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Incarnations of Lilith?

The Snow Queen in Literature for Young Readers

ABSTRACT In folk tales, good women are contrasted with evil ones. One specific kind of evil women are the snow queens, for example those depicted in Hans Christian Andersen's tales *The Snow Queen* and "The Ice Maiden." Other examples are the White Witch in the *Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis and Mrs Coulter in Philip Pullman's trilogy *His Dark Materials*. The realms of the snow queens are cold, frozen and sterile landscapes always covered with snow and ice – a symbol of their cold and dangerous sexuality. The queens are powerful women, beautiful, seductive and rebellious against patriarchal structures. They can be seen as incarnations of Lilith, Adam's first wife, and as female vampires, constantly looking for new victims. The only way of escaping being seduced by a snow queen is to be rescued by true and eternal love. Women with a desire for power and independence have to live their lives without love and are doomed to a cold and lonely existence. In this way, the snow queen stories support patriarchal gender ideologies.

KEYWORDS Snow Queen, Ice Maiden, H. C. Andersen, C. S. Lewis, Philip Pullman, evil women, Narnia, Lilith

The image of women in literature for young readers is not clear-cut. In the old folk tales for example, good women are frequently contrasted with evil ones, often in the same story: biological mothers are warm-hearted and generous, stepmothers are cold, mean and cruel. There are good fairies as well as evil ones, and witches of both kinds appear.

The snow queens modelled on the central character of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen* (1844) form a specific group of evil women.¹ Andersen's tale is the story of two children, Gerda and Kay, who live near each other and who are very close friends. One day when they are looking in a picture-book, Kay feels a sudden pain in his eye and his heart caused by splinters from a magic mirror. All of a sudden he is totally changed. He turns mean, cold and nasty and he is no longer interested in playing with Gerda. Out in the snow, all on his own, playing with his toboggan, he encounters an exotic woman sitting on a white sledge. Kay ties his toboggan to hers and is swept away, unable to detach himself again. When they stop, Kay is lifted over to the Snow Queen's sledge. She hides him under her fur and brings him with her to her palace.

At home, Gerda misses her friend and eventually decides to go and look for him. On her way she runs into an old woman who practices witchcraft. She stays with the old lady for quite a while and forgets all about Kay. One day she remembers her mission and starts to look for her friend again. Finally, she arrives at the palace of the Snow Queen where she finds Kay lonely and frozen. The sight of him makes her cry and her tears melt the ice in Kay's heart which makes him cry too. As a result, the splinter in his eye is dislodged, and together they leave the palace and return home.

Since Andersen writes his tales very much in the tradition of the folk tale whose main focus is the child's fear of adulthood and the process of becoming mature (Lüthi 1994), many interpretations of *The Snow Queen* concentrate on sexuality and the growing process of the two children. Margaret Rustin, for example, finds "unmistakable references to the excitement of growing up, to sexuality" (2005: 8) in the text, even though she also emphasises its religious frame. Wolfgang Lederer points out that the story of the two children leaving home and eventually returning as adults is a symbol of their search for adulthood (1986: 68-69). René Rasmussen, however, initially mentions dichotomies such as good and evil, innocence and guilt and sexuality and non-

sexuality, but she also comments specifically on the Snow Queen in connection with Kay: once connected to her sledge he is a part of her universe and cannot escape. Her kisses cause a state of amnesia which is comparable to death. Too many kisses would actually kill him and that, according to Rasmussen, indicates that female power and sexual pleasure are fatal (2002: 71, 74).

The presence and the power of the Snow Queen are indicated early in the tale when Andersen describes how winter and cold affect the lives of Kay and Gerda and make it hard for them to meet – an omen of the arrival of the Snow Queen but also an omen of the children's forthcoming separation. One night when Kay looks out of the window, he sees a snow-flake which slowly grows and transforms into a female character dressed in white. She is an extremely beautiful and attractive woman with sparkling eyes "but in them there was neither rest nor peace" (Andersen 2005: 216). This is Kay's first meeting with the Snow Queen. He is impressed by her beauty, but scared of her seductive power at the same time. The Snow Queen has now made her first attempt at taking possession of his heart. The splinter from the magic mirror that turns his heart into a lump of ice is her second move. It now becomes clear that her power over his heart is not only painful but might even prove fatal. No one can live with a heart made of ice and so Kay is an easy target for the Snow Queen when she comes to abduct him.

