality, but they can be, and often are, manipulated by the media into participating in social structures through the ideologies and discourses the media presents them with.

The manipulation of media discourses has politically relevant implications. T. R. Muralikrishnan has some interesting ideas about the political nature and potential of discourse. He describes how "the 'critical' in CDA refers to a way of understanding the social world drawn from critical theory. Within that paradigm reality is understood as constructed and shaped by various social forces" (Muralikrishnan). There is interplay and a progression from identity formation, to ethical beliefs and decisions, to understood reality. The author goes into more detail about the power of discourse to shape audiences' public, personal, and political ideas. Perceived human reality is not objective, nor does it exist outside of human culture and social standards. Therefore, discourses such as those found in the popular media are, again, much more than just passively consumed material; they have the potential to actively shape or reinforce audiences' perceptions not only of identity and morality, but reality.

Summarily, according to van Dijk, language is discursive and reflects social ideologies. CDA is a methodological approach to dissecting and interpreting these ideologies to both see how and why they work in large and small communities. This "theory of ideology and discourse as presented here offers a much more explicit framework for critical study...[and] Critical discourse analysis may then very well focus

especially on the dominant groups and their ideologies” (131-132). The dominant groups are those who are favored by the social discourse, giving them power that is structurally upheld whether the power is ethical or not. CDA, however, can uncover the powers structures that dominate society. Although abuses of power and disenfranchising powers may become part of identity through hegemonic discourses, CDA maintains the goal of mitigating this structural power abuse as “an interdisciplinary approach to textual study that aims to explicate abuses of power promoted by those texts, by analyzing linguistic/semiotic details in light of the larger social and political contexts in which those texts circulate” (Huckin 107). The sociopolitical context in which the 2005 and 2008 *Chronicles of Narnia* films were produced and released permeate the discourses of the film. This thesis therefore uses CDA methodology to observe, dissect, and in some cases react against the prevailing power structures represented in these films.

Methodological Processes

My methodology for the process follows a hierarchical format. Beginning with uncritical viewing to critical viewing, the process moves from social context to analysis of the very words and phrases of the films. I first watched the films when they came out in theaters in 2005 and 2008 respectively. When I decided to use these films for study, once as an uncritical viewer, after which I took notes and reflected on the content of the films, watched them once again, then began drafting critical analyses based on literature I had begun to review. My literature review began after my uncritical re-viewing beginning with critical media studies scholarship, then moving on to critical discourses analysis scholarship, and finally looking at other contextual sources. Throughout this process, I found discussing some of the issues of social structures I found with people who were involved and not involved to expand my ideas and gain more perspective.

The terms and levels of study used in this thesis are defined below. Most will be used directly in future chapters. Each term is briefly defined here while later chapters will explain the direct connection with used terms. These terms are derived from the previously stated CDA scholarship and more directly from Thomas Huckin's definitions and explanations of their use in his article "Critical Discourse Analysis."

Agency: agency refers to the power individuals have to make decisions and act according to their own free will. A character can be defined by an agent/patient relationship in which the agent is active and free and the patient is dependent on the agents and little ability to act alone, and/or shows little free will.

Background: background can be defined as social, political, and cultural history leading up to the event that has the specified background. Background facts and movements shape the content and reception of media.

Context: context is the current sociopolitical and cultural events going on at the same time as the event. Media interacts with and shapes the contextual world in which it exists.

Discursive Difference: discursive difference is audible differentiation in the ways different characters or individuals speak. It may refer to both accented speech and tones of authority and goodness.

Foreground: the foreground of a text (including media) are certain issues that are highlighted by the text and dealt with either directly or indirectly.

Framing: framing refers to the ways that characters and themes are given context and presented to the consumer to understand. This is closely tied to context and foreground.

Genre: this term deals with the stated type of media. For films, this can be terms such as

action, family, drama, comedy, etc. The stated genre will lead audiences to believe certain things about the text they are consuming.

Insinuations: insinuations are implications that are not directly stated. Implications are subversive since they are not direct and are not easily directly identified and questioned.

Labels: labels are the names and titles given to specific characters to characterize their actions, authority, and social position.

Manipulations: manipulation can be performed on many aspects of a text or the media. A writer or producer may choose to manipulate something like ethnicity or gender roles in order to fulfill expectations of the audience or secretly promote a certain message.

Omission: this term can refer to large scale omission or omissions of titles for specific characters. Omission has unstated implications for who deserves to be named and included and either supports or undermines power structures and gender and racial authority.

Presupposition: presupposition has to do with preconceived ideologies either or both the audience and producers of a text have about certain sociopolitical ideas.

Visual Cues: visual cues are the images audiences and consumers see along with the text and dialog presented. Visual cues are easily manipulated to support the messages of a text. In a film, of course, visual cues are constant and lend themselves to study of almost all the other terms as supporting evidence.

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF *THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE* (2005)

Film functions as both a reflection of society as well as a normalizing force of discourse, and this film directly promises to uphold morality, despite underlying racism and sexism. Pimentel and Velázquez point out that “modes of speech, power relations, class dichotomies, gender roles, sociocultural/sociolinguistic stereotypes, and moral/value judgments are created, digitized, formatted (usually into multiple languages), and presented as 2-hr comedic fantasies to attentive and impressionable audiences” (6). The audiences pick up, even unconsciously, on power structures. These can become normalized in the audience’s mind and subsequently in the larger society. Looking at several of Huckin’s key CDA points in terms of *Narnia* can make this clearer.

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (2005) is widely believed to be a direct allegorical tale of the Christian Gospel due to the story’s parallels with the Gospel of Jesus and Lewis’s own career as a Christian writer and apologist. Critical discourse analysis is a useful tool for dissecting this film and the subtle and not-so-subtle social messages it conveys about different groups of people including religious communities, women, and people of color. Critical discourse analysis uncovers and analyzes discourses, such as those in films, in their social context to examine how prejudices are reproduced by various means such as omission, tone, and insinuation. As Thomas Huckin

states in his article, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” “by focusing on language and other elements of discursive practice, CDA analysts try to illustrate ways in which the dominant forces in a society construct versions of reality that favor the interests of those same forces... By unmasking such practices, CDA scholars aim to support the victims of such oppression and encourage them to resist it” (96). Using CDA, I will first look at social contexts surrounding the film and the various levels of the film including the scenes, characters, words, labels, and the movie as a whole.

Genre

The genre of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* movie is fantasy, family, and (perhaps unofficially) Christian, which audiences likely will assume is innocent and innocuous. Though the film was not marketed by the producers as a religious film, many family-oriented Christian publications considered it to be a “Christian” film. Though many people aside from Christians saw the film, there was still the existence of a large body of writing citing the merits of this film based on “religious” morality and ethics. Social evils and dangerous thought patterns are not associated with *Narnia*, a supposedly family friendly and innocuous movie, so for a producer who might wish to uphold a more traditionally patriarchal view of things (as it is suspected of the actual producer of *Narnia*), this lack of suspicion might manipulate viewers into accepting all the direct and implied messages. Underpinnings of racism and sexist tendencies are therefore likely to go unnoticed.

The fantasy genre is a relatively recently popular genre. Development in special effects technology led to otherworldly locations being not only possible to portray but spectacular to see. The fantasy adventure genre was in demand because of movies such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, and *Harry Potter* series, all of which required eye-

catching special effects. *Narnia* is meant to visually dazzle. There have been several other cinematic adaptations of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* and the successive Narnian stories, both animated and with human actors, but no release had the financial and critical success of the 2005 version. The spectacular special effects of the film are likely responsible for this outstanding difference, and indeed the success of previous fantasy series likely led to the decision to make these new fantasy films at all. So the rhetoric that already supported moral endeavors had an outlet in this movie that was popularly accepted anyway on cinematic merits in addition to the moral merits that previous, but not as profitable, *Narnia* adaptations have had.

