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The Box of Delights and *The Chronicles of Narnia*

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ABSTRACT – The present paper will consider the influence of Masefield's *The Box of Delights* on Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*. Lewis himself openly acknowledged his admiration for and indebtedness to Masefield's work, and the influence of the earlier novel is clearly evident on several occasions in the *Chronicles*. However, certain key differences in the two authors' handling of similar themes and motifs reveal fundamental divergences in their attitudes to childhood and their vision of the function of children's literature.

KEYWORDS – Masefield; Lewis; *Narnia*; *Box of Delights*; children's literature; fantasy literature; BBC Children's television; Christmas; Christmas literature; portal quest fantasy; liminal fantasy.

1. Introduction, with a brief note on the 1980s BBC adaptations

The 1984 BBC adaptation of Masefield's *The Box of Delights* was, at the time of filming, one of the most expensive television series ever made, taking up one twelfth of the broadcasting corporation's total budget of twelve million pounds. The series began a tradition of lavish Christmas adaptations for children which, after *The Children of Green Knowe* in 1986, was followed by Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in 1988. All three of these productions were produced by the BBC's Paul Stone and met with considerable success in the United States. These 1980s television series were a huge cultural phenomenon, with children rushing home from school to see them. They featured on the front cover of the *Radio Times*, which included detailed plot summaries and cast lists for each episode, and were promoted on *Blue Peter* and *Pebble Mill at One* (Errington 2020, 108-11).

The adaptations of Lewis' and Masefield's children's classics are still much remembered by the generation who grew up watching them, as witness

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the *The Box of Delights Appreciation Society* on Facebook, which has over two thousand members, and fact that the numerous fanzines / Facebook groups dedicated to the Narnia books make frequent reference to the BBC series. A cursory glance at the photography and casting choices will reveal that the Disney films, and especially *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, were hugely influenced by the 1988 television series. These online communities centre on nostalgia: on nostalgia for the past childhood of their various members. From the thoroughly postmodern, globalised world of social media and Netflix, they also look back to the (perhaps illusory) simplicity that existed during the BBC's golden age as a national broadcaster, when schoolchildren and their families united around their television screens across the country at a given time and on a given date, in stark contrast to the proliferation of content and temporal fluidity which characterises the various streaming platforms.

Yet even at the time of their release, these series in some ways constituted a nostalgia project. With the collapse of traditional industries, widespread privatization and the miners' strike, the country house settings of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Box of Delights*, together with their emphasis on ancient festive traditions and frequent recourse to medievalism, must have felt like a welcome glimpse back into another, distant world. Although Cold War tensions had begun to ease under Gorbachev, the possibility of a nuclear Armageddon still seemed very real. Moreover, when it undertook these prestige projects, the BBC's privileged status as the national broadcaster was under attack. Thatcher repeatedly discussed the abolition of the licence fee and the need for the BBC to seek extra revenue from advertising.

That these two novels were chosen for adaptation in such close succession reflects a number of concerns and themes which are common to both their authors. Lewis was hugely enthusiastic about Masefield's novel. Thanking Martin Hooton for sending him a copy of the book in 1959, he wrote:

> the beauties, all the "delights" that keep on emerging from the box – are so exquisite and quite unlike anything I have seen elsewhere. (Hooper 2005)

We will see during this article that the influence of Masefield's *The Box of Delights* and, to a lesser extent, of *The Midnight Folk* can be clearly traced right across Lewis' *Narnia* series. Lewis' admiration for Masefield's children's books comes across in his adaptation in a series of motifs, many of which, I

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will demonstrate, meant that Masefield's work at least indirectly had a huge influence on what Maria Sachiko Cecire refers to as the Oxford School of Fantasy Literature.

