

‘Logic!’ said the Professor... ‘Why don’t they teach logic at these schools?’

C.S. Lewis, ‘*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*,’
in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Collins, London, 2001,
p.131.

Chapter Three: C.S. Lewis. Part One: Biographical Introduction

C.S. Lewis has to rank amongst pre-eminent moral educators in the humanities writing in English in the middle part of the twentieth century. His serious cultural studies, notably *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (1936), *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century. Excluding Drama* (1954) and *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1964) are still accounted essential reading to scholars in these fields. Meanwhile, in such texts as *The Personal Heresy: A Controversy* (1939) and *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961), he contributed significantly to a growing area of contemporary inquiry, literary critical theory.

Millions who do not rate scholarship or the arts highly would herald him arch-protector of their faith, veering towards his devotional and apologetic texts.¹ Finally, we have a vast and varied array of readers appreciating his imaginative prose: the young of all ages who adore *The Chronicles of Narnia*, comprising seven volumes published in annual installments between 1950 and 1956, and adults who admire the more complex trilogy we are to discuss. Lewis, who thought of himself fit for no employment save as an academic based at a University, the business of which should be, ‘teaching wisdom,’² was not only a highly successful scholar, but his creative output is approachable by both the very sophisticated and the intellectually naïve.

¹ Chad Walsh, in his *The Literary Legacy of C.S. Lewis*, Sheldon Press, London, 1979, worried about evangelical Christian intellectuals, contended, ‘Lewis scholarship has sometimes seemed a branch of hermeneutics rather than literary criticism,’ ‘Preface,’ p.ix.

² Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and their friends*, Unwin Paperbacks, London, 1981, contains invaluable material and commentary on this group. Hearing Charles Williams lecture on Milton’s *Comus*, Lewis quipped, ‘I have at last, if only for once, seen a University doing what it was founded to do; teaching wisdom,’ p.119.

Lewis's autobiography, *Surprised by Joy: the Shape of my Early Life* (1955)

'aims at telling the story of my conversion' ('Preface,' p.7). It is also a rendition of his changing position in regard to what he adopted as his own term, *Sehnsucht*, or 'Joy'. The text expresses his distaste for the English public school system, leading him to form a deep suspicion of human nature and a profound distrust of thinkers or movements attempting any radical social melioration.

Clive Staples Lewis, nicknamed 'Jack', was the second of two sons born to moderately well off parents, Albert James Lewis, lawyer, and Florence August Hamilton, a clergyman's well educated daughter, in Belfast, on 29th of November, 1898. According to several testimonies, including that of his sole sibling, Warren ('Warnie'), his best friend, confidant and, later, secretarial assistant, the younger brother bore certain distinct marks of the Protestant Ulsterman.³ Still, if this meant that he was to own to certain puritanical and pugilistic traits, traces of the Celtic Irish with their penchant for colourful tale-telling and formidable imaginations would also shine through. Reading, composition, and illustrated book-making delighted the two boys. As Walter Hooper draws to our attention, these early efforts, rooted in political and social realities, the interests of those elders around them, stand out as the anti-thesis of Lewis's mature inventions⁴.

³ *ibid.*, p.51, for Tolkien's dislike of Lewis's, 'Belfast Protestant attitude to Catholics.' For more on this subject see, Mark Noll, 'C.S. Lewis's "Mere Christianity" in VII: *An Anglo-American Literary Review*, Vol. 19, 2002, pp.39-41.

⁴ C.S. Lewis, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, Harcourt Brace, NY, 1975, See 'Preface' by W. Hooper, pp.V-VII.

It was not until attending Campbell College that he 'really began to enjoy learning, and to remember what he learnt.'⁵ He was drawn to all sorts of reading material, but what stood out about this time was 'the work of Rider Haggard; and also the "scientifiction" of H.G. Wells' (*SBJ* p.34).

William Gray divided the major literary sources affecting Lewis's mind-scape into four categories: Northern, Greek, Medieval, and Romantic.⁶ The first of these he initially encountered in *Tegner's Drapa*, Henry Longfellow's verse on the Norse god, Balder. However, it was through Wagner's orchestral music and Arthur Rackham's gothic illustrations that 'Pure "Northernness" engulfed me' (*SBJ*, p.62). Later he chanced on William Morris, his favourite recent pagan, translator of Icelandic sagas and someone whose eclectic tastes embraced the gamut of above-mentioned influences. He was early drawn to Homer and parts of Aeschylus and Euripides, however his leading guide became Plato. Under our third grouping Thomas Malory's *Le Mort D'Arthur* was a seminal discovery, whilst encountered early and venerated ever after was Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. What Lewis meant by 'romantic' deserves considerable space, and shall be explained shortly.

In September 1914, Albert sent his son for private tuition to William Kirkpatrick, or 'The Knock', resident in the delightful Surrey countryside. An early made friend, Arthur Greeves, increased his love, 'for myth and marvel,' as well as, 'the classic English novelists' (*SBJ*, p.122). Accepted into University College Lewis was soon an infantry lieutenant preparing for war in the trenches. from where he would be sent home wounded. Whilst finding army service odious he accepted it

⁵ Roger Green and Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography*, Collins, London, 1974, p.29.

⁶ William Gray, *C.S. Lewis*, Northcote House Publishers. Ltd, Plymouth, 1998, pp.19-26.

calmly, being in no wise an anti-war pacifist like Huxley or D.H. Lawrence, nor, although as Irish born liable to exemption, did he recant this choice. If some question Lewis's macho and belligerent posturings,⁷ he imbibed one grand lesson from World War One, to wit, 'I came to know and pity and reverence the ordinary man' (*SBJ*, p.157).

At the outset of his career Lewis aspired to become a poet. If unable to convince either critics or the reading public on this point, these poems, modelled on narrative constructions familiar in earlier ages, are not nearly so slight as some contend. *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics*⁸ was published under Clive Hamilton's name in 1919.

Especially relevant the flavour of *Sehnsucht* is in strong evidence. How this mood arose was indicated in the opening pages of the autobiography. A biscuit tin lid, decorated with organic materials, 'was the first beauty I ever knew,' and alongside a view of the Castlereagh Hills, 'taught me longing – *Sehnsucht*; made me for good or ill, and before I was six years old, a votary of the Blue Flower' (*SBJ*, p.12). Eventually, he concluded, the desire was not merely for a state of mind nor something produced at will, since 'it is a by-product. Its very existence presupposes that you desire not it but something other and outer' (*SBJ*, p.136).

⁷ Some find Lewis's response to military service, eg in *Mere Christianity*, William Collins, Glasgow, 1979 (Originally 1952), pp. 104-5 insensitive and theologically questionable. For a critique of his gratuitous evocation of violence and machismo refer to Kath Filmer, *C.S. Lewis: Mask and Mirror*, St. Martin's Press, N.Y., 1993, pp.28,35,136.

⁸ C.S. Lewis, *Spirits in Bondage: A Cycle of Lyrics*, Harvest Books, New York, 1984. Edited and with a 'Preface' by Walter Hooper.

Of value to us here is the leading item which gave its name to his second collection, *Dymer*,⁹ appearing virtually unheeded in 1926 under the previous pseudonym. In the ‘Preface’ Lewis admits:

Romantic longing – *Sehnsucht* – played an unusually central part in my experience. Such longing is in itself the very reverse of wishful thinking: it is more like thoughtful wishing. But it throws off what may be called systems of imagery. One among many such which it had thrown off for me was the Hesperian or Western Garden system, mainly derived from Euripides, Milton, Morris, and the early Yeats. By the time I wrote *Dymer* I had come... into a state of angry revolt against that spell.¹⁰

Whilst esteeming Plato’s *opus*, the parts of this Lewis least appreciated were the political and social constructions found in *The Republic*, and in *Dymer* the hero reacts forcefully against promoters of the scientific rationalistic methodology of an oppressive State.

Dymer undermines public enemies in the form of the vast over-ruling Machine Apparatus, and this is exposed in satiric lines focused on the youth’s birth and conditioning; these themes being foreshadows of socio-political concerns in the trilogy. In this ironically named, ‘Perfect City’ (I, 2, 7) erotic or conjugal desires and obligations have been obliterated, since:

love was in a schedule and the State
Chose for eugenic reasons who should mate
With whom, and when.

(I, 3, 4-6)

⁹ W Hooper, ed, *C.S. Lewis: Narrative Poems*, With a Preface by W.Hooper. Geoffrey Bles, London, 1969, pp.7-91. (‘Dymer’ was originally published in 1926.)

¹⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Dymer*, with a new 1950 ‘Preface,’ *ibid.*, p.4.

Not only does bureaucratic control leave nothing ‘to chance’ (I, 3, 7), but the blame for the ensuing rigidity and lifelessness is laid at the feet of the founding fathers ‘the last Platonists’ with their notion of ‘what ought to be’ (I, 4, 1 and 3).

Dymer the iconoclast is to change all this, yet when we initially meet him he is as helpless as Winston Smith in *Nineteen Eighty Four* because:

The public crèche engulfed him with the rest,
And twenty separate Boards of Education
Closed round him. He passed through every test,
Was vaccinated, numbered, washed and dressed,
Proctored, inspected, whipt, examined weekly.

(I, 6, 2-6)

This poem is a composite of several styles, and boasts some fine passages, like those below which, referring to *Sehnsucht* and, smacking of that article in Plato’s creed he could identify with, the Theory of Forms, reveal an alliterative lyricism which presents well when read aloud.

The most profound of successful undergraduate friendships, the one formed with Owen Barfield his, ‘anti-self’ (*SBJ*, p.161), deserves a mention, and Lewis’s scholarly text, *The Allegory of Love*, was to be dedicated to ‘Owen Barfield, wisest and best of my unofficial teachers’. (Frontispiece) In an undated letter Lewis described him thus, ‘the man of all my acquaintance whose character both moral and intellectual I should put highest, or very nearly so.’¹¹ A disciple of Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy, for about five years in the late twenties he carried out a debate with Lewis on philosophical and literary issues which the two referred to as ‘the Great War.’ Barfield helped him to clarify central concerns in his thinking, particularly in making a distinction between different types of romanticism, one described as ‘the pursuit of... pure Romance... the cult of far away and long ago,’ and a second,

¹¹ Lionel Adey, *C.S. Lewis’s “Great War” with Owen Barfield*, University of Victoria, Canada, 1978, p.11.

'metaphysical idealism, giving rise to "a new theory of poetry, which it sees for the first time more a religion than a past-time." '¹² Barfield identified Lewis as subscribing to the former and opposing the latter of these meanings.

Whereas he aligns with classicists in elevating reason, in aesthetic terminology, and in the heart if not the head, Lewis fits more satisfactorily into the romantic camp, albeit such a loosely used term has to undergo further analysis to avoid misrepresentation. In the 'Preface' to Lewis's subtle prose tale, *The Pilgrim's Regress: An Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism* (1933), he asserted, 'we can distinguish at least seven kinds of things which are called romantic.'¹³ Pre-eminently interested in the second category, Lewis explains its main features:

The marvellous is 'romantic', provided it does not make part of the believed religion. Thus magicians, ghosts, fairies, witches, dragons, nymphs and dwarfs are 'romantic'; angels, less so. Greek gods are 'romantic' in Mr. James Stephens or Mr. Maurice Hewlett; not so in Homer and Sophocles. In this sense Malory, Boiardo, Ariosto, Spenser, Tasso, Mrs. Radcliffe, Shelley, Coleridge, William Morris, and Mr. E.R. Eddison are 'romantic' authors¹⁴

When 'romanticism' is used in this text *Sehnsucht* is equally being evoked, 'that unnameable something, desire for which pierces us like a rapier... the human soul was made to enjoy some object that is never fully given' (pp. 9-10).

The quester John, entertains doubts about religion, but was not about to become seduced by scientific pretensions. In Book Two, Chapter 1, Mr. Enlightenment puts forth these reasons why the landlord cannot exist, 'Christopher

¹² *ibid.*, p.15

¹³ C.S Lewis, *The Pilgrim's Regress*, 'Preface', p.5.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 'Preface', p.6.

Columbus, Galileo, the earth is round, invention of printing, gunpowder,' sure Puritanians cling to outmoded opinions 'because they have not had the benefits of a scientific training' (p.36). Similar to Lewis elsewhere,¹⁵ John refutes the taunt about the supposedly new discoveries as helping to downgrade religious certainty by replying, 'My father always said it was round' (p.36), this perhaps Lewis's first known castigation of the irrationality of 'scientism'? Later on John resists further pseudo-scientific claims in the fields of economics, sociology and psychology when Marxism, Fascism and Sigmund Freud are shown to be lacking.