The more complicated genre, or at least political genre, for the purposes of this analysis is the family film genre. In 2005 and the years preceding, movies created during this time saw something of a conservative political resurgence and a burst of enthusiasm in the evangelical Christian movement, a force which may have been part of the force behind the 2005 adaptation. A reactionary stance emerged for some groups in the face of shifting social values and a war time mentality. Lurie reports that in fact, “conservative politicians also got into the act... When the governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, chose *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* for a statewide reading program, the *Palm Beach Post* called the move “a cabal of Christian commerce,” and claimed that the state was “opening up the public schools to some backdoor catechism lessons” (Lurie). The film received the ideal timing, released when special effects technology could fascinate audiences and values would prompt audience members to choose the film over (and over).

This family genre is deceptive though. The innocent fantasy adventure genre of this film already has recorded issues with equality for women and minority

representations. Eschholz, Bufkin, and Long report that “certain types of films, such as action/adventure flicks, were more likely to over-represent men in comparison to women... men outnumber women three to one in action/adventure films, [and]... in action/adventure films and comedies whites outnumber nonwhites approximately three to one” (314-315). With statistics like these, a researcher should be prepared to see both malicious underlying stereotypes along with omissions in fantasy adventure movies. However, popular audiences are not necessarily so prepared.

Audiences were predisposed to trust and put faith in the message of this film, but no film can be considered a paragon of morality. Any film will be tied to the social situation of the nation and the time that produced it. When discussing the subject of their analysis, Bromley and Hewitt point out that although any direct correlation to the state of a society may not have been intended, people see the reflection in films nonetheless (18). In the case of the US, the popular media is likely to show inaccurate representations of women and stereotype minorities. Bromley and Hewitt explain that “if a film reflects societal standards, one could expect that the producers and directors would themselves be influenced by current cultural values” (19). Combine these two genres with such an influential story and the result will be a film that has social injustices and an adoring audience that will accept what they see in the film as virtue.

Social Context

Christian and non-Christian audiences alike received the film well; it was a box office success grossing over \$291 million in the U.S. (#48 all time in the U.S. and Canada) and merited favorable reviews from all types of critics, both secular and Christian. Monroe of the *Christian Spotlight on Entertainment* points out that the producer of the 2005 film, “explained that Disney did in fact hire a company to do a grass

roots, faith-based campaign to promote this movie, however, he says it only represents about five percent of their marketing budget. Most of the money they spent on marketing, he says, is aimed at getting young boys to come see the movie.” *New York Times* writer Alison Lurie points out that “Disney publicists have shrewdly mounted two advertising campaigns for the film, one secular and one sacred. They did not want to scare away other paying customers, but they knew that the Christian overtones of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* could make the film tremendously popular with the religious establishment, especially in America” (Lurie).

According to *Christian Spotlight on Entertainment*, “there are changes, but ardent fans that have cherished these books for decades can rest assured knowing that these filmmakers remain faithful to its origins. The characters, storyline, themes and creativity all remain intact from the original charming children’s story” (Monroe). But this certainly belies definite changes when it comes to some roles, including the main two female protagonists. Monroe explains how the director, Adamson, commented directly on adapting the female roles, noting of one of the most noticeable changes:

[He] faced a bit of contention updating the role the girls played in “Narnia”, taking them from sideline cheerleaders to actual participants in the battle. Adamson would not include C.S. Lewis’s line from the book where Father Christmas says, “It’s ugly when girls fight.” Adamson didn’t see that as a world in which we live in today, so the line was changed to, “Battles are ugly affairs.” (Monroe)

The female characters are not singled out as unsuited for battle to reflect the feelings of the current audience. This point should serve to remind readers that the film was not intended to be sexist and indeed audience do not mean to be misogynistic. Any

discrimination in the film should be understood as a reflection of continuing, though changing discourses that still hold vestiges of sexism.

The framing of the films puts them firmly within Christian tradition. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005) is based on a book written by C.S. Lewis, who was known for his other Christian writing, so the connection to religion is an easy one to make for those who are already familiar with the allegorical potential of the *Narnia* books. By extension, a religious connection will reinforce beliefs about the wholesomeness of the movie. The presentation of women, men, and minorities is unlikely to be questioned by people who already adore the story. The assumed righteousness of the message as an allegory for the Gospel makes this a difficult perspective to antagonize for many because they do not wish to question their faith even if they would otherwise question other media.

The film and much of the advertising leading up to the film has an emphasis on the moral and ethical nature of the film's message with at least some connection to religious morality. This foreground attracts certain audiences but even more so emphasizes the primacy of the "good news" (as the Christian Gospel is often called by practitioners) that any bad news is not only less apparent, but not available to be questioned. There is an assumption with many faithful Christians that the religious writing of C.S. Lewis should not be doubted, and even more should the Gospel message not be doubted. Unquestioning religious audiences might take the film so literally in faith that they might accept blindly any and all moral messages therein, including the non-religious power structures. This is a specific example of how discourse can maintain by taking aspects of the social status quo for granted and preventing audiences from

questioning any discrimination that may be present by implying that all messages are not only normal, but “family friendly.”

Omission of Racial Diversity

There is a lack of racial diversity within the film as a whole, even among the mythological characters and their linguistic characterization. The main actors, including the children and the Witch, are all White. Even the voices of non-human actors have a British accent from mainly White voice actors. While this is likely to be a truthful representation of the majority of 1940s England, it is worth taking a moment to consider how this film accepts the normality of Whiteness in the U.S. cinema today. “Through media representations, social organizations, and even everyday objects, ‘white’ becomes an over-arching norm, a privileged non-race against which all other races are compared and measured” (Ott and Mack 139). In truth, the film is not even set in World War II England; the setting is mainly an alternate universe which is astonishingly populated with British voices.

Monroe briefly mentions race conflict, noting Tilda Swinson, who played the main villain, was intentionally “Aryan” to avoid the vilification of darker-skinned people in the 2005 film. But that does not change the fact that humans who have darker skin are hardly present at all in the film. Omission, as has been established in CDA methodology, can be just as important a measure of fairness as negative presence. Races were not described as much as the mythological characters of the supporting roles in Lewis’s books in characters such as centaurs and dryads (not “humans”), but in a modern adaptation in a film where decisions are made about casting visibly different (or not) races in certain roles, there should more diversity in representation, especially with characters whose “race” has no real description or mythological history.

In “Symbolic Reality Bites: Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities in Modern Film,” Eschholz et al. explain that “the overwhelming majority of directors, producers, and writers of popular films are men, and... represent a traditional social construction of the world where capitalism, patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity are all represented as both the norm and the ideal” (322). Their article compares numbers and types of roles held by women, men, and various ethnicities, and it was found that women do not hold as many powerful or diverse roles as compared to men. Additionally, minorities were also underrepresented in leading roles. They go on to explain how these statistics continue to influence society’s perception of people and uphold discriminatory roles and discourses. Although this article did not focus on *Narnia* specifically, it can be applied as the *Narnia* films fit into their analysis of film more generally. The article furthermore lends some statistical data to lay a foundation for claims about race and gender in this thesis.

Power relations in representations are reinforced to audiences and it is seen that “media representations are incorporated into the knowledge base of audience members. If these representations are biased toward a particular common set of social, gender or class stereotypes, it is logical to suggest that these biases play some role in the reinforcement of common stereotypes about race, class and sex roles in our society” (Eschholz et al. 301). While some might disregard the analysis of the whiteness of the film as irrelevant, saying *of course* they are White; C.S. Lewis was writing about British children and most British people are White. Some would think why bother even addressing this fact. Lewis’s British nationality aside, this does not diminish the fact that we are still seeing a racially homogenous world for a mainstream U.S. blockbuster. This homogeneity is uncontested despite the fact that this world is entirely imaginary and the dominance of the

White race exists even in imaginary characters. In the mainstream media, racial exclusion is no longer an acceptable phenomenon.

Insinuations

Insinuations suggest facts and viewpoints within a society that are mirrored in films. Though not direct, insinuations make assumptions that listeners are likely to go along with and even accept in an indirect way. This indirect acquiescence is a common way that discourses in the media become “common knowledge” even without direct consent. For example, by subversively insinuating certain things about the primary female characters and their roles in the action of this film, traditional gender roles may be reinforced or subverted.