Specifically, the "box of delights" itself, as a gateway to adventures in other times and spaces, is a precursor for C. S. Lewis' wardrobe perhaps the earliest manifestation of what Farah Mendelsohn terms the "portal fantasy", namely works in which:

> a character leaves her familiar surroundings and passes through a portal into an unknown place. (Mendelsohn 2008, 1)

Paintings serve as portals in both books: Cole Hawlings escapes the "wolves" through a painting of a mountain scene in Seekings House in Chapter Two of Masefield's novel, while Lewis' Pevensies are transported to Narnia for the third time when they are fascinated by a painting of a ship at the beginning of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (Lewis 1953a). Another shared portal motif is that of railway travel. Kay's dream apparently begins when he falls asleep on the train on the way back from school for the holidays. Similarly, the Pevensie children are snatched back to Narnia for their second visit at the beginning of Prince Caspian while they are waiting for the train to take them back to school. At the end of *The Last Battle*, we learn that all of the human visitors to Narnia have died in a train crash and this is what enables them to pass into Aslan's country. Despite these similarities we will observe certain differences in how the two authors treat of the interpenetrability of their dimensions. Whereas Lewis, with one significant exception, tends to adhere to the rules of the "portal fantasy", whereby "crucially, the fantasy is *on the other side*, and does not leak" (*ibid.*), Masefield's novel is also replete with elements of the so-called "liminal fantasy", where the fantastic spills into the real world and is met with a blasé reaction on the part of the child protagonist.

Then, there is the centrality of Christmas to both *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Box of Delights*. Masefield's novel is set in the days leading up to Christmas and centres on Kay's attempt to free the staff of Tatchester Cathedral, who have been "scrobbled" by the evil Abner Brown, in time to ring the bells for midnight mass, carrying forward a tradition which goes back to the fourteen hundreds (Masefield 1957, 295). In the White Witch's Narnia the Pevensie children learn that it is "always winter but never Christmas" (Lewis 1950, 23). Clear precedents for both Jardis and Father Christmas, whose appearance marks the initial thawing of the White Witch's spell, can be found in Masefield's Herne the Hunter and the Lady of the Oak,

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although here again there are notable differences in the depiction and function of the characters.

Finally, I would like to draw readers' attention to a specific parallel between episodes in *The Box of Delights* and *The Magician's Nephew*, which, I would argue speaks volumes about the fundamental difference between the attitudes towards childhood manifested by the two authors. In his 2008 study, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*, Perry Nodelman focuses on the use of third-person narrative in novels and stories whose perspective is ostensibly a "child's-eye view" but indirectly, through irony and omission, serves to put forward a certain construction of what childhood ought to be from the adult author's point of view (Nodelman 2008). I will argue that, whereas Masefield's nostalgic idealisation of childhood and the childish is absolute and has its origins in Romanticism and the ideas of Rousseau, Lewis' is tempered with the Christian doctrine of Original Sin. Childhood imagination and emotion, for Lewis, need to be harnessed and trained within a strict Christian pedagogical framework, not celebrated in and of themselves.

2. John Masefield and Clive Staples Lewis: childhood, modernity and meaning

Lewis and Masefield were both authors whose childhoods were marked by abrupt loss and displacement and who spent much of their adult lives grappling with a sense of alienation from the modern world and looking back to the past for spiritual meaning. Masefield always idealised his early childhood in Ledbury, together, indeed, with childhood in general. Thus, for example, he begins his autobiographical account of his early years, *Grace Before Ploughing*, with the words "For some years, like many children, I lived in Paradise" (Masefield 1966, 1).

Masefield's idyllic childhood in Ledbury was abruptly interrupted when he was six years old by his mother Caroline's death during childbirth. His father's mental health steadily deteriorated in the years which followed, in part because of the family's increasing financial hardship, and he died in a local hospital when Masefield was twelve. After his mother's death, Masefield and his siblings were left in the care of their aunt Kate and Uncle William, who were scornful of their young charge's bookishness and imaginative life. Masefield was sent to train on the HMS Conway in 1891 and then to sea

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abroad the Gilcrux in 1894. Rather paradoxically for an author best remembered for poems such as "Sea Fever", Masefield was a poor sailor. During this voyage around Cape Horn he suffered chronic seasickness, sunstroke and ultimately "some kind of mental breakdown" (*ibid.*, 42).