Father History confirms Reason's declaration that the island image is a legitimate doorway into comprehension of divine verities. Whilst Lewis lauded the Greek aesthetic approach to truth and thought the bulk of this and Norse and Celtic tellings artistically preferable to Hebraic cultural offerings,¹⁶ he realized the major contributions of the Jewish peoples had been their unique moral and prophetic elements. The Landlord gave his subjects pictures and rules and a balanced society benefits, when both, plus an extra necessary ingredient, are in use:

The pictures alone are dangerous, and the Rules alone are dangerous. That is why the best thing of all is to find Mother Kirk at the very beginning, and to live from infancy with a third thing... and which was brought into the country by the Landlord's Son.¹⁷

The *Allegory of Love* is referred to in our third section but for the present it is worth noting that the 'forties reveals itself as Lewis's most polemic decade, and titles propounding the core of his beliefs include *The Problem of Pain* (1940), *The Abolition of Man* (1943) and *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (1947). Even the

¹⁵ Eg, C.S. Lewis, 'Religion and Science,' *God in the Dock: Essays on theology and ethics*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970, p.74.

¹⁶ See. H Carpenter, *The Inklings*, p.47. Also, C.S.Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, p.139.

¹⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Pilgrims Regress*, p.152.

imaginative constructions, *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) and *The Great Divorce: A Dream* (1945) pierced by, respectively, Jonathan Swift's satire and George MacDonald's sanctity, are extremely sober, even terrifying accounts of deluded and damned beings.

With the launch of *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (1950), Lewis came closest to conveying that singular atmosphere which, by intertwining the usually separate categories of natural and supernatural, strikes us as a dominant characteristic of the best in romantic literature. In these seven volumes Lewis used a children's format to present sophisticated and serious-yet-joyous re-workings of Judae-Christian theology and ethics. In Narnia's becharmed realm the experience of the numinous is a common feature and the intervention of the "other" is taken for granted. In the Narnia texts Lewis relied less on his gift for reasoning, allowing instead the marvellous to have its way.

From chapter two of that apocalyptic finale to the Chronicles, *The Last Battle*, Roonwit's prophecy to his sovereign, Tirian, could have been uttered by Lewis himself, 'Never in all my days have I seen such terrible things written in the skies. ...there have not been such disastrous conjunctions of the planets for five hundred years.'¹⁸ In February 1940, Jack spoke of his incomprehension of the period's 'politics, or its economics or any damn thing about it. Even its theology... They don't think human reason or human conscience of any value at all.'¹⁹ A month on he berated the 'ghastly age' they'd been born into, adding "'Dynamic,'" I think, is one of

¹⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Collins, London, 2001, p.676.

¹⁹ W.H. Lewis, ed., and with a Memoir, *Letters of C.S. Lewis*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1966, p.177.

the words invented by this age which sums up best what it likes and I abominate.

Could one start a Stagnation Party?²⁰

Lewis announced that in his opinion the monumental change in consciousness and in day-to-day activities did not take place at the end of the medieval era.²¹ As he explained in his Inaugural Lecture at Cambridge in 1954, as the newly appointed Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English, he sensed himself as representing the dinosaur, a far more ancient creature than the centaur, or even the dragon into which Eustace Scrubb was metamorphosed in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. At least a century and a half of the all-encompassing spread of secular humanism and the ensuing onslaught of technical innovations had separated him from times when the logical outcomes of materialist assumptions had still to replace the dominance of religious reference-points and the bang and buzz of the Machine had yet to undermine the hum found in the created order. Thus, during a post World War Two boom, and to a generation becoming quickly secularized and affluent, he pronounced:

Between Jane Austen and us, but not between her and Shakespeare, Chaucer, Alfred, Virgil, Homer, or the Pharaohs, comes the birth of the machines. This lifts us at once into a region of change far above all that we have hitherto considered...It alters man's place in nature.²²

William White states, 'Reading, writing and talking about reading and writing were the essence of his life.'²³ The bulk of his voyages were inward, and as Barfield

²⁰ *ibid.*, p.179.

²¹ *ibid.*, p.263.

²² C.S. Lewis, 'De Descriptione Temporum' in *They Asked for a Paper: Papers and Addresses*, Geoffrey Bles. London, 1962, p.20.

²³ W.L. White, *The Image of Man in C.S. Lewis*, Hodder and Stoughton. London, 1970, p.32.

records, ‘at a certain stage in his life he deliberately ceased to take any interest in himself except as a kind of spiritual alumnus taking his moral finals.’²⁴

Lewis married Helen Joy Gresham in 1956 and entered a contented phase of domestic conjugalitly only to learn too soon that his wife had cancer and was not expected to survive for long. After a short reprieve Joy Lewis died on 13th July 1960, and her absence profoundly affected her husband, shaking, but not overturning, the foundations of his faith. On 22nd November 1963, Lewis’s own earthly sojourn came to a close.

Lewis’s reputation in several fields is a matter for history, notwithstanding the fact that even this evokes a fair amount of the mythical, including some less elevated or mundane meanings of that term.²⁵ Amongst the legacy the subject of this study left behind was a marking out of the boundaries separating areas of human discourse, especially the distinction to be drawn between what is private and what is public, before proceeding to reverse the status his own age accorded these.

During a century which increasingly pushed representations of the religious into the private sphere, whilst maintaining that a Christian’s primary obligation was to love and obey the Creator, Lewis believed it was also his job to affirm in the social domain the code of values he adhered to. Bruce Edwards, so dismissive of Anthony Hopkins’s portrayal of Lewis in the film, *Shadowlands* (1993), as a Lewis whom he argues ‘never existed,’²⁶ pointed out features of Lewis’s career that are worth recalling:

²⁴ J. Gibb, ed, *Light on C.S. Lewis*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1965. With an Introduction by Owen Barfield, p. xvi.

²⁵ Chad Walsh, *op.cit.*, warned, ‘The danger is that Lewis may become a cult figure and the study of his life and work turn into hagiography,’ ‘Preface’, p.x.

²⁶ Bruce Edwards, *C.S. Lewis: Mere Christian*, p.4. On the Occasion of the Centenary of C.S. Lewis’s Birthday. Taylor University, Ohio, 1998.

The role of civilization in general, and Christian civilization in particular... is to help make public men of private persons. It is to lift men and women out of their provinciality and narrowness into a more expansive realm of transchronological persons, ideas and ideals, into an arena in which character is built, affirmed, and celebrated as a public good which promotes the health of society at large.²⁷

²⁷ Bruce Edwards, *C.S. Lewis: Public Christian and Scholar*, Prepared for the Frances White Colloquium on C.S. Lewis, Taylor University, U.S.A, Nov. 12, 1998, p.5.

The life of the scientist or the artist is a higher life. Unfortunately, when led in an irresponsible, one-sided way, the higher life is probably more harmful for the individual than the lower life of the average sensual man and certainly, in the case of the scientist, much worse for society at large.

Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means: an enquiry into the nature of ideals and into the methods employed for their realization*, Chatto and Windus.
London, 1937, p.277.

Chapter Three: Part Two: C.S. Lewis on Science and Scientists

This chapter proposes to take a brief look at formative influences on Lewis's general attitude to the sciences before examining how he chose to utilise aspects of scientific knowledge in those fictive works often called collectively the 'deep space trilogy,' consisting of *Out of The Silent Planet* (1938), *Perelandra* (1943) and *That Hideous Strength* (1945). Then a few leading scientific characters from the above will come under scrutiny. Concurrently, this section explores why Lewis wrote in that relatively new genre called 'science fiction', and how he moulded the medium to expand its potentialities and suit his own purposes.

One's response to scientific endeavour and to the plethora of conclusions drawn therefrom depends in part upon when one was born and, in part, where one stands along the political divide. Thus, Percy Shelley, who amazed his sisters with chemistry, praised science and reason as weapons to help overthrow the tyrannies of King and Kirk. A few decades on, Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) appeared and conservative Alfred Tennyson, less convinced by cries of 'progress,' and daunted by recent findings in geology and biology, shared Pascal's terror of, '*le silence éternel des espaces infinis*'.¹

We have shown how Aldous Huxley, slightly older than Lewis, was aware of and keenly interested in implications of new findings in physics and mathematics, and then how, as decades wore on, his emphasis fell increasingly on the fields of psychology, biology and ecology. As an undergraduate, Lewis had studied history and philosophy, tutoring for a short time in the latter subject. Thus he increasingly

¹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, No. 206. In the essay, 'Dogma and the Universe,' (Orig.1943) in *God in the Dock*, ed., W. Hooper, Lewis wrote, 'The silence of the eternal spaces terrified Pascal, but it was the greatness of Pascal that enabled them to do so,' p.41.

focused on epistemological and ethical deductions to be drawn from current scientific theories, as well as on the meta-scientific assumptions behind them.

From the autobiography we hear nothing on youthful interest in any particular science. We do note an aversion to mathematics and an admission that military service exempted him from a compulsory maths exam which would have thwarted his academic ambitions (*SBJ*, p.111).² Open to intellectual pursuits in general, Lewis was pleased when a relative, ‘told me all the science I could then take in, clearly, eagerly,’ and ‘thus provided the intellectual background for my reading of H.G. Wells’ (*SBJ*, p.41). About his foremost teacher he wrote, ‘though I could never have been a scientist, I had scientific as well as imaginative impulses, and I loved ratiocination. Kirk excited and satisfied one side of me’ (*SBJ*, pp.111-12).

Owen Barfield helped to dissolve two notions he had unquestionably clung to. This self-declared ‘objective idealist’³ tore away at his ‘“chronological snobbery,” the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited’ (*SBJ*, p.167). Barfield also pointed out inconsistencies in a theory of knowledge, Lewis’s, which confused the logic of realist and idealist positions. Then, meeting solid academics of the calibre of Neville Coghill, J.R.R. Tolkien and Hugh Dyson, all Christians and supernaturalists, he had to take a closer look at his own opinions.

In showing scant sympathy with the aims and methods of science, Lewis, in contradistinction to Huxley, was a typical post – World War One member of the

² Confirming this, in W.H. Lewis ed., and with a Memoir, *Letters of C.S. Lewis*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1966, we read from the ‘Memoir’ ‘I do not believe that at any stage in his career he could have passed an examination of any kind in elementary mathematics.’ p.8.

³ L. Adey, *C.S. Lewis’s “Great War” with Owen Barfield*, University of Victoria, Canada, 1978, p.73.

literary intelligentsia. If on occasion using scientific references and if read up on such matters well enough to understand their implications for the individual and society, Lewis was neither particularly interested in, nor capable of, in-depth scientific analysis or depiction. Siding with Tolkien who claimed ‘the ultimate idea behind all machinery... is to create Power in *this* world,’ along with, ‘It isn’t really man who is ultimately daunting and insupportable: it’s the *man-made*,’⁴ Lewis grew increasingly sceptical about science’s confidence to bring about desirable social ends, and became quite negative in regard to its ability in achieving these by innovations of a technical nature.

Still, in a period when aspersions were often cast on the mind’s ability to comprehend the operations of external reality, and against an existential, anti-rational mood, Lewis held firmly to processes of reason and logic as adequate ways of knowing. In the manner, if not the matter, of ‘The Knock’, he challenged anyone keen to replace the pre-suppositions of religion with those of a meta-scientific world-view. He felt he was not castigating science *per se*, rather, his target was scientism:

Of course Shaw is not a scientist and the attack is not on science as such. But there is a sort of creed which might be called ‘scientific humanism,’ tho’ many of its votaries know very little science ...and which is shared by people so different as Haldane, Shaw, Wells and Olaf Stapledon.⁵

Of this formidable quartet most readers have at least heard of the two in the middle. In an essay, originally a talk given in 1955 at Cambridge, and entitled *On Science Fiction*,⁶ Lewis moved through detailing various sub-species of the genre to

⁴ Quoted in H. Carpenter, *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and their friends*, Unwin Paperbacks, London, 1981, pp.140-1.

⁵ W. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.160.