To begin the example, the main male/female power dynamic exists in the characters of Aslan, the male lion, and Jadis, the female Witch. If this tale is to be taken allegorically, as it often is, Aslan is understood to be fulfilling the role of Jesus and Jadis filling the role of the devil. In Christian tradition, and most passages from the Bible concerning it, the devil is male. He is the *Prince* of Darkness (not the Princess). Why then, is the main devilish antagonist not male? This insinuates a preference for male rule within power and authority, and implies the amount of trust and power that can and should be afforded a woman. The final triumph of good over evil being an ultimate triumph of confident and wild masculinity over hysterical and tyrannical femininity could be taken to have truly misogynistic undertones if the allegory is to be taken literally and fully by the community of movie goers. The viewers go along with this expected assumption and add a male/female opposition to an existing battle of good and evil.

The male and female power struggle between the Lion and the Witch has a definite tone of good and evil. The aura of goodness surrounding the male protagonist

goes on to characterize the other men and women; the men must follow in the “good” leadership role, and the women must submit to this goodness or else find themselves becoming “bad.” While some of the film might be seen as a more modern and feminist-friendly adaptation of Lewis’s novel, we can still see the creation of certain (dis)empowering societal discourses in the film. Because “discourses, when sanctioned by people in power, are often referred to as ‘self-evident truths’ and are more commonly known as dominant discourses,” there are many discourses of domination that are not readily apparent to audiences in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* (Pimentel and Velázquez 7).

Framing the Witch and the Women

Gender, especially with the role of the women, is framed in very traditional roles in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (book and film), and women who deviate too much from this standard are punished. Due to the wide acclaim, the roles of women in the film can be taken to gauge the current perceptions of female roles. The gender roles are taken for granted but also taken for granted is the correctness of the more-or-less traditional roles by associating this depiction with a strong moral presence. But the roles were indeed updated. As the director Adamson notes, some of the original sexism, such as excluding women from the main action of the battle due to their sex, has been eliminated, and the female characters take on a much more active role than their counterparts in Lewis’s books.

In her book, *Gendered Media*, Karen Ross expresses reservations about the extent to which media perceptions of women have made true and bold steps towards equality. Yes, the girls in *Narnia* are allowed to play a part in battle, but not the same part as the boys. They are given agency, but are under the authority of their male counterparts. As

Ott and Mack discuss in their chapter on “Feminist Analysis” in their book *Critical Media Studies*, “biological categories like male and female become conflated with cultural gender expectations, resulting in discriminatory social systems that privilege men over women” (177). This dichotomy is still definitely visible even in the most recent adaptations of *Narnia*. Ott and Mack go on to further explain that “the classic stereotypes continue to thrive in today’s media, and concentrating on these particular [female] stereotypes will provide a useful initial glimpse into the process of Feminist analysis,” and I would specify this statement to mean “analysis” of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* (182).

There are three main female roles in this movie, Lucy, Susan, and Jadis the Witch. Susan is by age a child, but she is given a far more adult role than Lucy and is framed in a motherly role. Though the book is far more openly sexist and patriarchal than the film, the film still creates the frames of traditional absolutes of femininity: the Madonna and the Whore, the female sinner and saint. Within the film is an underlying current, which has been part of social norms for centuries. By stereotyping the women in this (albeit culturally expected) way, they become “damaging because they gloss over the complex characteristics that actually define a social group and reduce its member to a few (usually unfavorable) traits” (Ott and Mack 180). The idea of the essentially good and bad woman has been the dichotomous norm for women since medieval times. This essentializing practice of framing women has denied a dynamic and multifaceted femininity to women for centuries and continues to inform modern assessment of women.

The film makes no mention of “sex” which is necessarily involved with the creation of actual mothers and whores. But in terms of representations, the “Madonna” is the motherly, saintly female role. The “Whore” is the woman who does not fit into the

role of the good and docile female. Jadis is the sinner, not the saint. Women's roles in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* are limited to these two options whereas the male roles can change and have different levels of morality, sin, and redemption. I am not saying that the Witch is *not* the main antagonist. What I am saying is that despite the fact that this film is a present day success, the *only* roles for the main female characters still uphold the age-old dichotomy. Thus, it can be understood that this film reiterates the fact that women's roles are still held to outdated standards even today.

Compared to other forms of media, family-oriented media displays fewer openly sexual women, but still keeps female characters subjugated in the bad/good, whore/Madonna roles. This is so engrained in the culture, and indeed in the women themselves, that it may be extremely difficult to overcome. Like Ross says of women in the media in general, there has been progress made, but we are not finished in the struggle for female subjectivity and equality.

Crisis of Masculinity

One "crisis" that is given prominence in the foreground of character development is the crisis of masculinity facing the character of Peter. In the role of Peter, we can see what Karen Ross describes in her book, *Gendered Media*, as a perceived crisis of masculinity in which males are forgetting their true roles of power and leadership and must rise up to reclaim their rightful place. This is a rather modern twist as this perceived "crisis" is a development with the exodus of women from the domestic sphere. In the books, we see Peter as a natural leader, but in this film, he is in crisis when it comes to taking authority for the first part of the storyline. This reflects what Ross describes as "media representations of masculinity [that] often frame men as dysfunctional and/or in crisis" (14). On one hand, as Ross describes in her work, the crisis of masculinity is seen

as symptomatic of a more liberated society of women who do not occupy their traditional feminine roles which formerly defined male roles by contrast. Without the women as passive and domestic, the place for men as active agents in the public sphere becomes questioned.

The prominence of this new internal battle of Peter's is symptomatic of a larger social trend. Perhaps we can understand Peter's crisis to be genuinely a symptom of a patriarchy which does not always benefit men. Ott and Mack explain this as "gendered expectations that patriarchy places on women also exert pressure on men" (179). Looking at several facts in the movie, we see Peter is really a child expected by all to take on the role of a grown man, he is grieving for his lost home and parents, and he has never been trained as the soldier he is supposed to become. But in deference to cultural norms, the audience expects the primary male figure to be a leader and a fearless fighter.

Agency

Agency is one element of CDA that characterizes a feminist analysis. Agent-patient relations is something Huckin describes as "who is doing what to whom... certain persons are consistently depicted as initiating actions (and thus exerting power) while others are often being depicted as being (often passive) recipients of those actions" (100). The agency seen in the film has to do with larger power structures reflected in the individual characters. This issue is no anomaly to the history of this society. Historically in the US, men have had more agency than women, those with lighter skin have had more than those with darker skin, and those with agency tended to have more money and thus perpetuate the domination.

If we look at the actions of characters in terms of agency, it is seen that the male characters have more power than their female counterparts. The "counterpart" is defined

in the binary opposition of male and female. Aslan has power over Jadis, Peter has authority over his siblings, and Mr. Beaver has more agency than Mrs. Beaver. On the other hand, not all of the women are subject to all of the men. However, in each binary pair, we see the (sub)conscious reinforcement of the patriarchal values that inhabited the original stories, and though those values permeate our current American society less than World War II Britain, there is still a gap in power, dignity, and thus agency between the sexes in this modern film.

Mainstream Christianity and its related traditional morality has a reputation for reacting against progressive social movements, especially feminism, as we can see in a review of Lurie's opinion on *Narnia* by a religious writer. When Albert Mohler, president of Southern Seminary and conservative blogger, says "Lurie clearly prefers children to read literature that is relatively feminist and generally secular," we can understand by the tone of the statement and his subsequent argument for the opposite that he does not agree with Lurie's "feminist" judgment, and he would prefer audiences to see non-feminist things like, he implies, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Mohler). That he equates feminism with secularism indicates a rejection of the idea that feminist goals and religious goals are compatible. That does not have to be true, but it is indeed a social stigma associated with religion.