Masefield returned from his voyage on the Gilcruix convinced that the sea life was not for him and "once more hoping to be a writer" (Babbington-Smith 1978, 46), an attitude which was met with hostility by his aunt Kate, who at once organised for him to join the crew of another ship, the Bidston Hill. In desperation, Masefield abandoned ship when the Bidston Hill docked in New York and lived as a vagrant for some months before finding work, first in a rather seedy saloon and then in a carpet mill. Curiously, it was during this period that he first developed a passion for Medieval literature, buying and endlessly rereading copies of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*. He stayed in Yonkers until 1897 when he finally sailed home.

In the decade and a half which followed, Masefield's literary career gradually took off, as he was welcomed into Yeats' circle from 1900 and published *Salt Water Ballads* in 1902, *Ballads* in 1903, *Ballads and Poems* in 1910 and *The Everlasting Mercy* in 1911. In 1913, following the death of Alfred Austin, there was already some speculation that he might already become the next laureate (Babbington-Smith 1978, 123), even though he did not actually achieve this honour until 1930.

Masefield travelled extensively across the various fronts during the First World War, volunteering in field hospitals and writing propaganda aimed at encouraging America to support the war effort. An unpublished poem, included in Babington-Smith's biography of the author, reveals the devastating effect the war had on the poet, who presents the war as having opened up an irreparable rift between the innocence of the past and the abomination of the present:

> I was a little child
> Laughing so merry
> At the blue wind flower
> And the black berry […]
> Then this began, this crime
> This hell of evil
> This bloody smear on time
> Done by a devil
> And all began again,

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> No more, oh never
> Love, beauty, power of brain,
> Peace like a river. (Babbington-Smith 1978, 177-78)

When Masefield published *The Box of Delights* in 1935, a new and even bloodier "smear on time was already looming. Surely the constant menace of "the wolves running" in *The Box of Delights* can on some level be associated with the shadows which were spreading across Europe at the time of its publication.

Masefield moved to Boars Hill near Oxford and continued writing for the rest of his life, becoming poet laureate in 1930. Yet with the dawn of modernism and the rise in popularity of figures such as Eliot, Pound and Joyce even the world of literature must have seem altered beyond recognition and Masefield in many ways never quite caught up with it. Looking back over his career in 1951, Masefield rather whimsically reflected,

> I thought it was long known that I am like the dodo and the great auk, no longer known as a bird at all. (Vansittart 1985, 39)

Lewis described his early childhood as so "humdrum" as to be barely memorable, but nonetheless "happy" (White 2003, 14-15). Lewis, then, shares none of Masefield's romantic cult of the child. However, like Masefield, Lewis also suffered an abrupt curtailment of his childhood, when in 1908 he lost his grandfather, mother and uncle in close succession. The cumulative effect of the trauma had a terrible effect on Lewis' father's mental health, and he began to drink heavily. Jack Lewis was sent away to boarding school, at Wynward House, which was closed two years later as a consequence of the horrific physical and mental abuse inflicted on its pupils. Lewis was called up to serve in the First World War at the age of seventeen and was wounded by shrapnel in the Battle of Arras (*ibid.*, 54). Like Masefield, Lewis found solace in the literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, becoming a renowned scholar in the field and one of the leading lights of the English Departments at Oxford University and subsequently at Cambridge. As in the case of Masefield, Lewis' passion for earlier literature was accompanied by a certain hostility to more modern literary forms and a vision of himself as something of a literary dinosaur. Thus, in his 1954 inaugural lecture as professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University, he told his students, "I read texts as a native that you must read as foreigners", going on to conclude that

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> Speaking not only for myself but for all other, Old Western men whom you may meet, I would say, use your specimens while you can. There are not going to be many more dinosaurs. (quoted in Tandy 2009, 2-3)