⁶ W. Hooper, ed., and ‘Preface’, *Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories*, Harcourt Brace, N.Y, 1975. Essay, ‘On Stories,’ by C.S. Lewis.

arrive at his preferred kind. Along the way, in discussing novelist and philosopher, (William) Olaf Stapledon, 1886-1950, remembered chiefly for *A Modern Theory of Ethics* (1929) and *Last and First Men* (1931), Lewis gets at the core of what these four had in common. Their ‘eschatological’⁷ texts are distinguished from political or satirical efforts (he mentions *Brave New World*) and ‘they give an imaginative vehicle for speculations about the ultimate destiny of our species.’⁸ Along with a paper, ‘The Last Judgement’ from *Possible Worlds* by J.B.S. Haldane, 1892-1964, geneticist and populariser of science, they present us with a grandiose cosmic view of things Lewis brands, ‘a new form – the pseudo-history.’⁹

Whilst maintaining that such volumes are valuable in reminding us of our ‘collective smallness,’¹⁰ it is their ideology which is questionable. Certainly he enjoyed Wells’s *Time Machine*, (1895), and *First Men in the Moon*, (1901), and often acknowledged the fact, whilst in the ‘Foreword’ to *Out of the Silent Planet* and in its tenth chapter his debt to the older writer is mentioned. Even when disputing his theories and view of history, Lewis seemed to retain a life-long soft spot for this author.¹¹ As for Stapledon, in the ‘Preface’ to *That Hideous Strength* we read ‘I admire his invention (though not his philosophy)’ (p.8), and the notion of a disembodied head surviving on its own is borrowed from Stapledon. To quote Lewis:

What immediately spurred me to write was Olaf Stapledon’s *Last and First Men* (1931) and an essay in

⁷ C.S. Lewis, ‘On Science Fiction,’ *ibid.*, p.65.

⁸ *ibid.*, pp.65-66.

⁹ *ibid.*, p.66.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p.66.

¹¹ See R. Green and W. Hooper, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography*, Collins, London, 1974, pp.163-4 for Lewis’s ambivalence toward H.G. Wells.

J.B.S. Haldane's *Possible Worlds* (1927), both of which seemed to take the idea of such travel seriously and to have the desperately immoral outlook which I try to pillory in Weston. I liked the whole inter-planetary idea as *mythology* and simply wished to conquer for my own (Christian) point of view what has always hitherto been used by the opposite side.¹²

G.B Shaw elicits the least sympathy. In *The Screwtape Letters* a 'modern writer – someone with a name like P-Shaw'¹³ - is welcomed by Toadpipe as a desirable influence. And in this title's fifteenth chapter a foremost goal of Hell is to lure everyone away from the all-important now, and neglect the promise of eternity to 'make them live in the future,' because 'nearly all vices are rooted in the future.'¹⁴

He was most enthusiastic about *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920), a text Colin Wilson regarded as 'the greatest imaginative work of the twentieth century... possibly in all literature.'¹⁵ To Lewis this unusual fantasy by David Lindsay, (1878-1947), whilst stylistically impoverished, was extremely important since

the author (like Kafka) is recording a lived dialectic. His Tormance is a region of the spirit. He is the first writer to discover what 'other planets' are really good for in fiction... To construct plausible and moving 'other worlds' you must draw on the only real 'other world' we know, that of the spirit.¹⁶

To turn, then, to how Lewis uses the matter of various sciences in *Out of the Silent Planet*. After meeting in a remote cottage the villains of the story, the metaphysically inclined physicist, Edward Weston (standing in for the materialistic

¹² *ibid.*, p.163.

¹³ C. S Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1942, p. 115.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p.77.

¹⁵ C. Wilson, *The Craft of the Novel*, Ashgrove Press, Bath, 1986, p.214.

¹⁶ C. S Lewis, 'On Stories', p.12, in W. Hooper, ed., *Of Other Worlds*.

West), and the entrepreneurial gold digger, Dick Devine (he who is a god unto himself), the hero, Elwin Ransom, awakes from a blow to the head in an unfamiliar place. Told the three are on a space ship a great distance from Earth, Ransom's fear is obvious, yet his curiosity has been aroused. When he asks Weston, 'how have you done it?' as concerns the operations of their space-vehicle, he is given the reply, 'there's no good you asking that. Unless you were one of the four or five real physicists now living you couldn't understand' (p.27). Nevertheless, amidst quasi-scientific pronouncements upon the mechanics of the voyage, the reader receives a small dose of practical information such as: 'we work by exploiting the less observed properties of solar radiation'¹⁷ (p.27). A little later on Ransom feels revitalized by sunlight, to be told by Weston, 'they were receiving... many rays that never penetrated the terrestrial atmosphere.' (p.35)

Weston, owing to scant sympathy for, let alone empathy with, practitioners of less pragmatic disciplines, pouts, 'I do not call classics and history and such trash education' (p.29). However, he is united with Ransom in a sentiment which the merely materialistic and hedonistic Devine could scarcely begin to fathom, the majesty of their own quest, since 'The adventure was too high, its circumstance too solemn, for any emotion save a severe delight' (p.34). In getting his imagination baptised, Ransom begins a lengthy de-conditioning process. Putting aside images made familiar by recent science fiction books, films and comics, he now thinks 'the very name "Space" seemed a blasphemous libel for this empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam' (p.35). Ransom relaxes into enjoying the surrounding wonder and in place of that mundane noun substitutes, 'the womb of worlds' and 'the

¹⁷ In C.S. Lewis's, 'Unreal Estates' in W. Hooper ed., *ibid.*, Brian Aldiss, twenty five years on observes how solar energy 'is back in favour again,' p.87.

heavens,' or, evoking Milton, the 'happy climes' (p.35). Lewis was more interested in inner quality than outward detail and promotes the poetic impulse above any want to analyse or dissect, as is re-enforced in the passage about Ransom's epiphany:

Now, with a certainty which never after deserted him, he saw the planets – the 'earths' he called them in his thought – as mere holes or gaps in the living heaven... formed... by subtraction from, the surrounding brightness.

(O.O.S.P. p44)

Further notions popularised by Wells must also get discarded. Thinking he is to be sacrificed to a creature called a *sorn*, Ransom expects the worse since 'He had read his H.G. Wells and others. His universe was peopled with horrors such as ancient and medieval theology could hardly rival' (p.39). Once the trio land on Malacandra (Mars), 'our' protagonist finds another pre-conception shattered. The planet 'was beautiful,' rather than 'rocky desolation or else a network of nightmare machines' (p.47). Instead, local flora reveals a colourful, even edible, if a somewhat surrealistic, landscape:

A mass of something purple, so huge that he took it for a heather-covered mountain, was his first impression... [it] looked for a moment like a plump of organ-pipes, then like a stack of rolls of cloth set up on end, then like a forest of gigantic umbrellas blown inside out. It was in faint motion.

(O.O.S.P. p.48)

On meeting local inhabitants, beginning with that species of hunter-gathers and poet-musicians, *hross* (plural *hrossa*), Ransom is startled to learn how benign, welcoming and creative they are. And, whereas in contemplation of sorns he expected a combination of 'superhuman intelligence with monstrosity of form and ruthlessness of will' (p.67), they prove to be in stark contrast to those aggressive Martians presented in the film opening in Australia in Winter 2005, of Wells's *The War of the Worlds*. Certainly Lewis gave us a more positive and 'species-friendly' range of

extra-terrestrials, and films such as Stephen Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and *ET* (1982) may well be part of a legacy in this shift of attitude. In that rambling conversation with science fiction writers Kingsley Amis and Brian Aldiss taped not long before his retirement, and aware of revolutionary concepts he initiated, Lewis put it thus:

Most of the earlier stories start from the opposite assumption, that we, the human race, are in the right, and everything else is ogres. I may have done a little towards altering that.¹⁸

Ransom's thoughts again display the author's cursory regard for specific scientific fact. We read: 'he had, it is true, a vague notion that the jaws and mouth of the beast were not those of a carnivore,' yet all the same, 'he was too ignorant of zoology to do more than guess' (p.62). Whilst Huxley was well informed as to various sciences and translated what he knew directly into his narratives, Lewis wanted to show he was not ignorant of these but had far different enthusiasms – a belief, for example, that non-human kinds are not objects to observe and exploit but subjects we can respect, enjoy and inter-act with. Unfamiliarity and caution soon turn to delight and fraternization, and we note a professional's fascination as he anticipates conversation with a rational or *hnau* being. If Ransom is keen about *any* science, it is that of philology, and he entertains a hope to discover 'the very form of language itself, the principle behind all possible languages' (p.62).

Despite this and in regard to native fauna, a few observations concerning physiology and gravity turn up. Copying the entrance of his *hross* guide into a boat Ransom realized his own movements were performed 'with an agility which would have been quite impossible to an animal of his bulk on Earth' (p.67). Then, puzzled

¹⁸ C.S. Lewis, *ibid.*, pp.90-91.

by the size of the vessel's oars, 'Ransom wondered how the creature could wield it, till he again remembered how light a planet they were on' (p.68). In the same chapter, too, fascinating contrasts are offered between certain differences in Martian and Terran geography.

If *hrossa* stand in for Lewis the poet and dreamer, the second race he meets represent his scholarly and analytic self. It is with Ransom's visit to the home of a *sorn* (plural *séroni*), Augray, that we learn about the most scientifically literate and intellectually astute *hnau* species on Malacandra. At once Augray perceives his guest came from Thulcandra (Earth), because he is 'small and thick and that is how the animals ought to be made in a heavier world' (p.105). Ransom is given a dose of oxygen from a cup 'attached to a length of flexible tube' (p.105). Significantly, we get a description of an angel-like being, an *eldil* (plural, *eldila*) that brings to mind Einstein's relativity theory (pp.108-9), and the not negligible conclusions to be drawn from such an existence. This evidence 'might after all have another explanation than the anthropologists had yet given,' so much so that 'it would turn the universe rather oddly inside out' (p.109).

Augray produces an object resembling a telescope even though the visitor had, 'seen nothing remotely like a factory or a laboratory' (p.113). Despite a dearth of gadgetry *séroni* are capable of mental sophistication, as their questions about Thulcandra bear witness and 'they worked systematically from the geology of Earth to its present geography, and thence in turn to flora, fauna, human history, languages, politics and arts.' They also worked 'from a wide background of general science' (p.118). Distinct features of Ransom's homeland intrigued *séroni*, one being, 'the extraordinary degree to which problems of lifting and carrying things absorbed our

energy.' The second was, 'the narrowing of sympathies and even of thought' (p.119). in a world where but a single *hnau* race existed.

The final exchange between these two focuses on Lewis's central concern, the philosophy of science, and it questions the very foundations of epistemology itself. Proffering his wrist-watch as a parting gift, Ransom observes that Augray comprehended its function, yet the sorn gives it back, asking, 'do your people not know except by looking at this thing how much of the day has worn?' Ransom replies that whilst 'there are beasts' who possess that kind of knowing, 'our *hnau* have lost it' (p.124). *Séroni* have not lost this intuitive or pre-conscious faculty and also are highly rational.

The further two kinds of Malacandran *hnau* are incapable of advanced ratiocination, and on meeting the crafts folk the *pfifltrigg* (pl, *pfifltriggi*), Ransom concludes that, if they are makers of artefacts, their works are akin to those of a pre-Industrial age. Recalling Middle-Earth's delving dwarves, their wares stand, then, in opposition to any inorganic output which speaks of advanced Terran technological wizardry. Lewis devotes little space to them, however, regarding the telescope Augray reports, 'We thought it... and the *pfifltriggi* made it' (p.113).

Further on something happens which causes Devine to warn his partner, 'These devils can split the atom or something pretty like it' (p.155). This occurs when three *hrossa* killed by the pair and then, 'laid on biers of some unknown metal' (p.145), upon getting touched, 'with some small object that appeared to be made of glass or crystal' (p.154), vanish altogether. Furthermore, in response to Weston's boast of his race's inherent superiority, the planetary ruler, Oyarsa, shatters this

deluded notion, retorting that long ago Malacandrians ‘were well able to have made sky-ships’ (p.163).

From the ‘Postscript’ the author raises a question which might bother the astute, namely, ‘how the *eldila*, who obviously don’t breathe, can talk,’ before mentioning discussing the problem with, ‘J – the only scientist here who is in my confidence’ (p.184). Lewis is not really worried about appealing to a handful of the scientifically trained amongst his readers. Instead, his gaze rests upon assumptions underlying scientific speculation, and how these may get changed. Accordingly,

What we need for the moment is not so much a body of belief as a body of people familiarized with certain ideas. If we could even effect in one percent of our readers a change-over from the conception of Space to the conception of Heaven.

(O.O.S.P p.180)

Lewis gave scientific material considerable coverage in this volume, probably more than anywhere else in his imaginative texts, but not everyone appreciated these efforts. In an essay, ‘Auld Hornie. F.R.S.’ (1946), Professor Haldane mounted a fierce attack on his presentation of science in the trilogy. Haldane’s response begins by discrediting his opponent’s paucity of authentic science by contrasting this lack against the capabilities of Lewis’s favourites, alleging:

Dante and Milton knew the science of their time... Mr. Lewis is often incorrect, as in his account of the gravitational field in the space-ship, the atmosphere on Mars, the appearance of other planets from it, and so on.¹⁹

¹⁹ J.B.S. Haldane, ‘Aulde Hornie, FRS,’ in *Everything Has a History*, Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1951, p.250.

