

Kidnapped Romance: From Walter Scott to C. S. Lewis

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Abstract:

Tracing a genealogy that runs from Walter Scott to Robert Louis Stevenson to C. S. Lewis, this article shows how stories about the kidnapping of a child become central to the fantasy of recouping a time outside the modern, progressive movement of history.

Keywords: children, history, inheritance, kidnapping, C. S. Lewis, maturation, modernity, romance, Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, time.

“What follows will [...] seek to speak, not of one historical time, but rather of many forms of time superimposed one upon the other.”
(Koselleck 2004: 2)

In the introduction to *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009*, Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn argue that Neo-Victorian texts “must in some respect be *self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*” (Heilmann and Llewellyn 2010: 4, original emphasis). While neo-Victorian critics have typically analysed these processes in postmodern texts, less attention has been paid to the pre-Victorian and Victorian precursors that offer models of how fiction thinks about its relation to the past. As Louisa Hadley explains, “[n]eo-Victorian fiction [...] is rarely understood in relation to Victorian and pre-Victorian forms of the historical novel” (Hadley 2010: 18).¹ This essay begins to fill in this gap by tracing a genealogy that runs from Walter Scott to Robert Louis Stevenson to C. S. Lewis. It reads the *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56) as a hinge text in which Lewis rewrote pre-Victorian and Victorian precursors to develop a neo-Victorian model for children’s fantasy that became a template for such novelists as J. K. Rowling. Using poetic excerpts from Scott’s *Guy*

Mannering (1815) in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950), Lewis engages with the nineteenth century at the level of the form rather than the content of his novels. Creating stories shaped by Scott's novel and *Kidnapped* (1886), Stevenson's Victorian rewriting of Scott, Lewis places himself in the tradition of what Northrop Frye calls "kidnapped romance" (Frye 1976: 29-30). Though Frye uses that term to reference *Guy Mannering's* appropriation of Renaissance romance forms, Scott's novel, like those of Stevenson and Lewis, uses romance to narrate the kidnapping of a child who "embodies [...] loss and dislocation" (Steedman 1995: ix). This configuration allows fictions from 1815 to the 1950s to explore the present's relation to a past it can never fully recover.

Kidnapped romances entail two temporal perspectives. A frame narrative describes the world from which the child is taken and to which he or she may return. In that world children grow to maturity and time moves forward in a progressive manner that provokes anxiety but feels inevitable. Nestled within that frame is the story of the kidnapped world, a place associated with "the lost realm of the adult's past, [...] the far country of dreams and reverie that came to assume the shape of childhood from the end of the eighteenth century onwards" (Steedman 1995: ix). The relation between these two worlds shifts as we move from the pre-Victorian to the modern period. In *Guy Mannering* the return of the kidnapped child brings the magic and romance of the past back into the novel's forward-moving realist narrative. By the Victorian era such a conclusion is no longer possible. As William Makepeace Thackeray makes clear in 1860, "your railroad starts the new era, and we of a certain age belong to the new time and the old one. We are of the time of chivalry. [...] We are of the age of steam" (Thackeray 1920: 54). Caught between Scott's moment and a future toward which they know they are moving, Victorians can only recuperate past values nostalgically, as *Kidnapped* demonstrates. Writing in the middle of the twentieth century, Lewis reanimates the "silvans, satyrs, and fauns, with whom superstition peopled the lofty banks and tangled copses of this romantic country" (Scott 1970: 116), whose loss Scott mourns in *Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830). But Lewis does so by eliminating the adult world of history and maturation to which the kidnapped child returns in Scott and Stevenson. Gradually regressing the age of both character and reader, from adult to adolescent to child, the sequence that runs from Scott

to Stevenson to Lewis marks the increasing difficulty of imagining the recovery of a pre-modern past as time moves toward a post-modern future.

Framing *Guy Mannering* with the taking and return of a child, Scott exploits the temporal and spatial valences inherent in kidnapping as that term first came into use in the late seventeenth century. Originally, to kidnap meant “to steal or carry off (children or others) in order to provide servants or labourers for the American plantations” (online *OED*). In 1769 William Blackstone defined the noun as “the forcible abduction or stealing away of man, woman, or child from their own country, and selling them into another” (online *OED*). These definitions underscore a division between worlds and the fact that individuals can be forced to pass from one to the other. The terms old and new suggest temporal as well as spatial difference, as if the future, represented by the New World, could compel individuals to move out of the past, represented by the Old. But at Scott’s moment ‘kidnapping’ also began to signify a temporal movement in the opposite direction. Picking up on the idea that kidnapping involved the “spiriting away [of] children”, writers referenced “this kid-napping of the human race, so peculiar to the whole Elfin people” (online *OED*). This sentence, taken from Scott’s letters on *Demonology and Witchcraft*, evokes a pre-Christian world that seizes a child and takes it back into a past that embodies the beliefs that are vanishing with modernity. This alternative usage becomes key to kidnapping in *Guy Mannering* and the novels that follow it. In them the child is drawn into a different temporal order, which refuses the forward movement of political and personal history; this alternative time is associated with magic, romance, and adventure.