3. Portals

Masefield's portals are generally associated with artistic creation in one way or another. The box, as a small hand-held object which can be opened to reveal fantastic worlds and characters, which is able to make its bearer "go small", in order to listen in on conversations to which they might not otherwise be party or "go swift", covering impossible distances in a short period of time, is surely a metaphor for the book itself. Cole Hawlings is able to escape through a painting of a mountain landscape, which "seemed to glow and open up" as Kay looked at it (Masefield 1957, 44). In general, the magic of the story seems to revolve around the figure of the "wandering showman", Cole Hawlings. Hawlings seems to have something in common with the eponymous King Cole of Masefield's 1921 dramatic poem. The poem tells us that King Cole lived in some unspecified Golden Age "before the troubles came" (Masefield 1921, 1), who was "so well beloved" that after his death he was allowed "to wander earth, a friend of man" (14) in the guise of "an old, poor, wandering man, with glittering eyes" (16; Cole is initially described as "a little old man in a worn grey overcoat" with "very bright eyes", Masefield 2008, 4). King Cole's redemptive power is, crucially, artistic. Befriending a circus fallen on hard times, he plays his pipe as they parade before the land's depressed young prince and their performance is infused with enchantment and magic. Cole, then, as a magician and puppeteer, can be seen as a figure for the artist himself. Yet this artist, perhaps like Masefield himself in the face of a world and a literary culture changed beyond all recognition, has fallen into difficulty and requires the innocence and imagination of a child to redeem him and help his art to be reborn (Lurie 2004, 78):

> "Time was when we had power, like the Sun, and could swing the Earth and the Moon, and now our old wheels are all running down and we are coming to a second childhood. Still, they say," he went on, "that it begins again, in the course of time." (Masefield 1957, 15)

The portal painting at the beginning of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (Lewis 1953a) is the only example of art-as-portal in Narnia, and it serves the

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quite specific purpose of comparing the simple, traditional artistic tastes of the Pevensies with those of the more modern Eustace Scrubb who, one would imagine, is well-versed in modern art.

> "For Heaven's sake don't get him started about Art and all that," said Edmund, hurriedly. (Lewis 1953a, 10)

The box and the wardrobe have much in common. Both are built with magical wood, associated with redemption and rebirth. The box is "made of lignum-vitae wood […] the wood the Phoenix builds in" (Masefield 1957, 82), while the wardrobe is made from a tree that Digory planted with the seeds from the apple which saves his mother's life and which he took, with Aslan's permission, from the newly planted Tree of Protection (Lewis 1955, 161-71). However, the box has a broader range of functions than the wardrobe. As well as opening the way to myriad times and places, true and fantastic, across European history, it is also able to make its bearer "go swift" and "go small" (Masefield 1957, 67). As well as being a portal to other, fantastic realms and times the box also transforms Kay's real world, in distinct contrast to the portal fantasy conventions outlined by Mendelsohn.

In general, Masefield's novel would fall more into the category which Mendelsohn terms "liminal fantasy", inasmuch as the fantasy world and the real world often appear to blend seamlessly and we as readers are left feeling somewhat disoriented by the novel's protagonists lack of concern in this regard. Although Kay meets Herne the Hunter inside the box, he meets the Lady of the Oak Tree out on the streets of Tatchester. Both fly together to rescue Kay, Caroline Louisa and the clergy from Abner's dungeons at the end of the novel. When Kay "goes small" he chats nonchalantly with a mouse and a fieldmouse, and overhears a scheming rat. This is interesting when we consider Mendelsohn's suggestion that many portal quests feature some kind of didacticism and even tend towards an infantilisation of the reader together with the protagonist, since the reader, passing from the familiar world to the fantastic, remains "tied to the protagonist and dependent upon the protagonist for explanation and decoding" (Mendelsohn 2008, 1). Thus, in Lewis' *Chronicles*, we as readers gradually learn about Narnia together with its various human visitors. In Masefield's novel, instead, events slip between the familiar and fantastic and the child from whose perspective events are narrated appears to possess insights which we do not. The child's-eye perspective is exclusive rather than limited; it is something to which we as readers aspire, rather than a weakness to be overcome.