She is magnificent when she arrives in her white sledge. Rasmussen describes her as "the woman of women" (2002: 72). Even though there are other boys than Kay playing in the snow, he is the only one trying to attach his toboggan to the Snow Queen's sledge. Every time he tries to escape, the Snow Queen turns around, looks at him and nods. This is enough to make him surrender. As earlier, when looking out of the window, Kay sees how the snow-flakes grow larger and larger and after a while the sledge stops and the Snow Queen materialises. Again, he is struck by her looks but this time the Snow Queen also kisses him. The first kiss goes straight to his heart already half-way to being a lump of ice (218) and he feels as if he is going to die. The second kiss makes him forget all about his past. According to Lederer, it kills "his emotions [...] altogether, and nothing is left but 'cold reason'" (1986: 30). He receives no third kiss or "else I shall kiss you to death," the Snow Queen says (237). She is determined in her search for satisfac-

tion. Kay is already blinded by her seductive influence which suggests that female sexuality is dangerous, even lethal. Kay is fully controlled by the Snow Queen who has not only taken control of his heart, but also his eyes and his mind. From this moment she seems perfect. She is the most beautiful person he has ever seen and she no longer gives the impression of being made of ice (220). Kay has taken the first step towards adulthood, which means that he is becoming aware of sexuality as well as of death, both represented by a powerful female creature (Rasmussen 2002: 73).

The Snow Queen is in every respect Gerda's opposite. Gerda is a child and the Snow Queen is a woman. Gerda stands for the innocence of a child, whereas the Snow Queen is a perfect seductress, scheming and powerful. Gerda is warm and loving but the Snow Queen is frigid and never shows any warm affection whatsoever. Her ice palace is a place where cold, sexuality and undefeatable death reign forever (Rasmussen 2002: 73). After having been kissed by the Snow Queen, Kay forgets his prayers as well as his home, his friends and his family. Lederer claims that the Queen is Reason herself (1986: 65) and therefore dangerous. She brings death to faith and to childhood. The feminine norm in the nineteenth century was a woman as wife and mother. Some evolutionists even argued that woman's development was arrested at an earlier stage than men's to ensure the maximum efficiency of her reproductive function (Pykett 1992: 13). The Snow Queen, with her inability to reproduce, is therefore an unnatural woman according to nineteenth-century gender ideology. Pykett also emphasises that even though Victorian theorists define women in terms of their sexual function, "normal" femininity is passionless and passive and consequently female sexuality is frightening and threatening (15). Thus, the Snow Queen with her powerful and demanding appearance and her cold sexuality, exercises a fatal attraction on men and is a most intimidating creature.

When Kay first catches sight of the Snow Queen, he notices her outfit. The first time she is dressed in "the finest white gauze which looked as if it had been made from millions of star-shaped flakes" (216). The second time she is "in a fur coat and a cap made of snow" (218). There is really nothing seductive about her clothing, but the first thing she says to Kay is "[c]rawl under my bear coat," and after having put her fur coat around him, she starts kissing him (218). She liter-

ally invites him in under her clothes, a very obvious act of seduction, almost as obvious as when Little Red Riding Hood is invited into bed with the wolf. Kay's inability to resist her is understandable, since the tale on one level tells the story of him growing up and becoming a man. Rasmussen, however, calls attention to the fact that sexual desire and sexual pleasure put Kay in a state reminiscent of death – a fact that does not prevent him from giving himself over to it (2002: 72). He is captured in the frozen world of the Snow Queen and he neither can nor wants to leave it. It is in this condition Gerda finally finds him when she arrives at the palace of the Snow Queen. He is “blue, yes, almost black, with the cold. But he did not feel it, because the Snow Queen had kissed away his icy tremblings, and his heart itself had almost turned to ice” (236). The Snow Queen herself is absent, but she still keeps her power over him. He is occupied with an ice puzzle since the Snow Queen has promised him that she will set him free if he can work out the pattern. On the floor, the ice puzzle forms the word that the Snow Queen has told him that he must find to get his freedom back – *eternity* (236).