Guy Mannering’s subtitle “The Astrologer” marks Scott’s interest in chronologies that antedate the modern idea of progress, when the stars could be read as indicators of the natural rhythms of time. As Reinhart Koselleck explains of pre-modern experiences of time, “astrology’s role should not be underestimated. [...] Astrological calculation of the future pushed eschatological expectations into a constantly receding future” (Koselleck 2004: 15). In his novel Scott combines modern and ancient conceptions by making the astrologer of the title a sceptical Englishman, Guy Mannering, who predicts a future he does not credit at the birth of the novel’s hero, Harry Bertram. Yet Mannering’s prediction, that Bertram will endure three hazardous periods in his life, “his *fifth* – his *tenth* – his *twenty-first* year” (Scott 2003: 20, original emphasis), proves true; the child is kidnapped in

his fifth year, threatened with murder in his tenth, and returns to Scotland to recover an inheritance he does not know is his in his twenty-first. But the novel does not depict this chronology as a progress in terms of either its narrative structure or its depiction of Bertram. It registers Bertram's birth, moves forward to the kidnapping, and then jumps to his return to Scotland as a man who has taken on a new name and forgotten his past. As Scott's narrator explains immediately after the kidnapping,

our narrative is now about to make a large stride, and omit a space of nearly seventeen years. The gap is a wide one; yet if the reader's experience in life enables him to look back on so many years, the space will scarce appear longer in his recollection, than the time consumed in turning these pages. (Scott 2003: 59)

Choosing for the epigraph to this chapter the passage from Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale* in which Time as a chorus asks the audience to "impute it not a crime [...] that I slide / O'er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried / Of that wide gap" (qtd. in Scott 2003: 59), Scott signals his awareness of the difference between a realistic or forward-moving novelistic plot and the cyclical structure of romance with its pattern of loss and return, which "values the antique and the exotic, and expresses a powerful longing for what came before" (Fuchs 2004: 6). The tension between romance and the forward movement of history is reinforced as the novel takes another thirty chapters to reach the point at which Bertram remembers his past when he finds himself suddenly at a set of ruins, which he learns are known as "the Old Place [...] in distinction to the New Place" (Scott 2003: 246). Contrasting with its predecessor the modern house that has been built to replace the castle that once housed the Bertrams, this phrasing evokes the tension between older and newer experiences of time and space that are incarnated in the Old World and the New. The "Old Place" brings back the past; as Bertram explains, "the remnants of an old prophecy, or song, or rhyme, of some kind or other, return to my recollection [...] it is a strange jangle of sounds" (Scott 2003: 247). Without being able to complete it, he remembers a verse that predicts his accession to the family estate he vaguely recognises as his but cannot yet name: "The dark shall be light, / And the

wrong made right,/ When Bertram's right and Bertram's might/ Shall meet on –" (Scott 2003: 247).

In 1887 Stevenson called this scene "a model instance of romantic method" (Stevenson 1904: 270). It enables the return of magic to the novel, bringing the gypsy Meg Merrilies back into the plot, as she completes the rhyme by uttering the words "Ellangowan height" (Scott 2003: 278). Translating the novel into romance, she writes *Guy Mannering* that "*You are a good seeker, but a bad finder*", advises Harry Bertram to "[g]o and meet your fortune – or turn back and lose it" (Scott 2003: 298, 328, original emphasis), and engineers a solution in which the crowd recognises Bertram as the true heir of Ellangowan. They know, in Merrilies's words, that "*The hour and the man are baith come*" (Scott 2003: 330, original emphasis). Like a magician she drives the novel toward a conclusion in which the various tenants cry, "Bertram for ever!" and "Long life to the heir of Ellangowan!" (Scott 2003: 338). Scott marks the recovery of a deep past by having the spectators exclaim, "I hae been seventy years on the land," "I and mine hae been seventy and seventy to that," and "I and mine hae been three hundred years here" (Scott 2003: 338). Describing this juncture as "one of those moments of feeling, when the frost of the Scottish melts like a snow-wreath, and the dissolving torrent carries dam and dyke before it" (Scott 2003: 339), Scott references the romance pattern in which the world of winter dissolves as a new green world is put in its place, the pattern Lewis literalises in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, when, in an echo of Scott's novel, the child protagonists are told that wrong will be right, and the frozen waste of Narnia is transformed, in a matter of hours, into a blooming springtime landscape.

In *Guy Mannering*, this romance conclusion involves the reinstatement of 'old' values associated with feudal relations that have been threatened by 'new' values of progress, commerce, and money. In Scott's novel those new values are embodied in the lawyer and estate agent Glossim, who manages to purchase Ellangowan midway through the novel. The return of the estate's male heir foils Glossim's machinations and reveals both that the agent was complicit in the original kidnapping and that he sought to have the adult Harry seized and sent "to America [...] or – to Jericho" (Scott 2003: 191). The return of a man kidnapped as a child enables the novel to turn back to a type of social relation that Scott feared was vanishing in his own time, as if those relations were incarnated in the child's

experience or memory of the past, which has been rendered changeless in the kidnapped world, buried in his memory like a fly in amber. Scott's was the moment when, as Carolyn Steedman has argued,

child-figures, and more generally the idea of childhood, came to be commonly used to express the depths of historicity within individuals, the historicity that was "linked to them essentially." "Childhood," "the Child," as this kind of configuring of the past, emerged at the same time as did the modern idea of history and modern conventions of historical practice. (Steedman 1995: 12)

But there is no actual child in Scott's narrative.