Race: Omission and Insinuation

What is not seen is just as important as what is seen in analyzing *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Omission is sometimes one of the only ways race in popular film can be discussed, as so many films are racially homogenous. By not showing races other than White, the cinema upholds the notion of assumed racial power imbalance by showing actual racial representation imbalance. "A common form of manipulation... is

the deletion or omission of agents, which escapes the notice of many uncritical” people (Huckin 100). The agents are the active and dynamic characters portrayed within a text, and agency can be understood as the ability to have an active role in one’s own destiny as well as the ability to change and be changed according to one’s ability. When all of the agents are of one race, it denies the existence of agency in other races by not representing them. Deletion of agency would refer to a lack of power in the minority characters that are seen, so deletion and omission of agency characterizes *Narnia*.

Since the U.S. has a history of racial power inequality with minorities having less social power, the minorities and other disadvantaged groups have received poor and stereotyped representation in the media. “Issues of politics and society are thus not merely abstract systems of social inequality and dominance, but they actually ‘come’ down in the forms of everyday life, namely through the beliefs, actions and discourses of group members” (Muralikrishnan). In the *Narnia* films, the unequal social structures are represented in a film many people are seeing and unconsciously accepting in their everyday lives. For some unstated reason, Lewis’s Aslan seems to have decreed that White English humans are the fittest to rule and the 21st century Aslan has not been adapted differently. There are colonial implications and understandings for this.

The example of the centaur will combine the elements of background, insinuation, agency, and omission. In this movie there is just one actor of color seen towards the second half of the film who plays a male centaur. The history of the myth of the centaur lends some disturbing insinuation to the decision to have this be the one role in which the audience sees a person of color. Though this particular centaur plays a noble role, the myth going back to the ancient Greeks holds that centaurs are wild, dangerous, and rapacious. C.S. Lewis’s book mentions this original myth of centaurs noting that not all

centaurs can be trusted. So on one hand, the film does not make this role a derogatory one at all. On the other hand, the role has a disgraceful history that is easily known, and there is an omission of racial diversity in other main roles.

Words, Labels, and Power through Naming

The final level of this analysis will look at the individual words and phrases used in the film, especially concerning names and labels. Labels play an important role in developing the characters in this film, and names and titles with which characters have been labeled are father, mother, Son of Adam, Daughter of Eve, Witch, King, good, evil, victim, conqueror, Queen, and High King. Many of these labels revolve around male/female counterpoints and thus serves to reinforce gender dichotomies even in the updating of the final battle scene to include women.

This chapter further examines the roles of gender by looking at the contrasting male and female roles named or labeled within the movie, first looking at the characters who are set up for us as the “mother” and “father” figures. From the beginning of the film, the roles of Peter and Susan are set up so that Peter is the father figure and Susan is the mother figure. While the younger siblings complain that Peter and Susan are not, in fact, “Mum” and “Dad,” the two elder siblings continue to fill those roles initiated by their naming. Domesticity and motherhood has long been synonymous with femininity in the media while activity and aggression are associated with masculinity. “Notions of power and physical prowess begin to define masculinity... in American society, while femininity and ‘being a woman’ are tied to passive acceptance and helplessness” (Ott and Mack 182). So the labels assigned to the characters lead to the fulfillment of stereotypical expectations.

An examination of the “couples” in the film provides an example of these damaging gender binaries. To begin with, the only explicitly “married” couple exists in the roles of Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. The male/female relationship is modeled through the Beaver’s relationship. It is against their example that Peter and Susan’s roles become most visibly defined. After the children arrive all together in Narnia, they are summoned by Mr. Beaver who is to lead them to Aslan, the king of the world in which Narnia lies. He leads them through a dangerous forest, avoiding a wolf pack. After bringing them to his dam, he convinces the Pevensies, especially Peter, of their divine destiny while his wife, Mrs. Beaver, cooks for them with Susan’s help. When it becomes clear they must leave the dam before they are attacked by wolves again, Mrs. Beaver fusses over packing jam and Mr. Beaver is frustrated by her domesticity. Eventually, Mr. Beaver leads them to Aslan, but Mrs. Beaver worries she does not look good enough to meet him. Mr. Beaver is the leader of the action, while Mrs. Beaver is concerned with her domestic responsibilities and her appearance.

In the male and female counterparts, we see the expected male/female roles arise in the model of this relationship. This is not the violent battle ground of Aslan and Jadis, but the marriage of the beavers is a stereotypical but accepted way of viewing a male/female dynamic. We see in Mr. Beaver that “to be masculine is to be ‘in charge,’” and in Mrs. Beaver, we see the absolute domesticity and the “beauty myth... [that] controls women” (Ott and Mack 186-7). These gendered power relations are reinforced to (Christian) audiences, and “these biases play some role in the reinforcement of common stereotypes about race, class and sex roles in our society” (Eschholz et al. 301).

In the film, this dichotomy begins to break down a bit when Susan takes the lead on some group decisions, but the characterization of “motherly” and “fatherly” ultimately

uphold the patriarchal norms. This development comes to the forefront of the action taking place mainly between the siblings (before they convene with Aslan and his army) when Peter and Susan argue about the path they should take to get across the frozen river. Susan has been becoming increasingly domestic and motherly in the preparation for their journey (being concerned, for example, about having enough jam) and specifically being the voice of what their mother would want. Peter, however, takes charge with the raising of his sword, disregarding Susan's opinions, and making the executive decision that they shall indeed cross the river despite impending danger. Danger does in fact befall the children and the beavers, but Peter wields his sword and anchors the group in the midst of a crashing ice waterfall and becomes the strong fatherly man he is expected to be.

Chapter Conclusion

Although members of the audience are not just necessarily anti-feminist, within the established power structures which are accepted as the norm, they are by default embracing the rhetoric of the power structures in the movies as well and thus perpetuating stereotypes, especially among audience member who may view the movie as doctrinal. Endeavors like critical discourse analysis are important, because, as van Dijk notes, "ideologies may thus function to legitimate domination, but also to articulate resistance in relationships of power" (117). Like ideological study in general, this thesis works to uncover the domination in as seen in the films and recognize how it is legitimized, but then the point is to "articulate resistance" to these structures. This thesis acknowledges and works to further the idea that "The central claim of CDA is that the way certain realities get talked or written about- that is, the choices speakers and writers make in doing it-are not just random but ideologically patterned" (Muralikrishnan). Because there are real ideological implications, audiences and consumers need to be

aware of the implications of what they are viewing or discriminatory practices will continue to be a central part many people's lives.

CHAPTER IV

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF *PRINCE CASPIAN* (2008)

Prince Caspian was released in 2008 as the second in a recent series of adaptations of C.S. Lewis's *Narnia* trilogy. The subject of this chapter centers on analysis of the discourse of the adaptation of the characters of Susan and Caspian. Caspian's character and culture will be the center of a discussion on race and Susan's character will be the focus of a feminist analysis. To review, within *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, some of the main issues are: 1. Gender is presented in a hierarchical binary that characterizes female characters as less powerful and more passive than their male counterparts, and maintains the ancient "Madonna" or "whore" dichotomy; 2. There are limited amounts of speaking characters who are anything other than White. This is a problem because exclusion of other races and the insinuation of White as a non-race prevents many viewers from seeing their race presented with complexity and subjectivity. This is reflective of an issue in the media as a whole, and not just this one film.

In the second film, *Prince Caspian*, there is a slightly different set of issues: 1. Female desire and sexuality, speculated to be something Lewis opposed, is brought to the forefront of the plot in a romantic adaptation twist for Susan. This is a complicated issue because, at the same time, female sexuality is an in-demand commodity for the media to consume, and the presence of this romance might be nothing more than a sexist marketing strategy. On the other hand, sexual empowerment and freedom are important

parts of a complex character with agency and free will. 2. The majority of “humans” in this film have darker skin and accents, but they are also the villains. This adaptation contains a variety of human ethnicities as well as several of their accompanying stereotypes. The characters, including the titular Prince Caspian, fall into stereotypical roles, which despite the representation in this movie, does not equally represent people of varying races.