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The portals in Lewis' *Chronicles* are more clearly defined and are subject to far greater temporal and spatial restrictions. Narnian time runs far more quickly than human time – the world of Narnia passes from its creation in *The Magician's Nephew* to the Apocalypse in *The Last Battle* within the lifespans of Digory and Polly, who are children in the first of the books and elderly in the last. Nonetheless, chronological order is always maintained. Each passage from our world to Narnia marks a new stage in Narnian salvation history, and after Digory and Polly's ill-fated trip to Charn at the beginning of *The Magician's Nephew* none of the other myriad parallel universes suggested by the many pools in the "wood between the worlds" are visited.

Perhaps more significantly still, the various portals in Narnia mark clear gateways between the human world and the other and, with one important exception, the movement only flows in one direction. The exception in question is at the end of *The Silver Chair* (1953b), where Prince Caspian and Aslan, together with Eustace and Jill, still dressed in their Narnian finery, terrify the bullies and the headmistress of "Experiment House". Caspian, who has passed away, is granted a special dispensation by Aslan to visit the world of his human friends:

> "Sir," said Caspian, "I've always wanted to have just one glimpse of their world. Is that wrong?"
>
> "You cannot want wrong things any more, now that you have died, my son," said Aslan. "And you shall see their world – for five minutes of their time. It will take no longer for you to set things right there." (Lewis 1953a, 204)

Caspian, then, is only allowed to reverse the laws of portal fantasy after death, when he has already passed into Aslan's country. The nature of that which Aslan wishes to "set right" is a telling illustration of Lewis' vision of pedagogy. Jill, Caspian and Eustace, followed by Aslan, race across time and space in order to administer corporal punishment to the undisciplined pupils of what looks very like a Rudolf Steiner school, reducing the school's head, "who was, by the way, a woman" into a fit of hysterics (*ibid.*, 206).

4. The Christmas setting

With its Christmas setting, Masefield's *The Box of Delights* ushered in a tradition of fantasy Christmas settings which would be reflected not only in Lewis' *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* but also in Tolkien's *Father Christmas*

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Letters (1976), Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* (1973) and even in the snowy landscapes of Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights* (1995). The Christmas setting arguably represents a kind of portal in itself, inasmuch as Christmas is a part of the liturgical calendar, eternally cyclical and repetitive, taking us outside of chronological time and beyond the vicissitudes of history. As a celebration of Christ's incarnation as a vulnerable baby, Christmas has always been interwoven with the idea of childhood (Larson 2020, 288-96) and I would argue that the way in which the two authors depict Christmas is a reflection of their vision of childhood in general.

Masefield's *Box of Delights* is a novel overflowing with sumptuous and colourful depictions of festive cheer:

> As they entered the little street, it was so dark with the promise of snow that the shops were being lighted. They were all decked out with holly, mistletoe, tinsel, crackers, toys, oranges, model Christmas trees with tapers and glass balls, apples, sweets, sucking pigs, sides of beef, turkeys, geese, Christmas cakes and big plum-puddings.
>
> "I say, I do love Christmas," Kay said. (Masefield 1957, 19)

Masefield's descriptions of Christmas are characterised by long lists, evoking a sense of superabundance. His account of the gifts at Bishop's Christmas party in Tatchester is a case in point:

> The boughs were laden with the most exquisite gifts. For the little ones there were whistles, drums, tops of different kinds, whips, trumpers, swords, popguns, pistols that fired caps and others which fired corks. There were also many dolls and teddy-bears. For the older boys there were railways with signals and switches and passenger trains and goods trains, some of which went by steam and others by clockwork. There were goods yards with real goods: little boxes, bales and sacks, real cranes by which these could be hoisted, and pumps by which the engines could get water. There were aeroplanes which you could wind up and they would fly about the room. There were others which you made to fly by pulling a trigger. There were farmyards with cocks and hens which really pecked and cows which waggled their heads. There were zoos with all sorts of animals, and aquariums with all sorts of fish (in real water which could not splash out). Then there were all sorts of mechanical toys, of men boxing, or wrestling, or sawing wood, or beating on anvils. When you wound up these they would box or wrestle or saw or hammer for three or four minutes. Then there were squirts of all kinds and boxes of soldiers with cavalry and cannons, boxes of bricks and of "Meccano", and all sort of adventure books and fairy books. (*ibid.*, 112-13)