Though Bertram remembers verses from his childhood, the novel does not depict him hearing those verses as a child. It narrates his kidnapping not from his perspective but from that of the adults who wait fruitlessly for his return. It makes some attempt to recapture Bertram's experiences during the time he was kidnapped and living away from Scotland by including a series of letters between him and Mannering's daughter Julia, the novel's main love interest. Those letters describe their interactions in India, where Bertram was serving first as a trader and later in the British army. Describing India as "the land of magic", where Julia heard "tales of sorceresses, witches, and evil genii" (Scott 2003: 93, 326), the novel stresses that these adventures "occupy not only an alien geographical horizon but a temporal gap in the romance plot, the seventeen-year dark 'chasm in our history'" (Duncan 1992: 122). Yet to identify the novel's temporal chasm only with India is to ignore its more absolute gap. When Bertram undergoes his Indian adventures, he is already a young adult, less than twenty-one, but able to enter the army and fall in love with a woman. The experiences Scott never narrates are those of the child, who "found [him]self an ill-used and half-starved cabin-boy aboard a sloop, and then a school-boy in Holland under the protection of an old merchant, who had taken some fancy for [him]" (Scott 2003: 309). Stevenson tells this missing story in *Kidnapped*.²

Unlike Scott, who imagines both his characters and readers as adults, Stevenson takes as his subjects and imagined readers individuals who

occupy a place between child and adult. As the editors of the periodical where *Kidnapped* was originally published explain,

[t]he title *Young Folks* cannot certainly be limited to children. The title was selected because it embraced a much wider circle. ‘Young Folks’ can be applied with as much propriety to young men and young women as to children. [...] Our readers [include] all classes, ages, sizes, and sects. (qtd. in Stevenson 1999: xiv).

Stevenson also changes the age at which the child is kidnapped; David Balfour, the hero of *Kidnapped*, is not five, as Bertram is when he is taken by pirates, but sixteen when his uncle pays the captain of the ship *The Covenant* to abduct the nephew who threatens his inheritance. As is consonant with the original meaning of kidnapping and with the historical case from which both *Guy Mannering* and *Kidnapped* were derived, the uncle pays the captain to treat his nephew like one of “these unhappy criminals who were sent over-seas to slavery in North America, or the still more unhappy innocent who were kidnapped or trepanned (as the word went) for private interest or vengeance” (Stevenson 1999: 48).³ But Stevenson’s novel swerves away from that intended destination. The ship rescues a Jacobite outlaw, Alan Breck Stewart, and its course is diverted from the New World back to the Old, as it heads toward the North of Scotland, where it founders, leaving its two heroes to negotiate a Highland society that represent old rather than new values. In terms of both history and personal development, the novel rests in a curiously indeterminate mode between past and present, youth and adulthood.

Though *Kidnapped* does not explicitly reference magic, Stevenson’s readers would have known to associate Highland adventures with fairies. As Scott explains, “the opinions on the subject of the fairy people here expressed, are such as are entertained in the Highlands, and some remote quarters of the Lowlands of Scotland” (Scott 1970: 125). These beliefs persisted into Stevenson’s era and beyond. Writing in 1904 about the real events on which *Kidnapped* was based, Andrew Lang notes that in the Highlands

you may really hear the fairy music if you bend your ear, on a still day, to the grass of the fairy knowe. Only two generations back a fairy boy lived in a now ruinous house [...] and a woman stolen by the fairies, returned for an hour to her husband. (Lang 1904: 100)

This history means that in *Kidnapped*, the Scottish Highlands effectively function “as a sort of mythic place, not wholly dissimilar to the more obviously fantastical places such as J. R. R. Tolkien’s Middle Earth” (Grenby 2011: 277). And, like the magic that was implicitly evoked through Scott’s references to gypsies and Indian magic, the Highland locale to which the kidnapped child is taken is a place in which the forward movement of time, in terms of both history and child development, is stalled.

This indeterminacy is embodied in the person David first encounters from the ship that eventually kidnaps him, the cabin boy, who “said his name was Ransome, and that he had followed the sea since he was nine, but could not say how old he was, as he had lost his reckoning” (Stevenson 1999: 46). This figure of no definite age stands on the boundary between the adult world, in which David has sought his inheritance and had his uncle almost murder him, and the kidnapped world, where he will undergo a series of adventures from swordfight to shipwreck to a journey across the Scottish Highlands. Encountering a mirror image of himself in Ransome, who “swore horribly whenever he remembered, but more like a silly schoolboy than a man” (Stevenson 1999: 46), David begins adventures in which he repeatedly stresses his own youth. He feels “a pang of light-headed fear, like what a child may have”, asks an older man to advise him “as you would advise your son”, speaks the “silly speech of a boy of ten”, and hides the fact that he is physically ill, “like a sick, silly and bad-hearted schoolboy” (Stevenson 1999: 201, 210, 218, 219). Acknowledging the similarity between himself and Ransome, David refuses to buy the cabin boy a drink because “neither he nor I were of an age for such indulgences” (Stevenson 1999: 52). Asserting that “I did my best in the small time allowed me to make something like a man, or rather I should say something like a boy, of the poor creature, Ransome” (Stevenson 1999: 63), David defines the parameters of the adventures he is about to undertake, which may or may not make a man of him but which continue to involve interactions with a character neither child nor adult.