It is clear that Andersen's tale about the Snow Queen, like many other of his tales and many folk tales as well, is a story about leaving childhood and becoming an adult. Therefore, both Kay and Gerda have to leave their homes and go through an adventurous and sometimes frightening journey to gain maturity. To Kay, sexual desire is crucial and he is eager to follow the beautiful and experienced woman who gives him access to her body and her bed. Female sexuality, however, is dangerous and consequently the Snow Queen may be viewed as the incarnation of death and evil. The description of the Snow Queen's palace is very much like a portrayal of hell albeit cold instead of warm (235). Time has stopped, Kay's heart has almost stopped and even his intellectual skills have ceased to function. He has become the target of “the improper feminine,” in other words of a woman who is figured as “a subversive threat to the family; threateningly sexual; [...] desiring and actively pleasure-seeking; [...] independent; enslaver; and victimizer or predator” (Pykett 1992: 16). What saves him in the end is not cold reason, “it is redemption through the love of woman,” Lederer claims (1986: 182). This means that the Snow Queen and her frozen realm can be defeated only by a *true* woman, a “naturally dependent, self-sacrificial, nurturing, maternal creature” (Pykett 1992: 55).

It is important, however, to notice that Gerda, as well as Kay, goes through a phase of amnesia when she, on her way to find him, encounters an old woman. The difference between the Snow Queen and the old woman is striking. The latter is kind and warm and ensnares Gerda by gently combing her hair and giving her a lovely bed with a “red silk coverlet quilted with blue violets” (222). Gerda’s bed is unmistakably intended for lust and love, but she is still too young which is why she can only dream “as gloriously as any queen upon her wedding day” (222).

By showing her a lovely flower-garden like the Garden of Eden where Gerda can play, the old woman – Lederer calls her Mother Earth (1986: 40) – makes the girl forget time and Kay for a while and Bruno Bettelheim also mentions that many tales “have the period of passivity for their central topic” (1977: 225). After some time of contemplation Gerda realises that she has been wasting her time at the old woman’s place and resumes her search for Kay. When she finds him, they are no longer children and can return home to build a life together. Because of Gerda’s innocence and warmth Kay is free and able to love her. The cold Snow Queen is no longer the queen of Kay’s heart – Gerda has replaced her and so they are “grown-up, but children – children at heart” (238). The old woman’s spell has not been a threat to Gerda’s heart and feelings and has not made her cold-hearted. Instead, she has given Gerda the time needed to adjust to her role as an adult.

The Snow Queen, however, is trapped in her cold realm where eternity is such a horrible thing that not even the word is to be spelled out when she is around. With no husband and no children of her own, unable to reproduce but with a twisted and perverted desire for little boys, she is not a true woman, but condemned to eternal loneliness in her empty and frigid palace (236).

About sixteen years later, Anderson returns to the idea of a powerful woman connected with snow and ice in another story called “The Ice Maiden” (Andersen 2005: 606-641). This tale however, is seldom included in the volumes of Andersen’s works and it is as a consequence less well-known than *The Snow Queen*. Still, there are obvious connections between the two stories and, of course, between the two female characters.

“The Ice Maiden” is the story about Rudy, an orphan who lives with his grandfather in the Swiss mountains. As a young boy, he falls in love with the miller’s daughter Babette and they are engaged to be

married. The night before the wedding they go out to a small island. All of a sudden, they see their boat drifting away from the shore. Rudy plunges into the lake to get it back and disappears in the water. His fiancée is rescued the next day, but, as Andersen concludes, “the guide-books tell nothing about Babette’s quiet life in her father’s house” after that day (641).

The Ice Maiden is the queen of the glaciers “whose joy and in whose power it is to seize and imprison her victims” (613). She attempted to abduct Rudy when he was a baby, but failed. She is now absolutely determined to capture the young man she thinks is rightfully hers, even though he is still alive:

And yet a beautiful boy was snatched from me – one whom I had kissed, but not yet kissed to death! He is again among human beings – he tends his goats on the mountain peaks; he is always climbing higher and still higher, far, far from other humans, but never from me! He is mine! I will fetch him! (609)

That the Snow Queen and the Ice Maiden are identical is “suggested [...] by their frigid nature, and by the kisses of death they bestow” (Lederer 1986: 29). Both women might be looked upon as symbols of Death, reminiscent of the Norse mythological goddess called Hel who rules over Nifelheim which is “a cold and misty place” corresponding to “the hot Mediterranean Hell of the Church Fathers (Lederer 1986: 29). Like the Snow Queen, the Ice Maiden is interested in little boys, although she knows that her kisses can kill and that she is of another kind than Rudy since he is human and she is not.