Obviously the defence might commence by asserting that centuries ago there was considerably less information to acquire. More valid is this: Haldane's argument becomes somewhat spurious once he actually falls into a trap Lewis frequently advised against. From questioning his adversary's factual basis, Haldane shifts to a different footing. Of a sudden his offensive takes on political overtones when he puts his Marxist credentials on the table. Not only has Haldane committed a *non sequitur*, he has over-stepped the mark in thrusting forth a questionable socio-economic doctrine which many claim has no grounding in any science. In 'A Reply to Professor Haldane,' Lewis admitted 'My science is usually wrong,' countering 'So is the professor's history,' before explaining their differences:

his false history is produced in works intended to be true, whereas my false science is produced in romances.... I needed for my purpose just enough popular astronomy to create in 'the common reader' a 'willing suspension of disbelief.' No one hopes, in such fantasies, to satisfy a real scientist, any more than the writer of a historical romance hopes to satisfy a real archaeologist. (Where the latter effort is seriously made, as in *Romola*, it usually spoils the book.)²⁰

Now, despite inevitable over-lapping of materials in our three chapters, *Perelandra* is more fittingly dealt with when we scrutinize the connection in Lewis's scheme between myth and religious belief, but, before we move on, a few relevant factors deserve a mention. Comparing the first and second works in the trilogy, J.S. Ryan averred that the latter registers a far smaller scientific component:

Typical of the change of style alone is the difference in the interplanetary conveyance of Ransom. The science fiction background of travel is abandoned although Weston still has to travel in a spacecraft, and there is no attempt to make

²⁰ C. S Lewis, 'A Reply to Professor Haldane' in *Of Other Worlds*, p.76.

Venus like the surface known to astronomers, as has been done with Mars.²¹

A re-occurring theme in these books is the gap between the beauty, harmony and fertility of the natural order and the ugliness, confusion and sterility of the man-made. The author had waxed enthusiastic over cross-country hiking,²² and in the midst of rural loveliness the character Lewis confronts a vacated abomination familiar to moderns: 'Great bulbous shapes of cement, strange brickwork bogeys, glowered at me over dry scrubby grass pock-marked with grey pools and intersected with the remains of a light railway' (p.12). Possibly Lewis is hinting that few aliens are as likely as we are to fill their world with garbage and then label their actions 'progress'.

Having but a perfunctory interest in the mode of travel, Ransom swiftly passes over precise details with 'I have no ideas what organs or instruments they use... I shall be in some state of suspended animation... I can't understand him when he tries to describe it' (p.28). After landing on Venus, while there are numerous descriptive passages, each either realistically or imaginatively convincing, these are hardly the records of a botanist, zoologist or marine biologist; rather it is the amazed poet and fervent animal lover who is overwhelmed by his experiences.

Lewis focused on logical conclusions to be drawn from an acceptance of different scientific and/or quasi-scientific theories and stances. Above all, he was keen to establish a firm basis for intellectual endeavour and to ward off doubts regarding objective grounds for epistemology and ethics. Questionable ideas beget

²¹ J.S. Ryan, *Modern English Myth-Makers: An examination of the Imaginative Writings of Charles Williams, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien*, unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Cambridge University, 1967, p.87.

²² W.H. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, pp.2,5.

incorrect practice, and have far-reaching consequences, as Bruce Reichenbach has made clear:

In *Miracles* Lewis expressed scepticism concerning what was at the time of his writing a relatively new theory of physics, quantum mechanics... Like Einstein, he could not conceive of God's playing dice with the universe. In *Perelandra*... Lewis seems to concur that this theory, along with Einstein's theory of relativity, is an attack on the view that reality is fundamentally rational, making our judgements about what is true or false or real or unreal merely subjective.²³

Whilst Lewis disclaims familiarity with any branch of the tree of science and is very frank as to his intentions, he reveals as much as he hides. This may be said because, as Aristotle and the romantics remind us, engaged artists, philosophers or scientists all begin their studies egged on by the same quality – wonder. Colin Manlove avers of *Perelandra*, ‘There are few fantasies in which the protagonist takes so little for granted, is so inexhaustibly curious about the world in which he finds himself, the impulse is almost scientific.’²⁴ He adds that, in descriptions of exotica, ‘Always there is this sense of a faithful, even a scientific record.’²⁵

Next, we examine Edward Rolles Weston, who whilst absent from the third in the series, strides the surfaces of Mars and Venus as the colossus of human evil. Early into *Out of the Silent Planet* we learn what a thoroughly nasty person he is. The mother of the half-wit employed by Weston and Devine tells Ransom her son is

²³ B. Reichenback, ‘C.S. Lewis on the Desolation of Devalued Science’ in *VII: An Anglo-American Literary Review*, Vol. 4, 1983, p.14.

²⁴ Colin Manlove, *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies*, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 105.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p.138.

'frightened of the Professor' (p.8). Nor has the physicist the slightest inclination to play host once Ransom unintentionally turns up, leastwise not until he figures out how to kidnap and exploit the intruder. From Devine we hear Weston has committed a serious *faux pas* against Ransom's code, and has used the dog 'Tartar for an experiment' (p.11). Additionally, excusing eugenics, Weston is ready to sentence defectives like the boy 'to a state laboratory for experimental purposes,' arguing that he is but, 'a preparation,' and 'only an individual' (p.20). However, in stark contrast to his professed super-human qualitites this boor has a bullying manner, emitting, 'monosyllabic barking ejaculations' (p.10). Extra aural similes include 'bawled' (p.12), and 'a grunt of assent' (p.14).

Nonetheless, there is in Weston a trait clearly separating him from the shallow Devine, and it comes out when he claims of their prisoner, 'I dare say he would consent if he could be made to understand' (p.21). Lewis himself never could abide small talk, so in this Weston, who believes passionately in a cause and attempts to infect people with enthusiasm, would appear to be like minded. Despite acting from supposedly elevated ideals, Weston is ruthless, asserting in Machiavellian fashion:

small claims must give way to great... infinity, and therefore perhaps eternity, is being put into the hands of the human race. You cannot be so small-minded as to think that the rights or the life of an individual or of a million individuals are of the slightest importance in comparison with this.

(O.O.S.P. pp.28-9)

Furthermore, he agrees with Ransom that he is prepared to do 'anything whatever' (p.29) to achieve his aims.

Once Ransom escapes we hear nothing of his previous captors till they are brought before Oyarsa in consequence of their slaying some locals. Whereupon, in a

rather contrived scene smacking of farce and burlesque, you either admire Weston's convictions and courage or deplore his foolishness when he talks down to his audience, using pidgin in a tone reminiscent of a colonial usurper confronting dim-witted 'savages'. The arrogance and duplicity of this invader is cleverly captured in those nuanced translations which Ransom makes for Oyarsa. Weston assumes the Earthling's acts of colonization, 'to be the right of the higher over the lower' (p.157), because of his race's superior advances in architecture, medicine and weaponry and as they 'exchange many things among ourselves and can carry heavy weights very quickly a long way' (p.158). Readers are also shown how entirely devoid Weston is of a sense of humour.

In speaking of the murderer, the archon of Malacandra substitutes 'it' for the 'he' pronoun, and, if admitting Weston had 'attained great wisdom concerning bodies', says also 'in all other things you have the mind of an animal' (p.155), a mind that is filled with, 'fear and death and desire' (p.156). Oyarsa discerns the brain, more than the will, of Weston is diseased, and appropriately sums up his singular obsession:

You do not love any one of your race – you would have let me kill Ransom. You do not love the mind of your race, nor the body. Any kind of creature will please you if only it is begotten by your kind as they now are... Thick One... what you really love is no completed creature but the very seed itself.

(*O.O.S.P.*, p.161.)

Urged to turn to Maleldil (the second person of the Solar Trinity), Weston answers 'Me no care for Maleldil. Like Bent One better: me on his side' (p.163). He is sentenced by Oyarsa to quit the realm immediately as 'no such creature will I suffer

in Malacandra' (p.164). The book's final image of the man who longed for the arrival of the *Übermensch*, 'superman,' is far from flattering. Confronting impeding annihilation on the home-ward trip Weston 'buried his face in his hands and laid his head down on the control-board... he was crying like a child' (p.174).

A third of the way into, *Perelandra*, Weston turns up in this tale and he arrives on Venus by spaceship, much to Ransom's immediate consternation. Fixing his eyes on Weston's means of transport, Ransom speaks of the ill-will of pseudo-scientific speculators on Earth preparing to lay claim to the universe, aware how in 'Weston the power had at last met the dream. The great physicist had discovered a motive power for his space-ship.' (p.92) Meeting up with his foe, Ransom discerns something disturbing in the air. Although the 'massive egoism' (p.96) is still obvious, Weston also turns out capable of conversing in Old Solar to the Green Woman, Tinidril, leaving Ransom feeling 'now in the presence of the incalculable' (p.96). When Weston produces a revolver Ransom fears the worst, but the other puts up the weapon and offers a conciliatory gesture. For once Weston is humble enough to admit having been 'seriously mistaken – in my conception of the whole interplanetary problem when I went to Malacandra' (p.99).

A moment afterwards Weston asserts 'The key of human destiny was placed in my hands' (p.101). The physicist had, 'plunged into Biology, and particularly into what may be called biological philosophy' (p.102), and, moving from metaphysical dualism to monism, had become 'a convinced believer in emergent evolution' (p.102). Certain he was embracing a higher objective than a merely erstwhile duty to his species, his aim was:

To spread spirituality, not to spread the human race, is henceforth my mission. This sets the coping-stone on my career. I worked first for myself; then for science; then for humanity; but now at last for Spirit itself.

(*Perelandra*, p.102)

Associating the latter with the Holy Spirit of Christian theology, Weston hails Ransom as a religious ally, a proposition which he straightaway rejects. Ransom deems the life-force to be without any significant ontological or moral basis, claiming 'the Holy Ghost is *not* a blind, inarticulate purposiveness' (p.103). Immersed in his mission Weston is not listening and blurts out 'I'm being guided. I know now that I am the greatest scientist the world has yet produced' (p.105), then goes on to boast that he is the vessel through which Spirit is drawing to its goal. After the pair engage in a religious discussion, Weston suddenly ceases to speak in a rational manner and howls 'I, Weston, am your God and your Devil. I call that Force into me completely' (p.109). At this point, consumed by a spiritual pride that Screwtape informed Wormwood is 'the strongest and most beautiful of the vices,'²⁶ Weston is possessed by a (or the?) devil, and so his fall is complete. Akin to the zombie of Caribbean lore, henceforth Weston is only human in shape; he is the one who has undone himself – the Unman. He might be named a 'success' in this regard, for he resembles Screwtape's, 'perfect work – the Materialist Magician.'²⁷

Much of the book's middle chapters revolve around Weston's attempts to get the Green Woman, Perelandra's queen-to-be, to descend into temptation, and Ransom's attempts at forestalling these efforts. As matters proceed, the villain's

²⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, p.122.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p.39.

senseless viciousness is exposed when he roams around ripping apart unsuspecting birds and beasts with his bare hands. Any remaining human element quickly subsides, as Ransom notices; ‘He did not look like a sick man: but he looked very like a dead one.’ (p.124) Referring to this rival as ‘that’ and ‘It,’ Ransom defines ‘its’ essence:

It did not defy goodness, it ignored it to the point of annihilation... he had never before seen anything but half-hearted and uneasy attempts at evil. This creature was whole-hearted.

(*Perelandra*, p.125)

The inanity of the Unman first calling Ransom’s name and when answered continually responding, ‘Nothing,’ is part of a ploy which Lewis adopted to counter the image of the Devil as a great and wronged arch-rebel or as a wily and sophisticated gentleman. These are the effects afforded by the combined efforts of the Satan of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and the Mephistopheles of Goethe’s *Faustus*.²⁸ Ransom is simply appalled by the grotesque and dreary figure, ‘a ghost or a mechanized corpse’ (p.147). Eventually Ransom decides he must fight to kill this caricature of a person who ‘regarded intelligence simply and solely as a weapon’ (p.146).

Parodying the last words of Jesus on the cross, ‘*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani*’ (p.174), the Unman arouses Ransom’s hate whilst attacking him. Fighting back, Ransom falls upon ‘the living Death, the eternal Surd in the universal mathematic’ (p.178), a fairly aypical remark from one so unmathematical as Lewis. To Ransom’s inquiry to who he actually is, the Unman grows afraid and ‘cried like a baby’ (p.189).