The Jacobite outlaw with whom David travels across the Highlands is “[s]mallish in stature”, possessing “eyes [...] as bright as a five year old child’s with a new toy”, and displaying a “childish propensity to take offence” (Stevenson 1999: 73, 90, 108). In making Alan short, Stevenson deliberately alters the details of the historical person who provided a model for his fictional character, the real life Allan Breck, who “was a tall thin man, marked with smallpox” (Lang 1904: 106). Alan’s childlike stature makes the hardships the two undergo as they cross Scotland into a series of adventures that are about the difficulty of growing up. As David comments after they reach the most dangerous part of their escape and have to crawl through the heather to escape detection,

we were past the greatest danger and could walk upon our feet like men, instead of crawling like brutes. But, dear heart have mercy! what a pair we must have made, going double like old grandfathers, stumbling like babes, and white as dead folk. (Stevenson 1999: 199)

Echoing the riddle from *Oedipus Rex* in which man goes on four legs in the morning, two at midday, and three in the evening, this passage references both babes and grandfathers, but not in any clear sequence: babes come after grandfathers and are followed by death.

David is only able to emerge from the temporal stasis of the kidnapped world by exposing Alan’s childishness and driving Alan to recognise both David’s youth and incipient adulthood. Telling Alan, “[y]ou have been chased in the field by the grown men of my party; and it seems a poor kind of pleasure to outface a boy”, David collapses, forcing his companion to exclaim, “I couldnae remember ye were just a bairn” (Stevenson 1999: 220, 222). But when Alan offers to carry David on his back, David exclaims, “an me a good twelve inches taller!” (Stevenson 1999: 223), stressing his own growth. In a series of self-corrections, Alan insists that,

[y]e’re no such thing! [...] There may be a trifling matter of an inch or two; I’m no saying I’m just exactly what ye would call a tall man, whatever; and I daresay [...] now when I come to think of it, I daresay ye’ll be just about right. Ay, it’ll be a

foot, or near hand; or maybe even mair!” (Stevenson 1999: 233)

These comments identify the juncture at which David’s movement towards adulthood is marked by his emergence from the kidnapped world and recovery of his inheritance. But Alan must help David negotiate the movement from fantasy back to reality as Ransome helped negotiate the hero’s initial movement into the kidnapped world. Ransome’s name identifies the function these characters play; they pay with their lives so that the hero can undergo adventures without penalty and return to reality at the end. Meg Merrilies plays a similar function in *Guy Mannering*, lending the hero a bundle of gold and jewels to redeem himself and dying as she negotiates his inheritance.

When David is captured and sold to the captain of the *Covenant*, he is only freed from his imprisonment after one of the ship’s officers inadvertently kills Ransome in a drunken rage. Earlier, when the captain comes to David, telling him, “[y]ou and Ransome are to change berths”, David observes that “the light fell direct on the boy’s face. It was as white as wax, and had a look upon it like a dreadful smile” (Stevenson 1999: 66). Taking the place of his dead double, David enters into new duties as cabin boy, which enable him, when his ship collides with one bearing Alan, to ally himself with that figure and be carried with him into the Highland world where he undergoes the bulk of his adventures. Subsequently, Alan makes the stakes of Stevenson’s novel clear as he emerges briefly from the Highland world that has contained him for the bulk of the novel to help David uncover his uncle’s perfidy and recover his inheritance.

Placing himself in the position in which David found himself at the opening of the novel when he knocked on his uncle’s door and was met by its owner with a loaded blunderbuss, Alan tells an alternate version of Stevenson’s novel:

It seems there was a ship lost in those parts; and the next day a gentleman of my family was seeking wreck-wood for his fire along the sands, when he came upon a lad that was half drowned. Well, he brought him to; and he and some other gentlemen took and clapped him in an auld, ruined castle,

where from that day to this he has been a great expense to my friends. (Stevenson 1999: 266)

Excising the trip the novel's heroes take across the Highlands, this passage points to what Stevenson knew to be true: that those adventures are the most compelling part of *Kidnapped*. Their attractiveness is reinforced when Alan raises the question of ransom with David's uncle, reasoning that "either ye liked David and would pay to get him back; or else ye had very good reasons for not wanting him, and would pay for us to keep him" (Stevenson 1999: 267). Suggesting that ransom might be paid not for the child's return but to allow him to stay in the world to which he has been taken, these comments set the stage for the kidnapped romances of Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, where children will remain within the fantasy world to which they have been kidnapped, paying a ransom that allows them never to return to adulthood or the forward movement of history.