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The repetition of the connector "then", the quantifier "all sorts of" and the grammatical construction "there were" enhance our sense of inexhaustible plenty, as does Masefield's use of superlatives: the Bishop's Christmas tree was "the biggest and most glorious Christmas tree that had ever been seen in Tatchester" (*ibid.*, 111) its boughs were "laden with the most exquisite gifts" and the crackers are filled with "the most lovely decorations" and "the most splendid hats and necklets" (*ibid.*, 113). All the proportions are gigantic: the half-barrel holding the tree is "monstrous" (*ibid.*, 111) and even the crackers are "eighteen inches long" (*ibid.*, 113). The description pushes the boundaries of scientific possibility: the barrel holding the tree is filled with "what looked like real snow" (*ibid.*, 112); the tree holds large numbers of physically unwieldy and elaborate toys (trainsets, farmwards, etc.), and the wind-up toys defy the laws of physics by running for three or four minutes, while clockwork planes somehow fly around the room. Overall, we have a sense of limitless wish-fulfilment, of the boundless voracity of childish desire (something like the Freudian pleasure principle) and imagination ranging unchecked.

Masefield emphasises the trans-historical quality of Christmas and its traditions. This focus is manifest in his repeated references to medieval, pre-Reformation Christianity. Thus, in his description of the Bishop's palace, we find the following:

> Beyond the room in which they had seen the show was another room, also a part of the hostel. Pilgrims had come to that place in hundreds in the Middle Ages, for the Cathedral had then held the Shrine of the great Saint Cosric, Saxon King and Martyr, who had worked such famous miracles in the cure of Leprosy, and broken hearts. (*ibid.*, 111)

However, Masefield also repeatedly emphasises the earlier, Pagan traditions surrounding the Winter Solstice. Cole Hawlings repeatedly states that he dates "back to Pagan times" (*ibid.*, 4). Herne the Hunter and the Lady of the Oak Tree, who appear driving sleighs drawn by lions and unicorns at the end of the novel, are also loosely associated with pre-Christian traditions [1]. Although the Christmas setting is central to *The Box of Delights*, it would

[1] The most obvious source for Herne the Hunter is act V of Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Errington writes: "There have been a number of theories about the origin of Herne, before Shakespeare. The deity Cerunnos, as worshipped by the Gaulish Celts around the period of the Romans, has been given as one source. Another theory suggests an origin from the pagan Angles" (Errington 2020, 62).

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be a misreading to interpret this choice in terms of Christian doctrine alone. Indeed, Errington writes:

> Despite his interest in dramatizing biblical stories […], Masefield was not religious. He refused on a number of occasions to become a godfather and when he was sent a Bible by his publishers he remarked, it is very kind of you to send me the Bible. I hope it will do me much good, but fear that it will have its work cut out. (Errington 2020, 67)

Masefield's depiction of Herne and the Lady of the Oak tree, dressed in green and driving sleighs across a snowy landscape, surely influenced Lewis' representation of Father Christmas in Chapter Ten of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Lewis 1950, 98-101). Father Christmas' arrival heralds the breaking of the White Witch's spell and Aslan's approach. Yet the role of Christmas in Lewis' narrative is somewhat problematic. Firstly, on a rather pedantic note, it is unclear why the denizens of Aslan's Narnia would know what Christmas is. Then, more significantly, as Aslan has not been reborn as a vulnerable infant, it is uncertain how the childhood-centric symbolism of childhood can apply (cfr. for example, Brazier 2009). Father Christmas' gifts for the children are "tools, not toys" (*ibid.*, 99) – a sword and shield for Peter, a horn and a quiver of arrows for Susan and a bottle of ointment for Lucy.