The Ice Maiden’s second move comes when Rudy is a young man, engaged to Babette but jealous of a young man who has shown too much interest in her. After an argument with Babette, Rudy is on his way home “following the mountain path, with its cold fresh air, and where the snow is deep and the Ice Maiden reigns” (633). He catches sight of a young girl who reminds him of someone. He asks her for some milk but she offers him wine. After having had some of it, he wants to kiss her. First, however, she asks him to give her his engagement ring. They kiss and he cries with pain – he has, of course, met the Ice Maiden in disguise. He has been unable to resist her attraction and given in to his desire for pleasure and enjoyment, and she has succeeded in her attempt to come between him and Babette (635).

The night before the wedding, Rudy meets the Ice Maiden for the last time. When the boat drifts away from the island where Rudy and Babette are sitting, holding hands, Rudy goes after it. The water is icy and clear and he thinks that he sees a golden ring that he wants to get. In the deep, he finds the Ice Maiden who kisses his feet: "Mine! Mine!" she says. "I kissed you when you were little – kissed you on the mouth! Now I kiss you on your toes and your heels – now you belong to me" (639). At last she has achieved what she has craved for a long time. She has managed this at the last moment: the next day Rudy would have promised Babette eternal love and he would no longer have been a virgin. Instead of marrying Babette, he becomes part of the Ice Maiden's collection of young men and women who have fallen into the crevasses of the mountains. They all stand in the icy water, looking exactly as they did in life but not alive anymore and like her, they are no longer able to reproduce. The Ice Maiden's realm is beyond time but not blessed the way Christian eternity is. Like the Snow Queen's palace, it is a cold hell. When Rudy allows himself to be attracted to the cold sexuality of the Ice Maiden and forget about his duties to Babette, he gives up not only true and eternal love but also sexuality and any possibility of reproduction. The Ice Maiden is as unable to conceive and give birth as all snow queens. By choosing the Ice Maiden, Rudy condemns himself as well as Babette to eternal loneliness and sterility.

The Queen of Narnia, alias the White Witch, also has to be seen as an incarnation of the Andersen Snow Queen. She appears in the second book (the first in the publication order) of the Chronicles of Narnia – *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) – telling the story of four children who are with an elderly professor in a large country-house.² The children decide to explore the house and come upon an empty room containing only a wardrobe. Still in the wardrobe in the real world and still unaware of the existence of Narnia and its inhabitants, Lucy can feel "something soft and powdery and extremely cold" on the floor (Lewis 2000: 12). The wardrobe is the sluice gate between the real world and the world of Narnia, the realm of the White Witch. For many years she has kept Narnia in a firm grip: "It's she who makes it always winter. Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!" one of the fauns complains (22). Evidently, she is a woman of great power and has made Narnia frozen and sterile, a landscape always covered with snow and ice, without joy or happiness. The four chil-

dren have to participate in a battle between the White Witch and her enemy Aslan, a lion and Narnia's true king. When the White Witch is killed, the children become kings and queens, and spend many years in Narnia, growing to maturity, before they return home and become children again.

Edmund, one of the four siblings, is the one who meets the Queen of Narnia first. She comes in a sledge drawn by two reindeer and she is taller than any woman he has seen before. Her colour is crucial and according to Cathy McSporran, Lewis very thoroughly calls the reader's attention to this when introducing her: "The White Witch is not just dressed in white; she is defined by whiteness" (2005: 194). Therefore even her face is white – "not merely pale, but white like snow or paper or icing-sugar, except for her red mouth. It was a beautiful face in other respects, but proud and cold and stern" (Lewis 2000: 34). The red mouth in her white face gives her an almost vampiric appearance. Like a female Dracula, she is unable to experience true love. In her ambition to satisfy a tormented sexuality which brings no pleasure but only eternal frustration (Botting 1996: 144-154), she constantly has to find new victims. "The witches know they are beautiful, and use their beauty not to bring pleasure to men, but to put others under their control," Jean E. Graham claims in her study of women in the Narnia chronicle (2004: 40). The White Witch invites Edmund to come and sit at her feet in the sledge and she tucks him in thoroughly with her fur mantle. The resemblance to the scene when Kay meets the Snow Queen for the first time is striking – with the difference that Andersen's Snow Queen, unlike the White Witch, has come to the human world and knows for whom she is looking. Since she is not human herself, she cannot exist in the human world. Therefore she and the other snow queens create, like their male precursor Dracula, their own realms, with impressive palaces where they reside as living dead and keep their victims.