For the Victorians, kidnapping defined not just events within the novel but also reading it. As Stevenson explains in 'A Gossip on Romance', "in anything fit to be called by the name of reading, the process itself should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves" (Stevenson 1904: 247). In the preface to *Kidnapped*, he insists that his book

is no furniture for the scholar's library, but a book for the winter evening schoolroom when the tests are over and the hour for bed draws near; and honest Alan, who was a grim old fire-eater in his day, has in this new avatar no more desperate purpose than to steal some young gentleman's attention from his Ovid, carry him awhile into the Highlands and the last century, and pack him to bed with some engaging images to mingle with his dreams. (Stevenson 1999: 5-6)

Here romance patterns capture the reader's excitement; on a winter's night the new avatar of an old fire-eater warms a boy's imagination into life. Such reading is capable, like the kidnapping depicted within the novel, of bringing back to an adult the feeling of a childhood that has been lost. In Stevenson's words, "fiction is to the grown man what play is to the child; it

is there that he changes the atmosphere and tenor of his life” (Stevenson 1904: 268). In this critical essay, Stevenson makes explicit what was implicit in Scott: that “to read a plot – to take part in its work of recognition – is to imagine a transformation of life and its conditions, and not their mere reproduction. Such is the rhetorical definition of romance by its modern theorists” (Duncan 1992: 2).

The Victorian era identified such transformative reading with Scott, whose novels began to be reconceived as children’s literature in Stevenson’s period. As Bruce Beiderwell and Anita Hemphill McCormick note:

In the 1870s [...] a massive change in the potential readership becomes apparent. *Ivanhoe* began to be marketed explicitly for children: it was included in publishers’ lists of children’s series, and it was sold as a school text. (Beiderwell and McCormick 2005: 170)

Writing for the *Cornhill Magazine*, Thackeray, himself an early writer of children’s literature and parodist of Scott, explains of his own childhood that “then, above all, we had WALTER SCOTT, the kindly, the generous, the pure”, going on to describe his predecessor as “the companion of what countless delightful hours; the purveyor of how much happiness; the friend whom we recall as the constant benefactor of our youth!” (Thackeray 1920: 60). To underscore Scott’s power, Thackeray imagines a scene of reading virtually identical to the one Stevenson evokes in the preface to *Kidnapped*, envisioning

[a] boy, – a boy in a jacket. He is at a desk; he has great books before him, Latin and Greek books and dictionaries. Yes, but behind the great books, which he pretends to read, is a little one, with pictures, which he is really reading. It is – yes, I can read it now – it is ‘The Heart of the Mid Lothian,’ by the author of ‘Waverley’. (Thackeray 1920: 53)

For both Thackeray and Stevenson, the novel, whether Scott’s or Stevenson’s, seduces the reader away from one kind of involvement with the past, the study of classics and history, to offer another: a romance that captures his attention, drawing him back to an era other than his own.

Writing almost a century after Thackeray, Lewis makes a similar point about the transformative power of reading. He argues that for young readers,

the first reading of some literary work is often [...] an experience so momentous that only experiences of love, religion or bereavement can furnish a standard of comparison. Their whole consciousness is changed. They have become what they were not before. (Lewis 1961a: 3)

For Lewis this intensity is connected not just to adult memories of childhood reading but to the experience of children themselves. As he explains in 'Three Ways of Writing for Children', imagining a boy being carried away by fairy tales, "fairy land arouses a longing for he knows not what. It stirs and troubles him [...] with the dim sense of something beyond his reach"; Lewis adds that "the boy reading the fairy-tale desires and is happy in the very fact of desiring" (Lewis 1982: 65) – in effect desiring to be 'carried off' away from the inexorable process and pressures of maturation. In *The Chronicles of Narnia* Lewis creates an imaginary world that both provides and stands in for the rapture of reading that his Victorian precursors celebrated. His child heroes are pulled away from the classics and drawn into something that gives them a more romantic experience of the past by turning not to other reading but to the magical realm of Narnia, which kidnaps and holds them happily hostage. As Edmund exclaims, when the Pevensie children are pulled back to Narnia in *Prince Caspian* (1951), the second book of the series: "This is better than being in a stuffy train on the way back to Latin and French and Algebra!" (Lewis 1960a: 3-4).

In the lecture Lewis gave at Oxford when he was appointed to a joint chair in Medieval and Renaissance Studies, he argued that the key division in history lies not between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, nor between Antiquity and the Dark Ages, but at a much more recent point in time: "the greatest of all divisions in the history of the West [is] that which divides the present from, say, the age of Jane Austen and Scott" (Lewis 1969: 7). For Lewis, the era that followed Scott is marked by the advent of steam, combined with a series of other modern developments; "when Watt makes his engine, when Darwin starts monkeying with the ancestry of Man, and Freud with his soul, and the economists with all that is his, then indeed

the lion will have got out of its cage” (Lewis 1969: 7). In the Narnia novels the magical realm to which the children are taken is defined as antithetical to the quick pace of modernity that has been from Scott onward associated with the locomotive. In both *Prince Caspian* and *The Last Battle* (1956), the Pevensie children are drawn into Narnia as they stand on a platform waiting for a train. In the earlier volume *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Edmund must be violently converted to belief in Narnia because he is invested in progress. Heading toward the witch’s castle where he will be imprisoned, he thinks “when I’m King of Narnia, the first thing I shall do will be to make some decent roads”, before ruminating about “how many cars [he will own] and all about his private cinema and where the principal railways should run” (Lewis 1961b: 73, 74). Eustace Scrubb plays a similar role in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952) as he boasts about “liners and motor-boats and aeroplanes and submarines” and complains loudly that he has “been kidnapped and brought away on this *idiotic* voyage without [his] consent” (Lewis 1960c: 24, 59, original emphasis).