One of the starkest differences in the adaptation is the fact that the two characters, Caspian and Susan, have developed a romantic relationship. This relationship may be used as a counterpoint for analyzing the power structures surrounding gender and race. This is a major twist since sexual or romantic elements are absent in Lewis’s book. The religious aspects of this film are less obvious than the previous film in 2005, but the demand for Christian morality was an influencing pressure from the audience who associate Lewis’s books with morality (despite his stated intentions). The mixing of perceived morality with potentially damaging stereotypes does not reflect well on the current state of the audience and society’s moral compass on social justice issues. This should not be understood as a random connection either since “context models may be ideologically ‘biased’ by underlying attitudes that are themselves ideological” (van Dijk 121). The extent of the stereotypes and the acceptance of female sexuality show a more progressive stance than the books, written in the 1950s. However, this movie continues to participate in the racial and gendered hegemony in the U.S. by using “a mixture of implied (through presuppositions, omissions, insinuations, and visual aids) and direct (through foregrounding, labels, and modality) cultural and linguistic messages” (Pimentel and Velázquez 16). These elements are used to characterize women and racial minorities

and create a power structure in the film which reflects and supports power structures of the society that produced the film.

Context

Adaptation Theory

Because they are derived from such a canonical work, the *Narnia* films are seen as primarily adaptations. “When we call a work an adaptation, we openly announce its overt relationship to another work or works,” according to Linda Hutcheon, who goes on to say, “an adaptation’s double nature does not mean, however, that proximity or fidelity to the adapted text should be the criterion of judgment or focus of analysis” (6). Of course, with a film based on an already beloved tale, fidelity is one of the first things many audience members look for, and variations from the original can be some of the most memorable events of the film (bad or good). But the film is still its own entity. In terms of critical analysis, then, the film has its own place in its own socio-historical context that is separate from the original books. The “adaptation” and reworking of the books into the film in later years can reveal changes in society. Through critical discourse analysis it can be seen that “it is an engagement with the original text that makes us see that text in different ways” and understand the respective societies and their political and social atmospheres (Hutcheon 16).

Social Context

Despite the lack of a direct parallel with the Christian salvation message like that perceived by many in the 2005 film, viewers of *Prince Caspian* (2008) still seek the religious connection and find it. The connection is often found in the absence of Aslan for the first part of the film as a lesson in faith: “Blessed are those who do not see and yet believe.” Did Lewis actually say this? Not exactly. Did Aslan in the 2008 film? Yes.

Peter Bradshaw of *The Guardian* reviews the film, and although finding it overall a good family film, he explores the possibility of any religious message. He stresses that the film emphasizes the value of faith – believing in what you cannot see – though he has concerns about the filmmakers’ stretch to meet the audience demand for faith: “Families and fans of the C.S. Lewis books can consider themselves in safe hands, though ... the interest of the *Narnia* series itself declines exponentially as it progresses towards the very uncomfortable, theologically strained finale” (Bradshaw). In fact, the film eliminates some of the most “magical” elements of Lewis’s book. Lewis is known to have asserted that he did not write the books with Christianity in mind. As a lover of Greek mythology, he included many pagan references in his books, not the least of which was a wild party to free the naiads and dryads featuring Bacchus, god of wine. This festival lacked the sexuality traditional of a bacchanal, but this whole scene was not depicted in the film. The fact that a mighty roar from Aslan replaced the awakening of the natural spirits through a party might reveal a reluctance to take away from the morality.

Background and Agency

The deletion of the Greek god of wine from the 2008 film might have had to do with many things including time, continuity, and/or moral issues. There is no definite answer. But it does appear that in the romance of Susan and Caspian that the filmmakers have replaced innuendo with more expected, and also more real, sexuality.

Why did the makers of this newest adaptation of *Prince Caspian* decide to add the romantic element? The question of why they chose Susan *for* the romantic character might be a better question to answer. As in the preceding film, Susan was already set up to be an adult woman capable of mothering. The actress cast in the role was old enough to look adult enough for a clearly sexual (not just implied) role. But back to the original

question, why add that at all? Female roles are markedly different from the books to the movies.

Originally, Lewis's books have the main female characters in far more whimsical and safe roles while the male roles are active and courageous. Agency is demonstrated through the "agent-patient" relationship and is seen through an "empowerment" dynamic which evolves through adaptation (Huckin 107). Mimi Haddad says, "Doubt is often cast upon women's abilities to act independently in taking risks, assuming leadership positions, and managing responsibilities," meaning women (historically) have less agency (6). While there are not many major changes to the plot and characters in the 2005 *Narnia*, the sequel, *Prince Caspian*, contains a major change for the character of Susan: she became a sexual woman, even if her sexual actions did not go beyond desire and kissing. The connotation and presupposition to this type of relationship puts Susan again in a weaker role, and this is reinforced when, although Susan tries to save herself, she ultimately needs the more capable Caspian to save her.

It is not easy to qualify the sexual roles and agency in *Narnia*. On one hand, there is a long history of women having no agency in society, least of all sexual agency. This ideology has a long history which is difficult to overcome since its roots are in morality based upon the Greeks and the early church. As Haddad says, western culture has "been quick to adopt a cultural devaluation of women, rooted in Greek philosophy, which they assume is biblical" though she qualifies this with the "teaching on gender... is illogical" (Haddad 5). On the other hand, for C.S. Lewis's *Narnia* novels specifically, there is hardly any sex or romance at all. This likely has to do primarily with two things: Lewis's religious convictions and the fact that these were intended to be children's stories.

There are more women performing traditionally male actions in the 2005 film, and by the second installment, this has been extended to battle. This complicated female role is centered on Susan. There is a presupposition that the roles that the female characters are placed into are natural and biologically determined. The “motherly” attitude for example, is considered to be a biological predetermination for the women, so it seems natural and not stereotypical that Susan would fall into this role in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005). The film also presupposes that the audience agrees with this premise of biological predetermination because the popular religion the story is traditionally linked with also presupposes this fact fairly often. Because of the dominating White male colonialist viewpoint in the novels, some see “the misogyny ... that permeates the whole” series (Pullman). The misogyny he refers to is the way in which female roles are stereotyped and women’s roles are dominated by their male counterparts.

Pullman further explains the presupposition of correct female roles within the *Narnia* series. He describes what he believes Lewis’s feelings towards the subject are by saying Lewis “didn't like women in general, or sexuality at all, at least at the stage in his life when he wrote the *Narnia* books. He was frightened and appalled at the notion of wanting to grow up. Susan, who did want to grow up, and... might have been the most interesting character in the whole cycle if she'd been allowed to” (Pullman). Pullman sees definite misogyny in Lewis’s characterization. This framework of misogyny “has vital implications for Christian evangelism and apologetics as the world evaluates Christian faith and its treatment of women” (Haddad 5). That is to say, in the same way that a film which is supposed to be innocent may transmit cultural discrimination, depictions of

religion in film by Hollywood only exaggerates the trust audiences are supposed to have and likewise makes any sexist messages seem more innocuous and acceptable.

Although Susan is only an active character in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian* (she is mentioned but is not a main character in the action of the other four books), she has inspired some of the most controversial reactions than any other characters of the novels. One of the most prominent examples is the short story, “The Problem of Susan,” by Neil Gaiman, which works as an implied postscript to Lewis’s final installment of *Narnia*, *The Last Battle*. This story reacts to the way Susan is perceived to be punished for her materialistic femininity and sexuality by being excluded from Narnia heaven, but moreover, by having her entire family die to get there, she is left, at 21, to fend for herself. The story describes a woman who could possibly be an older Susan who is in her fifties, a professor of children’s literature, and is haunted by lion-demons and witches in her nightmares.

Women have been kept at the sidelines for much of history as they are in the battles of Narnia in Lewis’s books. But today, there is a culture that celebrates heroic women who are active agents in their futures. But with the “liberation” of women as active agents, the audience also expects a visual female sexuality to be available for consumption. Cinematic sexism is a foreground to this, and many other movies. U.S. society remains generally sexist in images of women and society is permeated with ideologies and discourses which still accept this. But perhaps this gap is closing. Sexism is not necessarily inherent in the minds and hearts of any individual audience member; it is inherent in society, and that is what is reflected in the movies.