²⁸ Clyde Kilby, *The Christian World of C.S. Lewis*, Marcham Manor Press, Appleford, 1965, includes an analysis of the Satan found in Milton and Goethe, pp. 43-44.

of a quasi-religious nature that fails to touch upon the light of truth and goodness and along the way, recalling aspects of Odysseus' visit to Hades and Christ's descent into Hell. Finally Ransom slays his enemy, and as a token of respect for one who had been a person and at least, 'a great physicist after all' (p.217), inscribes details about him on a cliff wall.

In the 'Preface' to *Perelandra* we read, 'All the human characters in this book are purely fictitious and none of them is allegorical' (p.6), and I have found no evidence suggesting Weston's link with any actual scientist. If in the manner of the genre there is no in-depth personality study complete with inner dialogues, the shocking slide into absolute damnation makes this a powerful study of an exceptional human being led totally astray. As J.S. Ryan said:

One of the achievements of the book is the successful creation of the Unman as Evil. If it is a blemish that Weston had not been successfully individualized in the first story, he is clearly changed from the moment of his landing on Perelandra, being more ruthless, vulgar and cruel.²⁹

Arriving at situations confronting typical members of the intelligentsia in *That Hideous Strength* the reader is to concentrate on issues which Lewis as a professional and popular educator took exceptionally seriously. So much so are these that he believed if the central problem was not rectified the human race was both damned and doomed. Now if this error, which by its nature also affected scientific disciplines, attacked theoretical territories, it proved even more dangerous in its repercussions on the arena of everyday behaviour. Thus in his polemics Lewis is often seen reverting

²⁹ J.S. Ryan, *op.cit.*, p.96.

to the same problem, which he dealt with in the short, but succinct, essay, ‘The Poison of Subjectivism’ (1943).³⁰

Here Lewis was reacting against what he saw as one extreme finale to the century-long course of the Romantic Movement – a totally egocentric, even solipsistic, notion of selfhood. So he asserted, ‘Until modern times no thinker of the first rank ever doubted that our judgements of value were rational judgements or that what they discovered was objective’.³¹ He then cited ‘Plato...Aristotle... Hooker, Butler and Doctor Johnson’³² as his authorities. How different to our own era, he commented, when moral standards are generally regarded as, ‘sentiments, or complexes, or attitudes’³³ communally and conventionally passed on, and without any basis for universal application. He proceeds to add that from this surmise arises ‘the fatal superstition that men can create values, that a community can choose its ‘ideology’ as men choose their clothes,’ because ‘Unless the measuring rod is independent of the things measured, we can do no measuring.’³⁴

Lewis dealt with this subject in *The Abolition of Man*,³⁵ a booklet formed out of a series of lectures delivered at Durham, or Edgestowe³⁶ University in 1942. Lewis

³⁰ C. S. Lewis, ‘The Poison of Subjectivism,’ (Orig.1943) in *Christian Reflections*, pp.72-81, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1967. ed., and with a ‘Preface’ by W. Hooper.

³¹ *ibid.*, p.73.

³² *ibid.*, p.73.

³³ *ibid.*, p.73.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p.73.

³⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man: Reflections on Education with special reference to the teaching of English in the upper forms of schools*, Oxford University Press, London, 1944.

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³¹ *ibid.*, p.73.

³² *ibid.*, p.73.

³³ *ibid.*, p.73.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p.73.

³⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man: Reflections on Education with special reference to the teaching of English in the upper forms of schools*, Oxford University Press, London, 1944.

was disturbed by two authors whom he named Gaius and Titius, and their combined effort text book for higher students of English, *The Green Book*.³⁷ In alluding to an anecdote, familiar to literary scholars, about S.T. Coleridge and a pair of travellers beside a waterfall, one of whom calls the scenery ‘sublime’, the second ‘pretty’ Lewis began by quoting the view of these authors, opposed to his own:

When the man said *That is sublime*, he appeared to be making a remark about the waterfall... he was... making... a remark about his own feelings. What he was saying was really *I have feelings associated in my mind with the word “sublime” or shortly I have sublime feelings...* They add; This confusion is continually present in language as we use it.

(The Abolition of Man, p.3.)

Lewis was worried that readers would end up victims of two profound mistakes. The first is that they would think that ‘all sentences containing a predicate of value are statements about the emotional state of the speaker,’ whilst the second is ‘that all such statements are unimportant’ (p.4). He also accused the writers of proposing to bring about ‘a clean sweep of traditional values and start with a new set,’ and contended their sort of criticism is ‘a philosophical and not a literary position’ (p.8). A little later Lewis urged, ‘The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles but to irrigate deserts. The right defense against false sentiments is to inculcate just sentiments’ (p.9). Such a strategy will help prevent students becoming ‘easier prey to the propagandist’ (p.9.) Until our own period most pedagogues thought, like the elder poet,

³⁶ In the ‘Preface’ to *That Hideous Strength* Lewis says, ‘Edgestow has no resemblance, save for its smallness, to Durham,’ p.7. Nevertheless, features of this place occur in the imaginative setting. Refer to H. Carpenter. *op.cit.*, p.221.

³⁷ The authors were two Australians, Alec King and Martin Ketley and their book was entitled, *The Control of Language: A Critical Approach to Reading and Writing*, Longmans, London, 1939.

...that objects did not merely receive, but could *merit*, our approval or disapproval, our reverence, or our contempt. The reason why Coleridge agreed with the tourist who called the cataract sublime and disagreed with the one who called it pretty was of course that he believed inanimate nature to be such that certain responses could be more 'just', or 'ordinate' or 'appropriate' to it than others. And he believed (correctly) that the tourists thought the same.

(*The Abolition of Man*, p.9.)

Next, Lewis set himself up as a defender of a set of traditional standards which, found within every major religious and philosophic system, he dubbed the *Tao*. No-one, he insisted, had any right to concoct his own moral code, but instead must learn from the teachings of the enlightened in the past, and from their present pupils, those who have been trained to identify with the best in the community's store of higher knowledge, this leading to a state of wisdom. Thus, whereas Aristotle held that 'the aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought,' also, 'in early Hinduism, that conduct in men which can be called good consists in conformity to, or almost participation in, the *Rta*.' The latter is essentially the Cosmic pattern. and to the Chinese it was 'a great thing (the greatest thing)...the *Tao*...the Way, the Road' (p.10). To re-inforce this belief, Lewis offered in *The Appendix* a weighty collection of maxims, entreaties and exhortations having as their lowest common denominator – or should we say highest common factor – 'the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of things we are' (p.11). Unless these truths are recognised, we shall only get 'Men without Chests', poor specimens with 'a defect of fertile and generous emotion' (p.14).³⁸

³⁸ In the 'Two Towers' Aragon tells Eomer 'Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear; nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men. It is a man's part to discern them'. J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, part Two, Grafton. (An imprint of Harper Collins Publishers), London, 1991, p.44.

Although the rigours of logic could help us all arrive at correct conclusions the tragedy is, that whilst Gaius and Titius seem to care for beneficial outcomes, they inadvertently saw off the qualitative branch they sit upon. In popular parlance, ‘They want their cake and eat it too’. The pair also fall foul of a typical subjectivist outcome, a lack of consistency since ‘A great many of those who ‘debunk’ traditional or (as they would say) ‘sentimental’ values have in the background values of their own which they believe to be immune from the debunking process’ (p.16). Now the is-ought distinction is of huge importance to philosophers and Lewis faced the problem squarely, asserting, ‘From propositions about fact alone no *practical* conclusion can ever be drawn... The Innovator is trying to get a conclusion in the imperative mood out of premises in the indicative mood’ (p.17).

If on occasion setting up a proverbial ‘straw man’, Lewis proceeds on his path to knock down possible disclaimers against his thesis which we lack room to detail. Suffice it to stress this:

The Innovator attacks traditional values (the *Tao*) in defence of what he at first supposes to be (in some special sense) ‘rational’ or ‘biological’ values... all the values which he uses in attacking the *Tao*, and even claims to be substituting for it, are themselves derived from the *Tao*.
 (p.21).

Lewis rightly proposes that, in a closed naturalistic system, no yardstick with which to measure two opposing sets of values against one another can be seriously accommodated. Along the way Lewis has step-by-step suggested what the *Tao* consists of, and he now defines it in the following terms:

This thing which I have called for convenience the *Tao*, and which others may call Natural Law or Traditional Morality or the First Principles of Practical Reason or the First Platitudes, is not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value judgements. If it is rejected, all value is rejected. If any value is retained, it is retained.

(p.22).

Once into Chapter Three, Lewis asserts that humanity's so-called power over Nature 'turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument' (p.28). This will mean, too, that the elite of earlier generations will assert themselves over future generations and, furthermore, over possibly billions of creatures existent on other planets that we may influence. To Lewis, rather than obey the dictates of nature, 'the world of quantity, as against the world of quality: of objects as against consciousness' (p.34), humanity must return to those absolute values realized in the past.

Finally, Lewis posits that 'from Science herself the cure might come' (p.37), for along with magic it was 'born of the same impulse,' the desire to 'subdue reality to the wishes of men: the solution is a technique' (p.38), one which claims total allegiance. By returning to the premises of both old, and recent natural philosophers, (he names R. Steiner), modern science 'would conquer Nature without being at the same time conquered by her and buy knowledge at a lower cost than that of life' (p.39).

Lewis was occupied by a problem common to the discipline of philosophy, except that he speaks in the language of the intelligent layman and fails to mention those specialists who recently confronted it, such as David Hume and Immanuel Kant. Putting forward cogent comments on its subsequent neglect, A.D. Nuttall states the central premise of *The Abolition of Man*, known

as G.E. Moore's concept of the Naturalistic Fallacy, the error of supposing that one can draw ethical conclusions from non-ethical premises...It is in a way odd that a work which so thoroughly routs whole volumes of Nietzsche and Sartre is not more widely admired, especially as the style in

which it is presented is brilliantly lucid...doubtless the mere opposition of the Zeitgeist is the principal factor.³⁹

The dramatization of the above ideas gives vitality to the trilogy, particularly the third volume, to which we turn our attention.

When *That Hideous Strength* opens, Edgestow campus, one ‘more beautiful than either’ (p.13) those twin founts of privileged British education, Oxford and Cambridge, which it is being groomed to eventually supersede, appears an oasis of beauty and sanity in an increasingly commercialised century. But what will shortly get propagated from there by its forward-looking fellows in no wise matches this image. As George Orwell was only too aware, in some respects the middle-classes are prone to indoctrination in ways that the non-bookish and sensation-bound working classes are not. So the head of police or ‘Sanitary Executive’ (p.160), the dreadful butch lesbian, ‘Fairy’ Harcastle, ‘a terrible *Inglesaccia!*’ (p.70) has no qualms about kidnapping, torturing or murdering and she explains:

it’s the educated readers who *can* be gulled... When did you meet a workman who believes the papers? He takes it for granted that they’re all propaganda and skips the leading articles... But the educated public, the people who read the highbrow weeklies, don’t need reconditioning. They’re alright already. They’ll believe anything.

(*That Hideous Strength* (pp.119-20))

Of the foundation which arrives proposing to boost the welfare of everyone in Edgestow, the N.I.C.E, or National Institute of Co-ordinated Experiments, we read. ‘it was the first-fruit of that constructive fusion between the state and the laboratory on which so many thoughtful people base their hopes of a better world (p.22) The N.I.C.E. gains momentum from the ‘progressives’, a faction neither left nor right yet

³⁹ A.D. Nuttall, ‘Jack the Giant Killer,’ *VII: An Anglo American Literary Review*. Vol. 5, 1984, p.92.

prepared to exploit either. ‘*Of course we’re non-political*’, says Ms. Harcastle, ‘The real power always is’ (p.119). Its members, hardly altruists, are unsure of its precise goals, but are certain that they will benefit from any outcomes. Lord Feverstone, formerly Dick Devine, is impressed by the sheer scale of its operations, and expected monetary and prestige benefits. To the bursar, James Busby, the N.I.C.E. is ‘the first attempt to take applied science seriously from the national point of view’ (p.40). Meanwhile, to Curry, sub-warden of Bracton, enthused by the newest piece of gadgetry, the Pragmatometer, ‘The N.I.C.E. marks the beginning of a new era – the *really scientific era*’ (p.41). As for Withers, the Deputy Director who exudes an air of non-committal vagueness, he has another agenda altogether.

Behind the balmy façade of the institution there lurk less benign intentions. Whereas in the foundation work of the trilogy Feverstone was primarily focused on wealth, we see a change in emphasis for he now seeks power itself. He has decided, that ‘Man has got to take charge of man. That means, remember, that some men have got to take charge of the rest’ (p.46). To which end, ‘Quite simple and obvious things’ must happen to produce ‘a new type of man.’ Feverstone elaborates:

sterilization of the unfit, liquidation of backward races..., selective breeding. Then real education including pre-natal education... mainly psychological at first. But we’ll get on to biochemical conditioning in the end and direct manipulation of the brain.