Though *The Chronicles of Narnia* differ from *Guy Mannering* and *Kidnapped* in not being explicitly about child stealing, references to kidnapping recur in all the novels. When Lucy first encounters the faun Mr. Tumnus in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, he tells her,

I’m a kidnapper for her [the White Witch], that’s what I am. Look at me, Daughter of Eve. Would you believe that I’m the sort of Faun to meet a poor innocent child in the wood, one that had never done me any harm, and pretend to be friendly with it, and invite it home to my cave, all for the sake of lulling it asleep, and then handing it over to the White Witch? (Lewis 1961b: 14)

In the next Narnian scene Edmund is enticed through the trick all children are taught to associate with kidnappers: the White Witch offers him candy. Although initially “afraid that she might drive away with him to some unknown place from which he would not be able to get back” (Lewis 1961b: 29-30), Edmund is eventually seduced into complacency by her blandishments. This pattern is repeated in *The Magician’s Nephew* (1955). The two children end up in the rooms of Digory’s Uncle Andrew, who immediately “walk[s] across to the door of the room, shut[s] it, and turn[s]

the key in the lock” (Lewis 1998: 15). Exclaiming that “two children are just what I wanted”, he lures them into “Another World [where ...] you might meet anything – anything” by offering green and yellow rings that Polly finds so attractive she cannot avoid touching them (Lewis 1998: 15, 25). When the narrator explains that if she had been a little younger she would have wanted to put them in her mouth, Lewis effectively characterises the rings as candy and Uncle Andrew as a kidnapper.

Lewis’s figuration of being drawn into Narnia as kidnapping also echoes both Scott’s and Stevenson’s stories. As Seth Lerer has argued, “whatever magic lies in Lewis’s tales, it is the magic of books, and in particular the books of his childhood” (Lerer 2009: 273), including *Guy Mannering*.⁴ The opening of *Prince Caspian* invokes the end of Scott’s novel as it sets the children in the midst of a ruined castle that triggers vague recollections of a past they cannot quite recapture. Eventually they realise they are standing in the ruins of Cair Paravel, the place where they fulfilled the prediction promised them in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Though Lewis was less forthcoming about his connections to Stevenson than to Scott, Lerer notes that in *The Magician’s Nephew*, when Digory “tells Polly of noises he hears at the Ketterings’ house, he imagines that there is a pirate shut up in a top-floor room, ‘like the man at the beginning of *Treasure Island*’” (Lerer 2009: 273). When the children in *Prince Caspian* are pulled away from the train station to find themselves marooned on an island, they exclaim, “[i]t’s like being shipwrecked” (Lewis 1960a: 4), a situation that echoes the section of *Kidnapped* in which David’s adventures in the Highlands begin as he finds himself shipwrecked on an island he fears will leave him completely cut off from the mainland. *Prince Caspian* replays *Kidnapped* in its main plot, which tells the story of a boy (Prince Caspian) whose uncle (Miraz) has seized control of his rightful inheritance and seeks to murder him. When Caspian runs away from his uncle and is caught by the Narnians who are living in hiding, his captors are faced with the dilemma Alan evokes at the end of *Kidnapped*. They imagine they have two choices, either to kill the boy or “to keep it [sic] a prisoner for life” (Lewis 1960a: 55). *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* also includes “a kidnapper and a slaver” (Lewis 1960c: 33), who capture the children and attempt to sell them for slaves until they are rescued by Prince Caspian.

This emphasis on kidnapping means that Lewis’s novels typically resemble Stevenson’s in telling the story of an arduous trek across country.

In *Prince Caspian* the children journey through the woods, hide from their pursuers, and find food where it is available. In *The Silver Chair* (1953) they must rescue Prince Rilian, who has been kidnapped and absent for ten years, and return him to the throne of Narnia. They cross the Northern moors, shooting what game is available and avoiding capture by giants. In *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), two Narnian talking horses and a boy, who have been “kidnapped [...] or stolen, or captured – whichever you like” at an early age (Lewis 1958: 8), return to Narnia and save it from foreign invasion. They must disguise themselves to avoid pursuit and travel across the desert with little water. Even *The Magician’s Nephew* and *The Last Battle* include journeys where the children must forage for food and hide from enemies in the night. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the children cross the frozen Narnian countryside and escape pursuit in “an old hiding-place for beavers in bad times [...] and a great secret” (Lewis 1961b: 84) in the same way that in *Kidnapped* David and Alan seek out ancient Highland hiding places. When Lewis asserts of Edmund’s journey that it “lasted longer than I could describe even if I wrote pages and pages about it” (Lewis 1961b: 93), the passage echoes David’s exclamation that

by what I have read in books, I think few that have held a pen were ever really wearied, or they would write of it more strongly. I had no care of my life, neither past nor future and I scarce remembered there was such a lad as David Balfour. (Stevenson 1999: 198)