There is nothing in the recent cinematic iteration of *Narnia* to indicate that Susan will not grow up to be a normal woman with perfectly normal desires. She is an agent in

her own life, and she has the ability to reject the men she does not want (like her awkward schoolmate) and accept the men she chooses. Although she is sexualized, Susan is not overly commoditized, and she appears to have a great deal of confidence by the end of the film. Perhaps in this installment of *Narnia*, Susan would not be punished for growing up by being excluded from Narnia Heaven. Peter may still be the High King, but there is overall more equality between the sexes in this installation in the history of *Narnia* stories.

To further discuss the discourses and ideologies in the movie, this chapter will move into more specific analysis. The next sections will name and utilize Huckin's tools for critical discourse analysis. This will include framing, discursive difference, insinuation, omission, and visual cues.

Framing and Foregrounding

The romantic plot framework is a traditional and recognizable element of much of cinema. Within the frame of popular cinema, the message can "draw attention" to the aspects of romance and femininity that will "maintain the status quo" (Huckin 104). Sadly, even though audiences are comfortable with female sexuality, the addition of the romance might be, as Karen Ross says, "precisely because sex sells... simply another commodity to be bought and sold" (66). There is a demand for a sexualized woman, whether this is marketed as a film for children, adults, or the whole family. The movie provides this framework. "Media support for new women is usually restricted to championing their right to bare their breasts," so the media almost demands sexuality from women (Ross 29). Of course, this is nothing new. Simply looking at the history of children's films, there are many princesses who exist in sexualized female roles since the beginning of movies. Ross's statement refers to the fact that although representations of

women affords them more agency and the media may claim to be more feminist than sexist, the actual representation of women often remains sexualized, which keeps the role of women, in society's mind, as objects to be consumed.

Foregrounding Race

Princesses and sexism have long been a part of the cinematic tradition, but so have racial stereotypes. In Lewis's books, most of the characters were mythological creatures, and without an actual visual cue, race could only be implied, but in the adaptation, the vast majority of characters seen are human and their races are recognizable, even if manipulated. Included in that count is a new hero, "a new, more grown-up and plausibly dishy leading male - the eponymous Prince Caspian" (Bradshaw). Prince Caspian is one of the Telmarines, a race descended from dark-skinned, Spanish-accented islanders in our world. Thus, one of the most noticeable changes seen is that the skin color of over half of the "human" characters were brown skinned and spoke with a very noticeable Spanish accent. Since "a culture's racial ideologies help determine the structures of popular media texts like television shows, films, music, and periodicals" analyzing this racial element is important to uncovering what types of social discourses characterize the representation in the film (Ott and Mack 139). The Telmarines in this case were almost entirely characterized as villains, except, of course, for Prince Caspian who assimilates into the Narnian fold. Assimilation will be discussed in more detail later.

One especially surprising detail was the fact that the actor playing Caspian is an English actor with English parents. For the movie, his skin was darkened, and he developed his accent with inspiration from Inigo Montoya in the *Princess Bride*. There was a definite choice to create tension with racial and linguistic difference between the

Telmarines and the Narnians. The characterization of Caspian and indeed the Telmarines generally “is foregrounded in a manner that emphasizes cultural and linguistic stereotypes while simultaneously framing him as a collective representation of Hollywood’s misguided perception of Latina/o culture” (Pimentel and Velázquez 13). The battle between good and evil is once again put into visual terms, this time with one language and culture pitted against another.

Visual Cues

Visual aids are an important part of representing the dominant ideologies in any text, and so it is an important element of the CDA that Huckin describes. In a movie, however, it has even more relevance for study because the visual nature of a film is constant and unavoidable. The way minorities are portrayed fit into larger, and often stereotypical, societal roles. To extend the discussion of race, let’s take a moment to look at the progression from the previous film. In Chapter III, concerning the analysis of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, the almost complete lack of people of any race besides White was discussed. “CDA is not shy about admitting its explicit gaze at power dynamics in discourse” (Huckin et al. 112). CDA recognizes that the visual is constant and so any racial hierarchies that are being represented are upheld not only with words, but a constant visual display

The only speaking character who had visibly darker skin was a centaur. Ott and Mack tell us that “a prevalent representation of race in American media is actually better characterized as an absence of representation... this absence reinforces ideological power structures by over-representing the dominant white group in media texts” (139). The idea of Whiteness as the “standard” or “race-less” race is pervasive throughout much of the U.S. media, which allows almost all of their characters and stories to focus on White

people despite the media reaching a wide range of races. If there are other races besides White included, the media and movies often assign these characters damaging stereotypes. The mythological history of the centaurs is problematic. Having only the darker skinned people represent a potentially dangerous and sexually violent past implies a connection between appearance and history.

However, In *Prince Caspian*, there are many more centaurs. They are more numerous in this second film but also more ethnic. The main centaurs, discussed in Chapter III, and the only ones with speaking roles were all very dark skinned (even more so than the first one) and spoke with an accent meant to invoke Caribbean islanders rather than an English accent like most of the characters in the 2005 film. It is positive to see that there are other “ethnicities” in the centaur group as well as a whole range of skin tones, including one pale skinned baby centaur.

Omission also becomes a factor this more specific level of analysis through the naming or not naming of certain characters, not just the overall exclusion of multiple ethnic groups. In *Prince Caspian* (2008), even among the Narnian protagonists (the Pevensies and the natives of Narnia), most of the characters portrayed to have darker skin are not named, and if so, only in passing, even though a majority of the characters of the human race are made to be ethnically non-White. The name is not part of identity the way it is for the monarchs. There is nothing in the film that would question these implied power structures; they are an unquestioned institution. As Huckin says, “readers are reluctant to question statements that... appear to be taken for granted” (101). The colonial patriarchy is taken for granted in Lewis’s book, and this is something that has unfortunately remained unquestioned in the adaptation. The naming and labeling or lack

of such within the structure of CDA thus reinforces what seems to be common knowledge.

Discursive Differences

The conflict between cultures is not lost on popular reviewers. Bradshaw notes “the fact that all the heroes have British accents while the Telmarines are all decidedly Mediterranean in appearance and inflection. (Because the Brits, after all, do love to demonize the Spanish whenever they can)” (Bradshaw). The tone of the actors in addition to the tone of the film towards the Telmarines creates a tone which has racism at its roots. Muralikrishnan states that “language validates established beliefs and strengthens the authority structures of the polity or organization in which it is used. It is therefore the language form supporter of regimes or organizations rely on.” The language and linguistic differences of the characters create and maintain the social structure in *Narnia* which reflects that of the movie-goers.

All of the Telmarines speak with a Spanish accent that is markedly different from the English accent of the original English heroes. This modal difference from the heroes of the movie works to characterize the Telmarines as the villainous, less intelligent, and less civilized people. Pimentel and Velázquez note in their article the “stereotypical belief that people who speak with an accent are unintelligent and therefore sound funny” is a foreground for the movie (9). Additionally, Huckin in “Critical Discourse Analysis” says this is to “emphas[ize] certain concepts and de-emphas[ize] others” (99). Their negative features, like violence, are emphasized by the linguistic differentiation with the thicker accents working to build the antagonistic force based on stereotypes that Hispanic people are more violent and far crueler dictators.

There are several instances of stereotyped and linguistically othered characters,

but since *Prince Caspian* takes more liberties in the aspect of romantic character development, the negative stereotype of the “Latino Lover” stands out as an excellent specific example of characterization through visual and linguistic difference. This is a character trope that Pimentel and Velázquez discuss in their article “Shrek 2: An Appraisal of Mainstream Animation’s Influence on Identity.” In their article, they explain the stereotype of the Latin Lover and how this type of caricature exists in audience imaginations. Their article deals with the character, Puss in Boots, who is depicted as “the Latino Lover, who is said to have the ability to pleasure multiple women and not just one” (16). In both *Shrek 2* and *Prince Caspian*, the films both “compartmentalize Latina/o culture into an exotic archetype that fills White America’s fascinations and fears” (13). Caspian is exotic, sexy, fierce, but ultimately shaped by the view of the English people. Because of his heritage, he is at once dangerous, exotic, and in need of colonial assimilation to right his culture’s wrongs.