5. Facing the danger

Lewis' most obvious borrowing from Masefield is also perhaps the point at which the divergence between the two authors is the most marked. In Chapter Seven of *The Box of Delights*, Kay and the Jones children, together with the field-mouse, find themselves in a room whose walls are covered with ancient tapestries, featuring figures who appear frozen in a state of suspended animation, seeming alive, but "not quite". The scene as a whole is illuminated by a "soft, glowing light" such as that which we might find at dawn or at sunset, somewhere between daylight and night (Masefield 1957, 138). The subjects depicted are works of art so convincing that they appear to be on the brink of action:

> The walls were hung with banners and with portraits of extraordinary brilliant people, whose eyes seemed to move in their painted heads. (*ibid.*)

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The effect is at once irresistibly fascinating and terrifying:

> "Now, this place," the mouse said, when they reached the foot of the stairs, "this place I don't quite like going into, but it's so beautiful I can't keep away from it." (*ibid.*)

In the centre of the room is a horn, which is accompanied by a prohibitive yet enticing poetic couplet:

> He that dares blow must blow me thrice
> Or feed th'outrageous cockatrice. (*ibid.*, 139)

Susan and the field mouse are afraid of the horn but Kay, egged on by Peter, finds the temptation too strong to resist. Kay's three blasts of the horn light up the room and are likened to the passage from Winter to Spring. As the "good people" come to life, their song seems to call into being a host of other companions and their music and dancing are likened to the harmony of the spheres:

> And as they sang, countless other marvellous people of the sort thronged in […] And as they danced they all seemed to understand what it is that makes the planets dance around the sun and the great stars keep their place in the constellations as they move forever in the heavens. (*ibid.*, 141)

At the culmination of the dance, exquisite-tasting flowers fall from the ceiling:

> Then out of the ceiling little coloured flowers began to fall, and these the fairies caught as they fell and put to their lips. Kay did as they did: a little white violet fell into his hand and when he put it to his lips it was as though all the honey and every sweetness that he had ever tasted were pressed into his mouth at once. A joy thrilled through him such as he had never before known. (*ibid.*)

Kay's audacity is rewarded with a promise that he "may come again into Fairyland on one day in every year" (*ibid.*, 142).

At the beginning of *The Magician's Nephew*, Polly and Digory are faced with a very similar choice and the female protagonist again advises against the male hero's impulses:

> Make your choice, adventurous stranger;
> Strike the bell and bide the danger,
> Or wonder, till it frives you mad,
> What would have followed if you had.
> "No fear!" said Polly. "We don't want any danger." (Lewis 1965, 50)

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As in Masefield, Lewis' "Hall of Images" is full of hyper-real figures, appearing suspended on the brink of animation "like the most wonderful waxworks you ever saw" (*ibid.*, 49). Yet unlike the consistently "extraordinary brilliant" people depicted in Masefield, these figures reveal a gradual decadence from one generation to the next, coming finally to the formidable figure of Jadis (*ibid.*). The room is again in half light, but whereas the "soft glowing light" in Masefield's text is loaded with potential and proceeds a magnificent dawn when the fairies are brought back to life, Lewis' Charn is lit by a dying sun, "so big, so red and so cold" (*ibid.*, 61):

> What they noticed first was the light. It wasn't like sunlight, and it wasn't like electric light, or lamps, or candles, or any other light they had ever seen. It was dull, rather red light, not at all cheerful. (*ibid.*, 41)

Digory's awakening of Jadis leads to disaster: it catalyses the final destruction of Charn and constitutes the Original Sin at the beginning of Narnia's Christian narrative. Considering the clear influence of Masefield's horn scene on Lewis' Hall of Images, it is surely also worth considering the parallels between Kay's sensual delight upon eating the flowers and Jadis devouring the forbidden fruit in the Edenic garden in Chapter Thirteen of *The Magician's Nephew* or, to an even greater extent, the Turkish Delight with which Jadis corrupts Edmund in Chapter Four of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

In Masefield, in other words, the uninhibited pursuit of childish impulse leads to triumph. In Lewis it is a catastrophe. Herein, as we will see, lies the crucial difference in the two authors' approach to children's literature.