(That Hideous Strength, p. 47.)

In George Orwell’s prophetic satires, *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) language undergoes severe manipulation; meaning is rendered meaningless and public policy enforced by brute strength. Reviewing the volume *That Hideous Strength*, Orwell, who covered similar issues in his essay ‘Politics and the English

language' (1946), whilst finding the supernatural ingredients spurious and thus the ending predictable, still averred 'This is a book worth reading.'⁴⁰

'The dream of scientific techniques,' we might proclaim, tampering with Goya's famous phrase, 'begets monsters.' The physical and social fabric of the town nearby soon gets quickly torn apart by noisy machinery and the ill-mannered louts who operate them, the River Wynd is polluted and diverted, and groves of trees as well as ancient buildings are ripped down. Later a sizeable zoo is discovered, the animals there to be experimented upon, a practice Lewis sought to undermine in his *Vivisection*.⁴¹ Additionally, Hardcastle reveals developments to be undertaken by the local asylum, where 'They'll be using the ordinary patients experimentally' (p.228).

The emasculated physiologist, Professor Filostrato, is part of an inner core directed by evil entities called 'macrobes', and he tells Mark, the N.I.C.E. 'is serious. It is nothing less than the existence of the human race that depends on our work: our *real* work' (p.69). Substituting the Life-Force for the Creator, Filostrate plans to push things a lot further, and his grandiose plot spells the end of our race as we know it. Despising the wild abundance and unpredictability of flora and fauna and disgusted by the act of procreation, he awaits

the conquest of death: or for the conquest of organic life, if you prefer. They are the same thing. It is to bring out of that cocoon of organic life which sheltered the babyhood of mind the New Man, the man who will not die, the artificial man, free from Nature.

(That Hideous Strength, p.215)

Another taking pre-suppositions to far-reaching conclusions is Professor Frost, to whom 'the individual is to become all head. The human race is to become all

⁴⁰ Quoted in K. Filmer, *C.S. Lewis: Mask and Mirror*, St. Martin's Press, N.Y., 1993, p.70.

⁴¹ C. S. Lewis, 'Vivisection,' (Orig. 1947), quoted in *God in the Dock*, pp.224-8.

Technocracy' (p.318). Frost's deductions, from his dismissal of rational and objective grounds for knowing and his attempt to train Mark as a N.I.C.E graduate in the school of relativistic thought, are set forth in Chapter Twelve, parts IV and VII, and Chapter Fourteen, part I. Whereas Mark grapples with notions of teleology and defers to common-sense responses, Frost abhors maintaining value judgements, avowing:

It pre-supposes a means-and-ends pattern of thought which descends from Aristotle who in his turn was merely hypostatising elements in the experience of an iron-age, agricultural community. Motives are not the causes of action but its by-products... When you have obtained real objectivity you will recognize not *some* motives but *all* motives are merely animal, subjective epiphenomena.

(That Hideous Strength, p.365)

In his later 'Is Progress Possible?' (1958), Lewis declared 'I care far more how humanity lives than how long. Progress, for me, means increasing goodness and happiness of individual lives'.⁴² In this paper subtitled 'Willing Slaves of the Welfare State,' he weighs up, in assessing twentieth century human benefits and happiness, 'real ameliorations', against 'Hiroshima, Black and Tans, Gestapo, OGPU, brain-washing, the Russian slave camps'.⁴³ In conclusion, he advises us against slogans and trite assurances as 'some men will take charge of the destiny of the others,' and 'The more completely we are planned the more powerful they will be'.⁴⁴

Ultimately, then, muddy thinking and false expectations, whether in the grand schemata of the N.I.C.E or the schoolyard antics of Experiment House where Jill Pole

⁴² C.S. Lewis, 'Is Progress Possible? Willing Slaves of the Welfare State' (Orig.1958) in *God in the Dock*. p.311.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.312.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p.316.

is a victim of misguided educational theories pilloried by the author,⁴⁵ must lead to power-mongering and exploitation by those on top. Lewis's remarks about Civil Servants show it is not scientists alone who are at fault, for even if C.P. Snow's better type of official does not have worse taste or harder heart than the average, 'the State is increasingly tyrannical and you, inevitably, are among the instruments of that tyranny.'⁴⁶ We need to bring to mind here Screwtape's hell, for it resembles the bureaucratic structures of the much later sitcom, 'Yes Minister' more than those more obviously sensational images of the nether regions painted by Hieronymus Bosch or Peter Breughel, the Elder. Musing on the need for their enemies to arouse Merlin to join their cause, Ransom differentiates between 'the physical sciences, good and innocent in themselves' (p.248) and directions they were increasingly pushed toward:

Despair of objective truth had been increasingly insinuated into the scientists; indifference to it, and a concentration upon mere power, had been the result. Babble about the *élan vital* and flirtations with pan-psychism were bidding fair to restore the *Anima Mundi* of the magicians...the dissecting-room and the pathological laboratory were breeding a conviction that the stifling of all deep-set repugnances was the first essential for progress.

(That Hideous Strength, p.249).

Whilst never denying some validity to scientific research, on scientists en masse Lewis thought that:

Mathematicians, astronomers and physicists are often religious, even mystical; biologists much less often; economists and psychologists very seldom indeed. It is as their subject matter comes nearer to man himself that their anti-religious bias hardens.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Silver Chair*, in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, p.549.

⁴⁶ W.H. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.259.

⁴⁷ C.S. Lewis, 'Religion Without Dogma' (Orig. 1946), *God in the Dock*, p.135.

Let us see how a handful of scientific figures present themselves in *That Hideous Strength*. In Jane Studdock's initial nightmare we glimpse what is destined to be the literal head of the N.I.C.E, and which previously had sat atop Alcasan, once a famous radiologist and a 'Scientist Bluebeard' (p.12), guillotined for poisoning his wife. Jane wonders what her husband sees in Feverstone, 'that man with the loud, unnatural laugh and the mouth like a shark, and no manners...a perfect fool, too!' (p.54). Nor did she care for 'people like Mr. Curry and the odious old clergy-man' (p.54), meaning James Busby, who swapped his allegiance to his faith for a place in the foundation. Feverstone admits that his party's rivals, 'Glossop and Bill the Blizzard and even old Jewel have ten times their intelligence' (p.43), and are consistent in their positions. As for the wraith-like Withers, he seems too disconnected to run the N.I.C.E. and Mark's initial conversation with his employer elicits Mark's baffled query, 'What are we both talking about?' (p.62). Then we have the grossly sized Filostrato, a sort of neutered G.B.Shaw, and the Gestapo-like and cold-blooded Frost, both loathers of what the majority consider the wholesome, decent and sane. Both, too, think themselves free agents and yet are servants of sub-human beings. The bulk of scientists, or as oft as not, officials spouting scientific sounding jargon, are either unlikeable, self-obsessed and easily vulnerable to the negative forces – or, as is the case with Horace Jules (seen to stand for Wells),⁴⁸ – out of date with the latest scientific findings, and unaware of what more devious co-workers may be up to.

Dennison speaks of a colleague, Churchwood, who, if undermining correct thinking, was personally honest. All the same, intellectual delinquents have to be held to account as 'was there a single doctrine practised at Belbury which hadn't been

⁴⁸ J. Lopez-Morillas, *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol.4, No.2, 1971, says, 'Lewis draws a savage caricature of Wells under the name of Horace Jules', p.179.

preached by some lecturer at Edgestow?’ (p.462). Dimble, agreeing, uses the expression *Trahison des clercs*, whereupon Grace Ironwood retorts, ‘Those who call for Nonsense will find that it comes’ (p.462). Anyone rejecting an objective standard, Lewis would have argued, chose instead the way of that reprobate magician amongst ancient civilizations, Babylon. The Logos, the Word, is in John’s account in *The Gospels* not only Truth in the abstract sense; but also Truth as personified in the second person of the Trinity. Denying this, errant teachers become actualisations of onomatopoeia: they literally ‘babble on’, particularly in the Belbury feast sequence.

The central scientifically orientated character in the text is sociologist Mark Studdock, and in this extract on the formulation of his soul Lewis lays bare his own disregard for a then still infant University subject, sociology:

...in Mark’s mind hardly one rag of noble thought, either Christian or Pagan, had a secure lodging. His education had been neither scientific nor classical – merely “Modern”. The severities both of abstraction and of high human tradition had passed him by: and he had neither peasant shrewdness nor aristocratic honour to help him. He was a man of straw.

(That Hideous Strength, p.226).

When we meet him, Mark is so absorbed in his need to ‘get on’ that ‘He did not notice at all the morning beauty’ (p.13), and in conversation with his superior, Curry, Mark’s supreme pleasure is ‘derived from the use of the pronoun ‘we’ (p.14). As the plot advances, Lewis drives home Studdock’s incessant nagging desire for inclusion into the ranks of the ‘progressives’, leading him to risk anything to stand within that ‘inner circle’ the author so often warned about.⁴⁹ Not entirely taken in by the banter of the self-styled ‘elect’, but ambitious and weak-willed, Mark adapts

⁴⁹ W.H. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, his brother admits to, ‘a holy terror of coteries,’ p.48. See, too, ‘The Inner Ring,’ from *They Asked for a Paper: Papers and Addresses*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1962, pp.139-149.

himself to be their dupe. His motives are not altogether sullied, and hankering after a better social outcome, he is too inwardly vacuous to provide any reason why he believed in ‘the preservation of the human race – it’s a pretty rock-bottom obligation.’ (p.46). He certainly does no justice to himself in following Feverstone’s lead, in being impressed by ‘a big man driving a big car to somewhere where they would find big stuff going on’ (p.56).

His marriage falling apart, Mark hardly stops to consider that ‘charity begins at home,’ or question who is the inadequate partner. Cut off from his emotions he substitutes for ‘man’ and ‘woman’ impersonal categories such as ‘vocational group’, ‘elements’, ‘classes’, and ‘populations’ (p.104). Not until Jane is imprisoned does he ponder what he had entered into, and then he sees Feverstone as a ‘crook’ and himself as ‘the odious little outsider who wanted to be an insider, the infantile gull’ (p.301). At this stage his protest is born of ennui and self disgust, but he soon realizes that ‘His “scientific” outlook had never been a real philosophy believed with blood and heart. It had lived only in his brain, and was part of that public self’ (p.303), which he was losing. Like Lewis himself, Mark by degrees came to changing his fundamental outlook. He reflects that he had usually associated with various progressive or ‘cool’ elements who claimed social superiority, often forgoing preferred pleasures and people in the process. He sees that his wife ‘was one of those other people – who could enjoy things for their own sake’ (p.304). On the other hand, although he shared similar theoretical views with Professor Frost, Mark comes to understand why he can no longer accept his prior social judgements:

The knowledge that his own assumptions led to Frost’s position combined with what he saw in Frost’s face and what he had experienced in this very cell, affected a complete conversion.

(*That Hideous Strength*, pp. 365-66.)

The perverse instruction received in the Objective Room by Mark led to this unexpected reaction: he began to beware ‘of this room’s opposite’ (p.369). He apprehended that another thing, ‘the “Normal” -- apparently existed’ (p.370), and then he made a conscious choice to side with it. Mark decides that ‘If the scientific point of view led away from’ his adopted norm, ‘then be damned to the scientific point of view!’ (p.370).

Next, Mark, who has had a moral experience of the Good, arrives also at an intellectual grasp of the Form of the Good. Moving from the subjective belief that ideas are merely ‘the by product of meaningless reactions in the brain,’ in Mark:

that idea of the Straight or the Normal... grew stronger and more solid in his mind till it became a kind of mountain. He had never before known what an Idea meant... this Idea towered above him.

(That Hideous Strength, p.384).

Invited to enter the inner sanctum of the N.I.C.E., it is not till his conditioning in the Objective Room is well under way that he sees through the illusory foundation of Frost’s claim for total subjectivity in epistemology and ethics. Still his outrage is only totally aroused when, irreligious by upbringing and habit, he is ordered to trample on a crucifix. Clear thinking and a sense of fair play lead him to reject Frost’s order and exclaim, ‘It’s all bloody nonsense, and I’m damned if I do any such thing’ (p.418). Free in spirit, Studdock then quits the N.I.C.E just prior to its destruction, and ‘in spite of all perplexities, he was conscious of extreme well-being’ (p.473) Domesticity now means more to him, and once he has a vision of a glorified female figure he begins to fulfil his role as successful husband and lover. The inference is that Mark finally chooses human decency over modern standards and is a better man, if a ‘humbler scientist,’ for doing so.