In Lewis' tale, it is Edmund who has left the real world and come to Narnia. At their first meeting, the Snow Queen is not really sure of what he is. "Are you human?" she asks (36) – a question which underlines the fact that she, like the Snow Queen and the Ice Maiden, is not human herself. Edmund, however, is not really at ease under the Queen's mantle so she has to start her act of seduction. The Queen has noticed that Edmund is a childish and not very nice little boy (McBride 2005:

61) so instead of kissing him with her red mouth, she offers him a hot drink and his favourite candy, Turkish Delight. Her Turkish Delight is of course enchanted and anyone who has once tasted it will eat themselves to death (40). In other words, her candy, if consumed in too large quantities, is as fatal as too many kisses from the Andersen Snow Queen.

Even though neither Lewis nor Andersen directly addresses sexuality, the children in the three stories have to deal with dangerous women who represent the connection between female sexuality and power. The Queen of Narnia, the children are told by Mr. Beaver, is a daughter of Lilith, Adam's first wife (82). According to *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, Lilith claims that since she and Adam were created in the same way (they were both made from the same piece of clay) they are equal. She therefore refuses to lie below him and finally abandons him. When she refuses to return to him, her punishment is deportation to the desert and life as a demon. Hundreds of her children are to die in childbirth or from hunger every day because of her disobedience. The White Witch "is 'a daughter of Lilith,' and will never 'learn her lesson.' Nor can she be pardoned, or offered pity" (McSporran 2005: 192). Lilith represents the opposite of the Christian message since she declines a position inferior to Adam's and is a threat to patriarchal authority. Her refusal to lie below him can also be interpreted literally, indicating that her sexuality is about power, which makes it dangerous (Graham 2004: 33-34). She denies Adam access to her body and refuses to attend to her commitments as a mother that is, the Andersen snow queens and the White Witch show no maternal instinct at all. Furthermore, the White Witch lives in her realm, isolated from the other inhabitants of Narnia. She makes her country sterile through perpetual winter, a symbol of her infertility also demonstrated by the circumstance that she has no children of her own (Graham 2004: 39). Her situation is the result of her wish for power and her disobedience towards Aslan who represents male authority. "Lilith demands equality; the White Witch demands, like Milton's Satan, to 'Reign in Hell,' even if she must turn Narnia into hell to achieve her aim," Cathy McSporran concludes (2005: 194). The same is true of the Snow Queen and the Ice Maiden. They have all created their own Hell, resembling the ninth circle of Hell, as described by Dante in *Divina Commedia*, where all the sinners are completely encapsulated in ice. Dante's Satan is impotent – the snow queens are sterile.

Sterility, however, goes further than to bring snow and cold to the snow queen's realms. All three of them are incapable of reproduction, a punishment for female rebellion against "the principle of 'natural' authority, particularly masculine authority" (McSporran 2005: 192). In the nineteenth century, for a woman, getting married meant that she accepted "the moral and reproductive labour of the wife and mother" (Pykett 1992: 12). This role is out of the question for snow queens who, as a consequence, have to steal children – young boys in particular. "I have no children of my own," the White Witch says to Edmund and she continues: "I want a nice boy whom I could bring up as a Prince and who would be King of Narnia when I am gone" (Lewis 40-41). It is, however, not the longing for motherhood – a kind of respectable femininity – that makes the White Witch wish for a child – it is the need of an heir. Thus, it is obvious that the White Witch is a deviation from the nineteenth-century norm of ideal femininity.

When Edmund finally enters the palace of the White Witch, it is obvious that he has come to a place that resembles the palace of the Snow Queen and the underwater world of the Ice Maiden. It is cold and quiet and the courtyard is filled with statues – people that the White Witch has turned into stone (164). The statues, like the victims of the Ice Maiden, look the way they did in life – they have been captured in the middle of action. In the same way as the realms of the Snow Queen and the Ice Maiden, the realm of the white Witch is beyond time. It is a frozen eternity where Edmund now risks being detained.