6. Conclusions and directions for future research

The numerous parallels between *The Box of Delights* and the *Narnia* books bears witness to Masefield's enormous literary influence on Lewis as a children's writer. Yet if Lewis carried forward many motifs and tropes from Masefield which would come to characterise a whole tradition of fantasy writing for children, he also dramatically redirected and adapted each of these elements to his own ends. Whereas Masefield deploys the portal motif to celebrate artistic creativity, allowing fantasy and reality to intermingle seamlessly throughout his novel, Lewis uses the portal structure in a far more rigid manner and with a clearly didactic purpose. For Masefield,

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the Christmas setting is a timeless (and not exclusively Christian) symbol of joyous rebirth and is synonymous with childhood. In a rather bewildering step for a children's novel Lewis, instead, introduces the enormously popular childhood figure of Father Christmas at the same time as proposing a vision of the Incarnation which omits the Nativity and the associated glorification of childhood or childishness. Ultimately, while both authors view children as fundamental to their literary project, they conceive of childhood and children's literature in fundamentally different ways. Masefield is essentially a romantic in the tradition of Rousseau's *Émile* or Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, and views childhood as a privileged, blessed state which can only be corrupted by the imposition of external discipline. Hence, the poetic "Prologue", which introduces Masefield's collection of autobiographical writings, *Grace Before Ploughing*, refers to a transient moment of visionary epiphany from his childhood, which he has spent the rest of his life seeking to recapture:

> Once, looking north, the daisied meadow filled,
> With multitude, by miracle, unwilled,
> Men, of no mortals born,
> Splendid as flowers, many as the corn,
> Marching with banners to a tune that thrilled,
>
> I saw, I heard, I marvelled, but they ceast…
> Naught, but the meadow grass was north and east,
> I cried, "O come again…
> You singing men out-numbering the rain,
> And take me, too, to conquest or to feast."
>
> I trod the rocky road of no reply.
> They trod a way unseen by mortal eye
> To some immortal end,
> With life for bread, with ecstasy for friend,
> Their very substance that which cannot die.
>
> Still, in my heart, that marching music rings,
> Those faces glow of men whose wills were wings.
> Powers, by beauty shriven,
> A spark of immortality has given
> An immortality to mortal things. (Masefield 1966, xi)

Whilst somewhat hazy in his religious beliefs, Masefield expresses an unshakeable faith, throughout his career, in the redemptive power of art – in

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the power of aesthetic beauty and the human imagination to lend "an immortality to mortal things".

For Lewis, instead, children are incorrupt yet easily corruptible, and spiritual education is of paramount importance. In his 1943 educational treatise, *The Abolition of Man*, Lewis writes that children must be educated in "ordinate affections", trained to direct their love towards worthy objects. Despite the universality of these principles, Lewis explicitly denies that this impulse is innate and warns that, without guidance in what he terms the "tao" – of natural, universal moral principles – we are at risk of finding ourselves in a world of "men without chests" – of individuals lacking the trunk which links their higher faculties to their animal, visceral parts:

> Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism […] In battle it is not syllogisms that will keep the reluctant nerves and muscles to their post in the third hour of the bombardment. The crudest sentimentalism (such as Gaius and Titius would wince at) about a flag or a country or a regiment will be of more use. We were told it all long ago by Plato. As the king governs by his executive, so Reason in man must rule the mere appetites by means of the 'spirited element'. The head rules the belly through the chest – the seat, as Alanus tells us, of Magnanimity, of emotions organized by trained habit into stable sentiments. The Chest-Magnanimity-Sentiment – these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man. It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man: for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal. (Lewis 1943, 8)

For Lewis, imaginative literature for children has a vital pedagogical function from a social and spiritual point of view, guiding children towards an emotional harmony with the "tao" before they become corrupted by the damaging influences and values of modern society.

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