In *That Hideous Strength* science *per se* is not maligned, yet caution as to its self-assurance must be exercised, and many of the scientists are consciously or unconsciously pawns of blind inner drives and ‘bent’ external entities. In fact, some scientists do strive on the side of the angels and in William Hingest (Bill the Blizzard), chemist, Lewis portrayed someone immensely successful, ‘one of the two scientists at Bracton who had a reputation outside England,’ (p.65). and a man who possesses humility and integrity. Urging Mark to quit the N.I.C.E., Hingest adds, ‘That’s what happens when you study men. You find mare’s nests... you can only get to know them’ (p.83). Unwilling to co-operate with a political conspiracy run by ‘a parcel of prigs and professors’ (p.83), Hingest wants out, and so is murdered.

As Martin Boyd, evoking Rabelais, had warned, ‘the divorce of science from conscience... would bring the doom of mankind,’⁵⁰ so Ransom explains to Merlin:

The poison was brewed in these West lands but it has spat itself everywhere by now. However far you went you would find the machines, the crowded cities, the empty thrones, the false writings, the barren beds...worshipping the iron works of their own hands, cut off from Earth their mother and from the Father in Heaven.

(*That Hideous Strength*, pp.362-3)

Whilst his mind was often elsewhere, and he would probably have fitted in easily amidst the cloisters of Saint Thomas Aquinas or those courtiers familiar to Sir Philip Sidney, if Lewis were brought back today he would be appalled by the over-abundance of, and centrality of place given to (often questionable) technological toys, trinkets and gadgets.

Did he not write, when speaking about his disdain for television, that to its promoters, ‘the only important thing in life is to increase the comfort of homo sapiens

⁵⁰ M. Boyd, *Day of My Delight: An Anglo-Australian Memoir*, Lansdowne, Victoria, 1965, p.150.

at whatever cost to posterity and the other inhabitants of the planet'?⁵¹ Thus Lewis took up a challenge many at this moment are just beginning to grasp, the urgency of ecological concerns. If unimpressed by much scientific matter, and wary of the exploitation of its products by manufacturers, advertisers and their ilk, Lewis was extremely interested in understanding the conceptual frame-works supporting various sciences, and in explaining how they play out in everyday affairs, particularly in the case of 'Mr. or Mrs. Everyman', the ordinary individual. Some comments he made on psychoanalysis in a 1940 letter encapsulate what in this respect is a consistently reiterated proposition of his: 'so long as it remains a science and doesn't set up to be a philosophy,' and its revelations are judged, 'by the best human logic and scheme of values they've got and do not try to derive logic and values from it,'⁵² he could then see no problem.

In *Perelandra*, broken down by struggles with the Unman, Ransom momentarily doubts what he had experienced, that 'space' was rather to be thought of as 'the heavens' and accepts what he had previously mocked as 'The Empirical Bogey,' defined as:

the great myth of our century with its gases and galaxies, its light years and evolutions, its nightmare perspectives of simple arithmetic in which everything that can possibly hold significance for the mind becomes the mere by-product of essential disorder.

(Perelandra, (p.188)).

If a combination of several streams of pagan identity overlaid with mainstream Judaeo-Christianity satisfied Lewis, he was always eager to engage with its chief secular rival. In this exposé the aim of the pivotal paper, 'The Funeral of a Great

⁵¹ W.H. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.282.

⁵² *ibid.*, p.180.

Myth', is 'to bury the great Myth of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century but also to praise it.'⁵³ He claims its 'picture of reality resulted... not logically but imaginatively' from certain authentic theories and, was 'implicit in nearly every modern article on politics, sociology and ethics' (p.82). Lewis was sure to 'sharply distinguish between Evolution as a biological theorem and popular Evolutionism or Developmentalism which is certainly a Myth' (p.83). Interestingly, he traced its antecedents not from the usual suspects, Wells and Shaw, but instead to Keats's *Hyperion* and Wagner's *Nibelung's Ring*. He proceeded then to the main thrust of his argument, namely that: 'In the science, Evolution is a theory about *changes*: in the Myth it is a fact about *improvements*' (p.85). Lewis adds that Haldane was aware of this,⁵⁴ and so we have a singular item on which those two concurred. Mentioning in passing a Professor D.M.S. Watson,⁵⁵ Lewis quotes Watson's reason for some specialists accepting evolution, 'the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible', that is Lewis maintains 'the sole ground for believing it is not empirical but metaphysical – the dogma of an amateur metaphysician' (p.85) tainted by prejudice.

We have in addition the ways theoretical constructs held by 'pure' scientists are explained or expounded upon by social scientists, amongst others. In another essay, evolutionism is linked with Hegel and Marx to give then another half-baked – 'ism', historicism, whence, 'Evolutionism, when it ceases to be simply a theorem in biology and becomes a principle for interpreting the total historical process, is a form

⁵³ C.S. Lewis, 'The Funeral of a Great Myth', in *Christian Reflections*, pp.82-93.

⁵⁴ J. B. S. Haldane, 'Darwinism and its Perversions,' from *Everything has a History*, p.216.

⁵⁵ D.M.S. Watson. Nobel Prize - winning biologist and geneticist, 1928-.

of Historicism'.⁵⁶ Later, in *The Discarded Image* (1964) the dichotomy between older and newer models of the Universe would get explained, as well as effects they have on our emotions. We read, 'the 'space' of modern astronomy may arouse terror, or bewilderment or vague reverie; the spheres of the old present as with an object in which the mind can rest.'⁵⁷ Whereas no overwhelming cosmic imperative brought forth the contemporary age, there must have been a human need, or at least 'want', causing a tumultuous change in consciousness. In a discussion surrounding various historic mental models and the psychological conditions associated with these, Lewis posits:

The demand for a developing world – a demand obviously in harmony both with the revolutionary and the romantic temper – grows up first; when it is full grown the scientists go to work and discover the evidence on which our belief in that sort of universe would now be held to rest...No Model is a catalogue of ultimate realities ...each reflects the prevalent psychology of the age about as much as it reflects the state of that age's knowledge.⁵⁸

Lewis argued by rational and imaginative means for a science, and an entire education process alike, respectful of those absolute values the West was anchored in, and the trilogy is an essential part of this astounding attempt at cultural reclamation of the lost. He also warned many about their blind faith in space travel, a theme that continues to be seen in science fiction. In Stanley Kubrick's rendition of Arthur C. Clarke's *2001, A Space Odyssey*, viewers are left wondering whether computers

⁵⁶ C.S. Lewis, 'Historicism,' in *Christian Reflections*, p.101.

⁵⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1964, p.99.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, pp.221-22.

would make humans redundant. Lewis did not deny that further considerations were to be taken into account, and he never believed he could convince everyone. From *The Magician's Nephew* we have this thought, ‘what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing: it also depends on what sort of person you are.’⁵⁹ So he was hardly perturbed when in 1957, shortly before his demise, Russians launched themselves into Earth’s Space, and failing to find any deity there, ridiculed believers. Lewis retorted, ‘To some, God is discoverable everywhere; to others, no-where...send a saint up in a spaceship and he’ll find God in space as he found God on earth. Much depends on the seeing eye.’⁶⁰

Considering the totality of his writings, it would seem that Lewis achieved a healthy enough balance between the objective and subjective polarities, just as he did with those distinct mental states called ‘reason’ and ‘imagination’. Certainly the trilogy is a well thought out and sophisticated contribution to the relatively new genre of science fiction, as well as being a convincing re-working of the essentials of Judaeo-Christian mythology; now enlarging this from a terran to a solar story; to something which is imaginatively genuine without having departed from a much loved traditional ethos.

⁵⁹ C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, p.75.

⁶⁰ C.S. Lewis, ‘The Seeing Eye,’ in *Christian Reflections*, p.171.

The laws of the spirit of man must hold, alike in this world
and in any world he may invent...In physical things a man
may invent; in moral things he must obey.

George Macdonald, 'The Fantastic Imagination' in *Orts*,
Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington,
London, 1882.

Chapter Three: Part Three: C.S. Lewis on Belief and Theology

We begin by focusing on *Surprised by Joy* and on what he reveals there about his religious upbringing, and his own subsequent responses to it. To the subject of our investigations, belief meant, fundamentally, religious belief, and so we explore what he absorbed from two dominant expressions of European spirituality, Paganism and Christianity, and examine how these contribute to the temper of the trilogy. Concurrently we will define what Lewis meant by ‘myth’ and ‘allegory,’ and regard how the end-point of the journey he had taken shaped itself around *Sehnsucht*, and came to coalesce with the chief constituent of that which he, by 1955, had identified as the sole historically verifiable myth and theology. We shall also delve a little deeper into the kind of fantastic literature Lewis liked best, the ways in which he expanded the horizons of the genre, and, in the process, clarify the foundation stones of his aesthetic.

When he entered Oxford, which he saw as an oasis of beauty and meaning standing solidly forth in a barren, increasingly industrialized landscape,¹ Kirk’s protégé had imbibed his mentor’s scepticism and professed himself an atheist, or at least agnostic, and only those venerable halls of learning themselves lent him any religious feelings. To scholars raised on Thomas Hardy’s Schopenhauerian novels or A.E. Housman’s irreligious idyll, *The Shropshire Lad*, religious doubt was prevalent and often assumed.

Brought up in Belfast as a nominal Protestant, Lewis accepted what he was told and yet had no emotional bond with this instruction, adding that his childhood ‘was not in the least other-worldly’ (p.12). Meanwhile, an intuitive grasp of a quality

¹ See W.H. Lewis, ed., and with a Memoir, *Letters of C.S. Lewis*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1966, pp.32, 52. As a symbol of civilized standards observe Numbers XXX, ‘Oxford’ and XXXVIII, ‘Lullaby’ from *Spirits in Bondage*, pp.57, 70-71.

he esteemed, simply, 'goodness', was found in three women: his nurse; his governess, Annie Harper, 'a Presbyterian' (p.15), and his mother. With the latter's death insecurity set in and an unloved father's assertiveness did little (as in Macdonald's case) to form any idea of a loving, protective Divine Father.

Whereas of 'Belsen' he records, 'There first I became an effective believer' (p.32), not long afterwards we learn that at Chartres, tempted for a while by spiritualism, 'I ceased to be a Christian' (p.52). Lewis complained, too, that 'No-one ever attempted to show in what sense Christianity fulfilled Paganism or Paganism prefigured Christianity.' He acknowledged in himself a constitutional flaw, 'a deeply ingrained pessimism... much more of intellect than of temper' (p.55). In retrospect, he notes incongruities, particularly 'this directly Atheistical thought, this great "Argument from Undesign" with my Occultist fancies' (p.57). The connection was their common hostility to organized Christianity, and he gained a measure of satisfaction by excursions into several mythologies, each temporarily able to 'possess stronger appeal than Judaeo-Christianity'.² He averred, 'I think that all things, in their way, reflect heavenly truth, the imagination not least' (p.135). The attraction of his confused metaphysic was 'It had no other' (p.139), certainly no personal god requiring obedience or commitment.

Two literary figures steered the author toward his ultimate religious position. George MacDonald, a Victorian Age Scottish Congregationalist minister heavily influenced by eighteenth century German romantics including Novalis, Jean Paul, E. Eichendorff and E.T.A Hoffmann, was dismissed from his church and pulpit for heresy. Immersed in his *Phantastes*, Lewis enthused:

² Note, e.g., this profession in 'Is Theology Poetry?' (1944) in *They Asked for a Paper*, 'the mythology I believe in is not the one I like best. I like Greek mythology much better: Irish better still: Norse best of all.' (p.152.)

never had the wind of Joy blowing through any story been less separable from the story itself. Where the god and the *idolon* were most nearly one there was least danger of confounding them.'

(*SBJ.* p.145)

Phantastes, of which he once said, it 'fills for me the place of a devotional book,'³ had baptised his imagination' (p.146). Elsewhere he stated, 'I fancy I have never written a book in which I did not quote from him.'⁴

Convalescing from trench fever, he chanced upon some essays by Roman Catholic, journalist and man of letters, G.K. Chesterton, who 'made such an immediate conquest of me.' Lewis respected the elder man's 'humour,' and 'goodness' (p.153), and reading *The Everlasting Man*, was drawn to Chesterton's presentation of 'the whole Christian outline of history' (p.178).