Racial Backdrop and Insinuation

This vilification of darker skinned people is definitely a running problem in Lewis’s original novels. Their non-English characterization is meant to insinuate that they are not to be trusted. Insinuations are “slyly suggestive,” but “powerful elements in any kind of discourse” (Huckin 101). This paradigm is exhibited through the map of Narnia and the surrounding lands. The map looks almost exactly like a slightly modified version of Europe with some of the most insidious of the series’ characters from the desert country of turbans in the South. Phillip Pullman, a critic of Lewis, notes what he believes underlies the books: “Death is better than life; boys are better than girls; light-coloured people are better than dark-coloured people; and so on” (Pullman). There is a small step towards correcting this colonial perspective. It is forward from the absence of

races other than White. The next step is eliminating stereotypes since “simplified racial caricatures enable systems of white privilege by presenting consumers with a world where the majority of complex, interesting, and realistic characters are white” (Ott and Mack 140). The importance of fidelity should not overshadow social justice, no matter how beloved a book may be.

Cultural Omission

Cultural omission refers to a lack of history and context for a group of people portrayed. While the Pevinsies have an actual culture seen at the beginning of the film, the group of Telmarines has little context other than allusions to their violence and cruelty. Aside from naming their origin as pirates and islanders, there is little actual cultural history given to the Telmarines as there is for the English, although both of them are said to have originated in our world, so logically, both have a real cultural heritage, but only one is acknowledged. This lack of cultural history and “participates in Huckin’s (1995) concept of omission, deleting important information of a text and therefore not giving the audience members the opportunity to question this” (Pimentel and Velázquez 17). Perhaps because it is a work of fantasy, some audiences may think it is useless to discuss actual racial implications in a fictional people. But the people, races, and societies that produced them are real, and so the discussion remains valid. Those who may identify racially or linguistically with the group of Telmarines see a film that has neglected to give them a complex and realistic cultural background.

Closely tied to omission is background, since “the ultimate form of backgrounding is omission—actually leaving certain things completely out of a text. . . . It often does not enter the reader’s mind and thus is not subjected to his or her scrutiny. It is difficult to raise questions about something that is not even ‘there’” (Huckin 99). The

background for this movie is the same omission of racial diversity that goes unacknowledged by many. Background “needs to be understood in terms of tensions between discontinuity and continuity, between the transformative capacity of innovative forces and new discourses, and the obduracy of existing structures, practices and habitus, and the long-term historical processes which are discernible in particular areas and regions” (Wodak et al. 2-3). In the case of the *Narnia* films, the CDA tools of omission and background greatly inform one another and, in the case of this movie, both indicate the foundation of racial hierarchy in the U.S. media. The background makes it easy for audiences and perhaps the filmmakers to presuppose that the racial stereotypes are “natural” or at least not malicious.

Because of racist stereotypes that end up providing characterization and background, “Latinos are faced with an overwhelmingly negative perception of their culture through both the media,” and those who feel these stereotypes are justified remain in a position of social power (Pimentel and Velázquez 18). Perhaps the filmmakers were simply villainizing darker-skinned people in the name of “fidelity” to Lewis’s books, but the distinct visual cues remain a decision of making the film, and the skin and language of the characters, unavailable in a novel, create identities that reflect social discourses. Within the movie, the discourses are reaching a more diverse audience and have more means (visual, audible) of reproducing discourse.

Racial Manipulation and Moral Insinuation

While on one hand the vast majority of the living and speaking characters were meant to represent other ethnicities than White, the structure of the power dynamic was framed to be more than vaguely colonial. “Framing refers to how the content of a text is presented, what sort of perspective (angle, slant) the writer is taking” (Huckin 95). The

most important and ultimately most powerful people are the English Pevinsies upon whom everything depends and revolves. Then there is the “good” Telmarine who works with the Pevinsies, and the “bad” Telmarines who are ultimately cast out. The way the main characters are portrayed and talk are “images and words most commonly used to discuss whiteness [and] reinforce [White people’s] privileged place at the center of our understanding of race” (Ott and Mack 139). This understanding is that there is a colonial hierarchy with White humans unquestionably in the “High King” role. The power chain depends on how much the others align with the Golden kings and queens. The colonial undertones are even more evident when discussing all the species of Narnia.

The name of High King is only used by Peter, the English king though Caspian may be a “king.” King and queen are never used for the natives, however, so they could thus be understood as colonized people. At one point the non-human Narnians have a rather heated argument over the possibility of whether or not they should have a human king. It is ultimately settled in favor of the humans when a badger convinces everyone that things are “always better when a Son of Adam is on the throne.” The natives cannot and should not rule; either English or Spanish people should be in power. But, in the course of the film, the English people did a much better job, ushering in Narnia’s “Golden Age,” while the Spanish have initiated a reign of terror over the talking beasts. There is a hierarchy of race overlying the colonial structure.

Minority Agency

The generalized and vilified characterization is certainly not a fair representation for all Hispanic and/or “Mediterranean” viewers because “systems of symbolic exclusion... do manage to partially erase the perspectives, interests, and needs of the significant U.S. Latino population” (Ott and Mack 140). By putting the people with

accents in the violent and antagonistic roles, the movie reinforces these stereotypes that already exist in the minds of some people. Accents and stereotypical characterization “are not random and instead are a mirror reflection of social reality” (Pimentel and Velázquez 12). Like the characters in *Shrek 2*, the majority of the “Spanish” Telmarines are “presented as criminals, mysterious, exotic, passive, deferential, poor, uneducated” (17). That is, of course, unless the character is willing to assimilate. If they can become like the Golden rulers, they can retain power. The superiority of the White English people is unfortunately upheld by the downgrading of darker people through accents and stereotypes.

The titular character, Caspian, is the exception to the degradation through assimilation. He learns to be a good ruler despite his Telmarine heritage. The audience presupposes that the English are better and therefore, in order to be a “good” ruler, Caspian must assimilate. Through this assimilation, he gains more and more agency as he learns the ways of Narnia. Even in his power, the way that Caspian enters the legitimate ruling class is problematic. Ott and Mack explain how “good” minorities are often characterized by their willingness to become like the dominant “White” culture when the “racial minorities become... assimilated into a middle or upper class that largely reflects the perspectives of white individuals” (141, 143). It is only through assimilation into the English way of doing things that Caspian gains redemption from his heritage:

Characters and personalities of color assimilated into the white, middle-class media landscapes seem to testify to the non-existence of racial ideological power, obscuring real issues of racial dominance and privilege by presenting consumers by presenting consumers with images of false diversity. This functions as a tool of hegemony, convincing people to

believe in mainstream media representations because they seem to present a racially equitable world even as the images reinforce current racial power relations (Ott and Mack 144).

The hegemony is created and maintained through normalizing media such as film. When people come to see imbalanced power structures as not only the norm, they understand dominant authorities and discourses not only as acceptable, but right. This happens within the reception of *Narnia* when the audience see traditional racial and gender structures in the characters and roles within the film and unquestioningly accept the structures with which they are subconsciously reinforced.

Chapter Conclusion

By being vigilant to the social injustices that continue to be seen, the gap of inequality between the hegemonic powers and any disempowered people will sooner close. Teun van Dijk states that “group beliefs are characteristically ideological, in the sense that they are controlled and organized by underlying ideologies... Ideological group beliefs take different forms, depending on their social functions” (123). A film, as a single and complete instance of a social iteration can be an excellent encapsulation of ideology and group norms. Through the harmless appearance of the genre, insinuations of gender, race, and agency, these discourses seen in the light of the national and religious background have the potential to be more normalizing for this group.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This project has been a critical examination of the recent 2005 and 2008 adaptations of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, how U.S. social discourses are represented and upheld through film and media, how morality has become assigned to and associated with both the films, how this association makes the films' messages seem like "common sense," and finally, this thesis has taken a critical lens as part of the larger goal of critical studies to mitigate harm on personal and cultural identity for women and minorities. There have been chapters devoted to critical discourse analysis (CDA) theoretical framework, and discourse analyses of each of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005) and *Prince Caspian* (2008) films. Finally, this chapter will offer concluding remarks on the potential power of film, and specifically the recent cinematic Chronicles of Narnia, to promote and perpetuate understandings of morality and interpretations of social discourses for audiences.