Both comments reflect the fact that in the kidnapped world time seems not to have the fixed end that it does in the external world to which these fantastic experiences are typically contrasted. Lewis understands the implicit dilemma posed by such narratives: one can either, as Scott does in *Guy Mannering*, narrate the story that surrounds the kidnapping, or, as Stevenson does in *Kidnapped*, narrate the story of what happens during the kidnapping. But because the two are fundamentally different temporal states, the experience of the child and of the adult, it is virtually impossible for the novel to narrate both. Lewis addresses this problem within the Narnia series by having time run differently within the two realms. No matter how long the children have been in Narnia, no time has passed when they return. But while they are away from Narnia, any amount of time might

have passed since their last visit. Lewis also represents the relation between the worlds in spatial terms, showing how the story of kidnapping, which seems to involve transport to another place, is actually, as Scott's and Stevenson's novels demonstrate, contained within another temporal universe altogether. In Lewis's novels transport to that other world is always an inward journey. When the children in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* are forced to play in the house because it is raining, this circumstance drives them to hide in the wardrobe through which they enter Narnia. His stories have to do with what he calls, in the case of the child hero of *The Magician's Nephew*, "indoor exploration" (Lewis 1998: 7).

This strategy creates an absolute boundary between worlds and between child and adult. Each time the children return to Narnia they are faced with an image of aging, as, for example, in *Prince Caspian*, when they see the mound that has grown up over the stone table where Aslan was sacrificed in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and understand that all its carvings have occurred since their time. Similarly, in *The Silver Chair*, Eustace is unable to recognise Prince Caspian, his seafaring companion in *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, because Caspian has become an old man. But the children themselves never age in the series. Indeed, puberty is the boundary that will keep them from returning to Narnia. Susan's interest in boys and stockings shuts her out from the final return of all the children on the occasion of their deaths in the apocalyptic *The Last Battle*.⁵ Lewis signals his awareness that in the Narnia series he is both replicating and revising the kidnapped romances that preceded his in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, which most explicitly echoes *Guy Mannering* in the scene in which the novel's four child heroes learn that they are destined to become kings and queens of Narnia. Reiterating the rhyme that in Scott's novel allows Harry Bertram to recover the memory of his forgotten pre-kidnapping identity. Mr. Beaver tells Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy that "Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight" and that "When Adam's flesh and Adam's bone/ Sits at Cair Paravel in throne/ The evil time will be over and done" (Lewis 1961b: 64, 65).

Lewis's novel, however, also differs crucially from Scott and Stevenson. In *Guy Mannering* and *Kidnapped* the child recovers his inheritance when he returns to the adult world. In the Narnia novels, the children inherit in the world to which they have been taken. Lewis does not seek to balance the pre-modern time of romance with the adult time of the

frame narrative. Instead he locates his children in a realm fully outside modern time. As becomes clear in the last two Narnia novels, *The Magician's Nephew*, which narrates Narnia's creation, and *The Last Battle*, the series aims to recover the experience of time that Koselleck describes as follows: "until well into the sixteenth century, the history of Christianity is a history of expectations, or more exactly, the constant anticipation of the End of the World" (Koselleck 2004: 11). At the conclusion of his Oxford lecture on time, Lewis explains that

in the individual life, as the psychologists have taught us, it is not the remembered but the forgotten past that enslaves us. I think that the same is true of society. To study the past does indeed liberate us from the present, from the idols of our own market-place. But I think it liberates us from the past too. (Lewis 1969: 12)

We might think here of the moment in *Guy Mannering* when Bertram is driven to remember the past and freed from the kidnapped world that threatened to enslave him. In Scott's novel that recovery enables the return of values that liberate society from the commercialism embodied in what Lewis calls "the idols of [the] market-place". By the time we get to Stevenson such a recovery seems less possible. David can experience the pre-marketplace values of Highlanders who refuse to turn Alan in despite the fact that the bounty that is placed on the escaped Jacobite's head would free them from poverty. But in a novel written toward the end of the period identified with the steam engine and the locomotive, it is impossible to imagine how the values of the past could be brought (back) into the present.

Lewis solves this problem by telling stories in which children do not return to their rightful place in the world. In so doing, he creates a fantasy world free from the marketplace but also a world that, while it incarnates values associated with the past, frees itself from that past by narrating the stories of children who do not age and never occupy a place in history. For Lewis, the Victorian era most importantly marks a shift in thinking about time in terms of consumption that persists into the twentieth century: "our assumption that everything is provisional and soon to be superseded, that the attainment of goods we have never yet had, rather than the defence and conservation of those we have already", he maintains, has become "the

cardinal business of life”, something that “would most shock and bewilder” the people of Scott’s era “if they could visit ours” (Lewis 1969: 11). The title of Lewis’s essay ‘*De Descriptione Temporum*’ or ‘Of the Description of Times’ perfectly captures the strategy of the kidnapped romances I have analysed here, which involve multiple temporalities, those of the adult historical world with its emphasis on progress, and those of the world into which the child is kidnapped, where time ceases to flow in the same manner as in the world left behind. Such logic is inevitable given Lewis’s decision to make the kidnapped world the place where the children wish to stay rather than a transitional state that makes possible the return and reinstatement in the adult world.