At the end of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the White Witch is overpowered and killed by Aslan since, according to McSporran, her "inhumanity negates her femininity, and justifies any form of violence against her" (2005: 199). As a result, Narnia is released from its state of eternal winter. There is, however, an important difference between the White Witch on the one hand and the Snow Queen and the Ice Maiden on the other. When the White Witch is defeated by goodness – one could even say grace – her realm and her prisoners are saved. "Narnia was" as Watt-Evans points out, "created without evil [...]" and the White Witch brought in evil" (2005: 28). When she dies, Narnia goes back to its original state and even Father Christmas returns as a symbol of joy and happiness.

Philip Pullman, author of the trilogy *His Dark Materials*, also introduces an incarnation of the Snow Queen in his novel *The Golden*

Compass (1995) – the story of Lyra Belacqua, a girl raised and educated by Oxford scholars.³ She has had a carefree and unconfined life, but when Lord Asriel – a man who Lyra has known as her uncle but who turns out to be her father – returns to Oxford from exploring the North some strange events where children go missing begin, and Lyra herself is taken away from Oxford to live with the attractive but cunning Mrs Coulter. Lyra and her *dæmon*, Pantalaimon, discover that Mrs Coulter is behind the abductions.⁴ They escape and try to rescue the stolen children. Lyra's journey becomes a life and death struggle and it also raises the question whether Lyra will take on the role Destiny has decreed for her or not. "There is a curious prophecy about this child: she is destined to bring about the end of destiny," one of the witches announces, identifying Lyra as a redeemer (271). Her first mission in *The Golden Compass* is when she has to set free the *dæmons* and the children captured by Mrs Coulter. Her role as redeemer is emphasised in the third book of the trilogy when she leaves the human world to break open the world of the dead.

The snow queen Mrs Coulter makes her first appearance in the novel at a market. She is described as a "lady in a long yellow-red fox-fur coat, a beautiful young lady whose dark hair falls, shining delicately, under the shadow of her fur-lined hood" (Pullman 2003: 37). She is observing a little boy and after a while she offers him a drink of chocolate. Even though she looks quite different from the previous snow queens with her dark hair and her yellow-red fur coat, her seductive skills are indisputable. Like Lilith, Mary Harris Russel points out, she is assertive, sexual and independent (215) – qualities not necessarily regarded as desirable when it comes to women – and she has already captured at least a dozen children – boys as well as girls. She is not only beautiful but also charismatic: "Mrs Coulter [...] was not like any female Scholar Lyra had seen [...] Mrs Coulter had such an air of glamour that Lyra was entranced" (59). In Mrs Coulter Pullman has introduced another daughter of Lilith with "a penchant for stealing children" (McSporran 2005: 197). It is, however, not only her looks and her manners that make an impression on Lyra. When Mrs Coulter starts telling her about the North and Greenland, Lyra is enraptured and she now finds Mrs Coulter the most wonderful person she has ever met (61). Her talents as a seductress are beyond doubt and her connection to ice and snow is established.

Lyra leaves Oxford and moves in with Mrs Coulter in her apartment, but when she learns about the kidnapped children and Mrs Coulter's connection to them, she escapes. This is the beginning of a long and adventurous expedition that takes Lyra far up north where snow, ice and cold reign. She understands that Mrs Coulter is actually her mother and in charge of an organisation – the Oblation Board – that uses children for scientific experiments. Mrs Coulter realises that Lyra will become a threat to the board and goes after her. In an essay treating Pullman's trilogy, Burton Hatlen points out that throughout the novel, Lyra is the hero and Mrs Coulter the principal villain (Hatlen 2005: 79). What Hatlen does not mention is that the fight between Mrs Coulter and her daughter is a fight between the devilish and the divine, between Lilith and her daughter. Since Lyra has not been under her mother's influence while growing up, she is not contaminated by Mrs Coulter's wickedness. According to Harris Russel, Mrs Coulter is a seeker of knowledge and she mesmerises Lyra when talking about the things she has learned and experienced (215). However, being a snow queen she lacks the knowledge of how to be a mother and a natural woman. Lyra is intelligent and ambitious like her mother, but remains warm-hearted and compassionate and acts out of instinct instead of hunger for power.