Cultural Representation

Culture and social messages can be transmitted through film. Films, such as *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005) and *Prince Caspian* (2008) represent both the culture of the U.S. by embodying and representing dominant ideologies and discourses. To review, discourses are ways of speaking, thinking, and knowing that shape and create ideologies held by society. James Gee states that "a discourse analysis involves asking

questions about how language, at a given time and place, is used to construe the aspects of the situation network as realized at that time and place and the aspects of the situation network simultaneously give meaning to that language” (Gee 92). The *Narnia* films are historically and socially contextualized representations of discourse that represent dominant ideologies about the time and society that produced them. Power imbalances seen in the film therefore represent those in society, but likewise reinforce this structure to audiences.

This thesis focuses on the power imbalances in film “because power abuse is most often centered in institutions, CDA routinely engages in institutional analysis—especially, powerful institutions such as... media” (Huckin et al. 123). Furthermore, this thesis focuses on the *Narnia* films because they have a particular resonance with perceptions of morality (at least with some audiences) by virtue of their association with the Christian Gospel. Pimentel and Velázquez point out that sociocultural power structures “and moral/value judgments are created, digitized, formatted... to attentive and impressionable audiences” (6). The audiences are even more impressionable in this case given the amount of faith placed in the story. Audiences will take the film, racism, sexism, and all and place it on a pedestal of belief.

Unconscious Racism and Sexism

Even in the feminist (sometimes called post-feminist) society of the 21st century, sexism is rooted into the U.S. social consciousness, and racism is seen in ways considered both overt and innocuous. Although some would call this historical period “post-racist,” scholarship, including critical media studies, would say otherwise. As previously stated in this thesis, there is little reason to believe that either audiences or filmmakers are consciously promoting an active agenda of discrimination. The issues of

hidden sexism and racism are subtler, and much larger than the individual films. Within the films, social discourses from the U.S. media in general are visible. The morality associated with the movies by some viewers exaggerates these issues and creates a conflation of these discourses with ethical belief, and the acceptance of the wholesomeness of the films creates an unquestioning attitude towards the discourses in the film, that reinforces the continuation of imbalanced power structures.

Moral Implications

These films in particular has a specific connection to possibly reinforcing morality, which is why I chose them for CDA study. Much religious allegory is ascribed to the stories, even in the most recent films. These films were, and indeed still are frequently pitted against “secular” films in their genre, such as the *Harry Potter* series. *The Chronicles of Narnia* are regarded by many as an extension of the Gospel, or at least a paraphrased version of the Bible. Unfortunately, this fervor leads audiences to accept the socially contrasted power imbalances as part of the moral message. Lilie Chouliaraki discusses the moral power of the media, saying that a “concern with the role of media in cultivating cosmopolitan sensibilities among audiences inevitably raises questions about the... moral power of representation” (831). The moral power of representation in Narnia has the potential to be almost unquestioned by association with religion, but the fact remains that this film was produced by a still racist and sexist society, not by a true religious authority. The “family friendly” genre of films have the potential to be subversive to trusting audiences since any traces of sexism and racism may become glossed over and seen as similarly harmless and natural and indeed not in opposition with morality. Audiences are thus either unaware of traces of racism and sexism or they see and ignore them in light of a larger perceived morality.

These high-grossing U.S. films contain recognizable cultural discourses and ideologies, and can be considered a representation of U.S. culture. Ott and Mack remind readers that “a culture’s... ideologies help determine the structures of popular media texts like television shows, films, music, and periodicals” (139). The thought patterns of the film cannot be extracted from the thought patterns of the culture as a whole. Additionally, morality is just as historically contextualized as a film so this subculture is heavily influenced by the discourses and larger ideologies shaping the society that has shaped the U.S. media.

Through media, discourses become “common knowledge” and thus the represented ethical systems become viewed as acceptable and normal by consumers. Just as the cultural knowledge base produces iterations of discourse in the media, the media is just as likely to reinforce the power structure that creates it. “That which we regard as ‘knowledge,’ very loosely speaking, is configured in discursive (and generic) arrangements, reflecting the larger social organizations with their structures of power in which ‘knowledge’ is realized/articulated through the representational means available in a particular culture and its society” (Kress 443). Gendered and racial power structures are created and reflected in the media and become part of “normal” and “common knowledge” without intervention.

CDA Goals

In this thesis, CDA has been used to approach and uncover the hegemonies represented in the film with the ethical approach of trying in some way to reverse these. “CDA is an ethical approach to analyzing texts with the goal of uncovering power imbalances that are embedded within texts and images that work to (re)produce racial constructs, and in extension, the status quo” (Pimentel and Sawyer 100). Gendered power

relations are seen in the film and reinforced through framing of characters, labels such as mother and witch, and insinuations about agency. Similarly, analysis of omission, discursive differences, visual cues, and agency through assimilation show the social underpinnings of racism. The genre of the film made these movies seem safe and harmless, when really they contained underpinnings of discrimination that can be harmful. Without even realizing it, audiences may incorporate these beliefs into their own ideologies and identities if they are not careful. Certain types of “popular” racism are recognized in the media as excluding minorities or basing characters and actions of minority actors on stereotypes, which reinforces damaging racist ideas. Actors with darker skin and who are not linguistically mainstream are either not seen, they are stereotyped, or they are othered through these characteristics as the “villain.”

Composition Connection

According to Huckin, “CDA [is] a powerful new methodology for rhetoric and composition, leading to unusually rich and versatile research” (Huckin et al. 110). This thesis combines the interdisciplinary elements of CDA with the background and goals of rhetoric and composition with the overarching goal of helping to move the university to recognize and revoke power imbalances in many different arenas. “Rhetoric and composition has always been concerned with the power of spoken and written discourse” and these discourses are present in the films and in the relationships of students and teachers in composition (Huckin et al. 109).

Critical pedagogy may be connected to critical discourse analysis. Critical pedagogy engages students with social justice issues and issues that they may themselves face, knowingly or unknowingly, and acquaints them with counter-discourses to recognize and begin to reverse discrimination.

The scholarship of this thesis can be reproduced in part in all levels of writing classes, from instruction on critical media studies, to having students reflect on CDA issues in a film or other media, to even having students conduct research on a CDA issue they discover in the media. Issues like racism and sexism are not merely abstract notions, but are ideologies which affect people's lives every day. These discourses are reinforced in the media, and into the lives and moral compasses of composition students, but a critical pedagogy used in conjunction with CDA can make university students and teachers more aware of the discourses and their own agency in promoting or countering them.

It is important to recognize that social agendas shape perceptions of morality and ethical representation just as much as a moral system may be thought to shape society. This thesis seeks to separate and analyze the ways this process works and tries to mitigate the negative influence of harmful power structures. Teun van Dijk states that "there are many discursive ways to enhance or mitigate our/their good/bad things, and hence to mark discourse ideologically" (127). Thus, the theory and the hope behind this thesis is that it will help both to mitigate ideological discriminations and to stop automatically associating racist and sexist messages with moral, ethical, or safe family films which are often subversive of what may be considered overt morality. Society may say racism is bad, but when racist discourses are permeating a film, that first message is undermined.

Race and gender power struggles are power balances which affect virtually all members of society, from the broader social discourses, down to interpersonal relationships, therefore this awareness of power imbalance is relevant to the study of rhetoric and composition. This is even relevant to the teaching of writing since "racist ideologies do not stop at [the national media] level, which would be bad enough, but

carry into schools, where minoritized children continue to be oppressed because of the same racist ideologies” even though “schools try to break away from these narrow stereotypical constructs” (Pimentel and Velázquez 19). Through recognizing the power structures reinforced through social discourse in the media, scholars and teachers become more aware of these same power structures enacted at the university level, and they too can work to reverse the processes that would stereotype and exclude students.

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