With this decision he exploits the double valence of ransom posited at the end of *Kidnapped*. In some sense, all Lewis’s novels are about ransom. Lewis named the hero of *Out of the Silent Planet* (1938) and *Perelandra* (1943), the first two novels of the science fiction trilogy that preceded *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Elwin Ransom. That term was obviously resonant for him because of its longstanding use to describe Christ’s sacrifice, and his readers sense that use in readings of the scene in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* in which Edmund is rescued from having been kidnapped by the White Witch by having Aslan pay the ransom of dying in his place. That scene is typically understood both by those who love the novels and by those who critique them as a rendition in fantasy of Christ’s death and resurrection. But once we read Lewis’s novels as meditating on their relation to their pre-Victorian and Victorian precursors, we see that such a scene of kidnapping and ransom also reflects a tradition of using the kidnapped child to work through anxieties about the forward movement of time, anxieties that persist beyond the limit of Lewis’s own work. Standing on a threshold, pointing backward toward the nineteenth century and forward to the later twentieth century, the Narnia novels create an image of what we might call, following the title of this special issue, the neo-Victorian child, a child, like those evoked in Scott’s and Stevenson’s novels, that *must* be kidnapped.

Yet it is in some sense ironic to call these children neo-Victorian, since the values incarnated in their stories are meant to counter the idea of progress associated with the Victorian era and the idea of modernity referenced by the prefix ‘neo-’. These kidnapped children come into modern literature trailing clouds of nineteenth-century anxieties about progress, but

by the time we move beyond Lewis into the latter half of the twentieth century, they have become so integral a part of children's fantasy that it is almost impossible to begin a series without a kidnapping. To confirm this, one has only to think of the opening of the Harry Potter series, which depicts Harry as a baby who must be snatched by Dumbledore and Hagrid to protect him from Voldemort. Rowling inherits the neo-Victorian image that Lewis's novels instantiate, in which kidnapping has become desirable and the world outside the magic realm into which the child is taken is almost wholly uninteresting. Who after all would choose to be a Muggle if s/he could be something else? In this modern version of kidnapping, children find their inheritances not by returning to an adult world but by staying within a world ruled by magic. In Rowling's world as in Lewis's, ransom must be paid for this substitution to take place. As Aslan and finally the children themselves must die in order to remain in Narnia, a series of figures perish over the course of the Harry Potter series, ransoming Harry so that he can complete his quest to recover his identity. While Rowling reintroduces some of the maturation that drops out of Lewis's stories, her children grow not in the external world but in the magic world that has kidnapped them and made them its own. As the children's novel moves into the twentieth and the twenty-first century, fantasy fully substitutes for the world outside it; kidnapped romance replaces the movement of history it was originally intended to counterbalance.

Notes

1. Rosario Arias and Patricia Pulham begin to address this problem, insisting that "the Victorians' own engagements with the past, or perhaps more accurately critical evaluations of such interactions, inform contemporary debates in postmodern modes of nostalgia" (Arias and Pulham 2010: xiii). Kate Mitchell also places neo-Victorian fiction within the tradition of the historical novel, which has "always been invested in historical recollection *and* aware of the partial, provisional nature of such recollections" (Mitchell 2010: 4, original emphasis).
2. The connections between Stevenson and Scott are many. Scott met Stevenson's father in 1814 when he "went on a tour, from July 29th to September 8th, with the Lighthouse Commission", for which Stevenson's

father was a surveyor (Masson 1923: 9). One of Stevenson's father's "favorite books [was] Scott's *Guy Mannering*" (McLynn 1993: 9). Stevenson himself asserted, "I have at various periods thus sat at the feet of Sir Walter Scott and Smollett and Fielding and Dickens and Poe, and Baudelaire, and the number of things which I have written in the style of each would fill a clothes basket" (qtd. in Terry 1996: 79).

3. James Annesley, the heir to five titles, was kidnapped in 1728 and sent to America as an indentured labourer. He returned to England in 1741 to attempt to reclaim his inheritance in a spectacularly publicised trial. Tobias Smollett included a chapter on the case in *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751). Charles Reade wrote a full fictional version of it in *The Wandering Heir: A Matter of Fact Romance* (1875). As late as 1912 Andrew Lang compiled a set of documents entitled *The Annesley Case*. A. Roger Ekirch provides a full background (see Ekirch 2010).
4. Lewis read Scott both as a child and as an adult. "His teenage interest in Scott's novel *Guy Mannering* was piqued simply because its subtitle was 'The Astrologer'" (White 2004: 247). In his letters to Arthur Greeve, Lewis writes extensively about his adult rereading of Scott (see Hooper 1979: 439).
5. Neil Gaiman's story 'The Problem of Susan' makes the sacrifices entailed in Lewis's novels dramatically visible by imagining Susan's life in the adult world in which she remains. Since the three other Pevensie children and their parents die in a train crash in order to be reborn in Narnia, Susan, Gaiman posits, would have had to identify their mutilated bodies.

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