Mrs Coulter shows no mercy for the children she has captured. She is also an unnatural mother since she has never taken any interest in Lyra when she was a baby. Her father, Lord Asriel, explains it to Lyra:

You see, your mother's always been ambitious for power. At first she tried to get it in the normal way, through marriage, but that didn't work, as I think you've heard. So she had to turn to the Church. Naturally she couldn't take the route a man could have taken – priesthood and so on – it had to be unorthodox; she had to set up her own order, her own channels or influence, and work through that. (328)

In Lord Asriel's view, Lyra's mother should have been satisfied with what she would have been able to achieve as his wife, since that is what he considers "the normal way." As a woman, she cannot become a priest. What is left for her is to reign with the help of evil. Her realm is the research station in the North where "the Aurora was swaying

above them in golden arcs and loops, and all around was the bitter arctic cold" (182-183). Mrs Coulter's arrival is the entrance of a true snow queen, announced in various ways in the text: it gets colder and colder, the lake is frozen, and the snowfall gets more and more intense. Lyra, who is in a sledge on her way to the Experimental Station of The Oblation Board, finds herself stiff and cold.

At the station, the purpose of catching children is finally revealed to Lyra by Mrs Coulter. By separating a child from its *dæmon* – a horrible idea to Lyra – people will get saved from Dust. "You see," Mrs Coulter explains to Lyra,

your *dæmon*'s a wonderful friend and companion when you're young, but at the age we call puberty, the age you're coming to very soon, darling, *dæmons* bring all sorts of troublesome thoughts and feelings, and that's what lets Dust in. (248)

This will, according to Mrs Coulter, make everything peaceful – forever.

Obviously, Mrs Coulter and the Oblation Board want to keep people in an eternal state of immaturity, at least when it comes to sexual matters. Lyra instinctively feels that there is something wrong about this and she is determined to fight Mrs Coulter and the Board and to set all the children and their *dæmons* free. Unfortunately, the battle has to take place in an environment that suits Mrs Coulter far better than Lyra and the children: the realm of a snow queen where the air is frozen and the falling snow makes them blind. Lyra fears that even though they manage to escape, they might die of cold.

The portrait of Mrs Coulter is, as noticed by Lisa Hopkins, complex (2005: 54). Despite her indifference toward Lyra when she was a baby and despite her cold voice and her face "a frozen glare of intense feeling" (259) during the combat, she is prepared to sacrifice herself to save Lyra. But, according to Hopkins, this is Pullman's way of demonstrating how "love for one's own child is entirely compatible with the most extreme forms of selfishness and ruthlessness" (2005: 54). This view is not indisputable, however. Lilith, Adam's first wife, revolted against "proper" masculine authority" and that made her monstrous (McSparran 2005: 193). The portrait of Mrs Coulter, refusing to take on the role as a wife and a mother, abducting children and using them for painful,

scientific experiments which she even seems to enjoy, makes her seem monstrous as well. Her husband Lord Asriel does not approve of her ambitions, and Mary Harris Russel describes her as someone following “a completely independent path toward power and ego satisfaction” (2005: 215). On the other hand, one might perhaps say that Mrs Coulter’s heart is not as frozen as the hearts of the Andersen Snow Queen, the Ice Maiden and the White Which, perhaps because she is after all a mother. This becomes more obvious in the second book of the trilogy, *The Subtle Knife* (1997). It is clear, however, that female ambition and power are not compatible with maternal skills and maternal devotion in Pullman’s texts.

Snow queens in literature for children and adolescents are generally incarnations of Lilith and consequently evil. They are powerful and seductive which makes them more villainous than their male counterparts. What they fear most of all is love and warmth and they fight to keep their victims away from warm and gentle feelings as well as love and passion by putting them in a state between life and death, preventing them from growing up. The only way of escaping this fate is to be rescued by true and everlasting love. Women who have a desire for power and independence will have to live their lives without love. They are doomed to a cold and lonely existence. In this way, the representations of the snow queens in literature for young readers become powerful reinforcements of patriarchal gender ideologies.

NOTES

¹ *The Snow Queen* is included in *Nye Eventyr, Første Bind. Anden Samling* (1845) but was first published 21 Dec. 1844.

² The Chronicles of Narnia comprise, in publication order, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), *Prince Caspian: The Return to Narnia* (1951), *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), *The Silver Chair* (1953), *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), *The Magician’s Nephew* (1955) and *The Last Battle* (1956).

³ The trilogy comprises the following novels: *Northern Lights* (released as *The Golden Compass* in North America and published in 1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997) and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000).

⁴ People’s souls manifest themselves as animals, so called dæmons.

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