Green and Hooper's biography focuses on a seminal text in a subject that always engaged Lewis, the philosophy of religion. From Samuel Alexander's *Space. Time and Deity* he discovered a distinction between enjoyment and contemplation, and that each experience of Joy was 'only a reminder' (p.176) of something beyond itself. Adopting the nebulous Absolute of T.H. Green and F.H. Bradley⁵ failed to move him, and around 1925 he dropped Neo-Hegelianism to take up 'the simple, workable, theistic idealism of Berkeley' (p.178).

Four years on, as he tells us: 'I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all

³ W.H. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.84.

⁴ Quoted in William Gray, *C.S. Lewis*, Northcote House Publishers Ltd., Plymouth, 1998, p.26.

⁵ Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882) and Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924) were teachers at Oxford University, and followed the German Idealists, Immanuel Kant and F.W.G. Hegel, rather than the British empiricist tradition.

England' (p.182). If drawing closer to a firm religious formulation, he remained a vague theist till Monday, 28th of September, 1931, the day of his full conversion to Christianity. Readers are not presented with any instance of *metanoia* in *Surprised by Joy*, the claims of reason leading to this conversion.

If for a decade or so the youth was a religious sceptic, during the better part of his life he was found anchored amidst those who believe that the physical is but a secondary state of reality as compared to the spiritual or noumenal. The idea that the phenomenal world is but a copy of something else leads inevitably to Lewis's Platonism. English philosopher A.N. Whitehead is reputed to have announced 'All philosophy is a footnote to Plato,' and such is definitely Lewis's estimation. Indeed, like Milton, he would

Unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind.⁶

He declared 'I often find myself at such cross-purposes with the modern world: I have been a converted Pagan living among apostate Puritans' (*SBJ*, p.60). If this sounds like the St Augustine of *The Confessions*, so it might, for Augustine of Hippo, another Christian Platonist, was a Lewis favourite. Owen Barfield took offence at his friend's response to philosophy, retorting, 'it wasn't a *subject* to Plato, ... it was a way' (*SBJ*, p.180), thus awakening Lewis to the role of the *involved* teacher. In the *Screwtape Letters* Wormwood was told, 'We make the Sophists. He raises up a Socrates to answer them.'⁷

⁶ J. Milton, 'Il Penseroso,' Lines 89-92 in G.B. Harrison, ed., *A Book of English Poetry*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1950, p.113.

⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, p. 118.

If Aristotle and that most religious of Roman poets, Virgil, also interested Lewis, the contemporary moralists in fiction, James Joyce or even Graham Greene did not, and instead he made room in his affections for Keats and Shelley and praised William Morris as ‘the final statement of *good Paganism*; a faithful account of what things are and always must be to the *natural man*.⁸ Furthermore, Morris was considered healthy as against the negative ‘ravings of Hardy’ or, in contrast to the ‘optimistic communists.’

Although suspicious of widely respected ‘proofs’ for the existence of God, Lewis accepted a degree of natural law inherent in the structure of the cosmos, compelling him often as not to try convince his audience of the validity of the *Tao* as a pre-requisite to introducing theological notions. Thus *Mere Christianity*, Book I of this his most extended treatment of his faith, is entitled ‘Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe.⁹ Akin to the legendary King Arthur, then, who had united Pagan British and Christianised Latin forces to defend Christendom against lawless heathen invaders, Lewis promoted the higher spiritual and ethical systems above contemporary amoral secularism.

The ‘Preface’ to *Mere Christianity* aimed ‘to explain and defend the belief that has been common to nearly all Christians and at all times’ (p.6), to confirm that unifying factor of which he sent its Book II. ‘What Christians Believe,’ to ministers of four leading denominations: Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian. Then, referring to shifts of meaning in the noun, ‘gentleman,’ he declared his inability to allow popular usages of the word ‘Christian’, averring, ‘The name *Christian* was

⁸ W.H. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.159.

⁹ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Fount Paperbacks, London, 1979 (Orig. 1952), pp.15-38.

first given at Antioch (Acts XI: 16) to ‘the disciples’, to those who accepted the teachings of the apostles’ (p.11).

Apt to appear on doctrinal matters to be an ‘either-or’ dogmatist, Lewis was also capable of proclaiming: ‘As in arithmetic there is only one right answer to a sum and all others are wrong, some of the wrong answers are much nearer to being right than others’ (p.39). He was severer when it came to the centre point of the Gospel message. To Lewis the Incarnation spelt out the uniqueness of Christ, and he argued ‘Either this man was and is the Son of God or else he is a madman or something worse’ (p.52). As for the Resurrection, ‘It is obvious that Christians think the chief point of the story lies there’ (p.53.) Together with his acceptance of the Jews as a race set apart, of Scriptural reliability, the necessity of Church attendance, the reality of the supernatural and an after-life, as well as his upholding absolute values and Jesus’ pre-eminence, we find in him an orthodox Christian who soon gained mastery in the art of apologetics. How ironic, then, that one who adhered to the ‘Nicene, Athanasian, and Apostles’ Creeds’¹⁰ put as his guide in the Paradise of *The Great Divorce* a person in certain respects an obvious heretic, especially as regards his confirmation of the universalist doctrine of salvation.¹¹

To turn to examining how religion is presented in the trilogy. In a late piece, ‘Religion and Rocketry,’¹² the author asked a number of hypothetical questions a

¹⁰ C. Kilby, *The Christian World of C.S. Lewis*, Marcham Manor Press, Appleford, 1965, p.157.

¹¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, p.114. In G. Macdonald’s *Lilith* (1895), both the first wife of Adam, Lilith, who in Jewish lore became a witch and child-killer and the ‘great Shadow’ (i.e Lucifer) by a change of will and accepting the gift of salvation are redeemed. But Lewis, sticking to dualism, makes it quite clear he rejects the syncretism of William Blake’s *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, (1790).

¹² C.S. Lewis, ‘Religion and Rocketry,’ in *The World’s Last Night and Other Essays*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, NY, 1973. (Orig.1960), pp. 83-92.

person of his persuasion might anticipate when coming into contact with rational aliens. These revolve around the human race's supposed uniqueness, and problems following humanity's fall from grace, and the ensuing need for redemption. Actually, Lewis had pre-figured these philosophisings in the invented worlds of Malacandra and Perelandra.

This writer's understanding of the heavens inverts the recent concept of space as mere dead and empty matter, and offers a spiritually based myth to replace the evolutionary one. So his expression, 'The Fields of Arbol', sounds more organic, more poetic as against the poorer appellation, 'Solar System.' In a similar vein, whereas the purblind related to the sun as a gold guinea, William Blake espied there a host of heavenly angels crying 'Holy! Holy! Holy!'¹³ In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, when the 'progressively' educated and mean-spirited Eustace Scrubb meets the retired star, Ramandu, and blurts out 'in our world...a star is a huge ball of flaming gas.' he gets corrected, 'even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is, but only what it is made of.'¹⁴

In *Out of the Silent Planet*, as soon as the three main characters are introduced, readers sense the divide separating the self-obsessed Weston and Devine from Ransom, 'a pious man' (p.40). There, as in *Gulliver's Travels*, the hero's interaction with different races allows for contrast with local customs, often to the detriment of his own species. *Hrossa* prove to be a less corrupt, and more grateful race than humans. Ransom meets the friendly Hyoi and learns that fish 'was their

¹³ Quoted in V. Buckley, *Poetry and the Sacred*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1968, p.119.

¹⁴ C.S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* from *The Chronicles of Narnia*, p.522.

only animal food. Vegetable fare they had in great plenty and variety' (p.75). Akin to the un fallen situation in Milton's epic, Lewis's Malacandrians exist on foodstuffs from the prelapsarian Garden of Innocence where butcher's blades were conspicuously absent.

Once he has been bidden to visit Oyarsa and there hears about, 'Maleldil... and the Old One' (p.78), Ransom determines his lack of fitness to teach any religion to his hosts. In fact, they treat him as lacking in such matters, and begin instructing him in aspects of their own theology. He is amazed that none of the three *hnau* kinds 'had yet exterminated the other two' (p.79), this causing him to conceal any mention of 'our human wars and industrialisms' (p.81). Furthermore, Ransom is pleased to find, 'a species naturally continent, naturally monogamous', leading him to deduce, 'not they, but his own species... were the puzzle' (p.85). We observe, too how *séroni* were astonished to hear 'of war, slavery and prostitution' (p.118).

Previously, the murdered Hyoi at his side, Ransom had uttered, 'we are all a bent race... we are only half *hnau*' (p.94). Lewis's notion of the self rests upon that paradox which is the crux of the New Testament offer of salvation, 'Whosoever loses his life shall find it,' (*Matthew* 10:39). And it is aligned with the Pauline idea that the redeemed cast off the old Adamite nature to adopt a new personhood in Christ, (*1 Corinthians*, xv, 22). Neither would Lewis have failed to take heed of the Socratic injunction at Delphi: 'know thyself.' So when a *sorn* says that humanity's flaws stem from allowing 'no Oyarsa,' Augray replies, 'It is because every one of them wants to be a little Oyarsa himself' (p.119). Lewis was overturning a common assumption of liberal humanism, that, whereas people are intrinsically good, personal growth is frequently held in check by the constrictions of the ruling paradigm, and that a secular education is the best means of bringing about individual and social improvements. To

this proposition Lewis opposed the Biblical account of man's relationship with his Maker: how our forebears were given a perfect realm, how they rebelled against His command to forgo a central act. And as a result of disobedience all are flawed and depraved and, although a proper education is essential, the quickest means of achieving full humanity is to attune oneself with the Divine Will.

A *sorn* asserts to Ransom, 'There must be rule, yet how can creatures rule themselves?' (p.119). Whereupon Lewis introduces what he saw as self evident signs of a universal hierarchy, the Creator at the apex and men and women, 'like an angel... a god... the paragon of animals,'¹⁵ certainly once redeemed. Suspended midway between the beasts and the spirit-beings high up in the order of created beings are the angel-like *eldila*, each planet having its ruling *eldil*, called an archon. Here, it is the Oyarsa of Malacandra, and his special characteristics exempt him from belonging to any category of *hnau*. It is from Oyarsa that Ransom discovers that he has been called from Thulcandra, 'the world we do not know. It alone is outside the heaven, and no message comes from it' (p.140). Oyarsa's telling Ransom of the opening years of solar history tallies with traditional Biblical stories about Lucifer as a glorious creature expelled from Heaven for rebellion, and then sent to rule a hostile territory (Job 1:7), whose inhabitants he hates. Again Lewis challenges modern presuppositions. 'Yes,' he would have said, 'humans *are* unique – uniquely *bad*.' In contrast, when Oyarsa confronts the villains, he restrains himself from wielding his awesome powers, and operates within Lewis's concept of the *Tao*. Moreover, those residing in his domain show a wholesale acceptance of death, viewing it as a doorway into further dimensions rather than as a complete end (p.180).

¹⁵ W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II, ii, 314-15, *The Signet Complete Shakespeare*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, N.Y., 1972, p.932.

Malacandra appears as guileless as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Romantics' dream of the noble savage, and on it no fall from grace has been recorded. However, we run into an enigma striking a dischordant note, since, 'Maleldil has let in the *hnakra*' (p.86). This object of pursuit for the *hrossa* hunters represents a negative ontological aspect, if not wholly so because 'The *hnakra* is our enemy, but he is also our beloved' (p.86). Whilst the beast is not hated, and its threat enhances the quality of life and strengthens *hrossa* versification, there are some who remain as unconvinced as they are with Lewis's treatment of suffering and evil in *The Problem of Pain*.¹⁶ These would doubt that he has sufficiently answered the vexing question, 'If Maleldil represents absolute goodness and omnipotence where does evil come from?' What is very significant about the book is that, in place of vague religious sentiments, the Malacandrians possess a systematic theology. In 'Is Theology Poetry?' Lewis expressed awareness that not all societies, including those of the ancient Greeks, had a clear theology, which he defined as, 'the systematic series of statements about God and about man's relation to Him which the believers of a religion make'.¹⁷

Even the forms of poetry and music performed by *hrossa* sound closer to the choruses of classical drama and the chanting of medieval monks than they do to modern art works. *Séroni* have scrolls and yet, as Augray claims, 'It is better to remember' (p.117), adding, 'The *hrossa* used to have many books of poetry... they say that the writing of books destroys poetry' (p.118), a reversal of the situation on Earth and a notion which should interest linguists and anthropologists alike. In his portrayal of Malacandrian music and language Lewis gave just enough information to

¹⁶ C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, Fount Paperbacks, London, 1983. (Orig. 1940).

¹⁷ C.S. Lewis, 'Is Theology Poetry?' in *They Asked for a Paper*, p.150.

sound convincing without over-burdening the narrative with complexities of etymology, onomastics or musicology. In this volume one gets the feeling that Lewis was thoroughly involved with his invention, and went wheresoever it might lead him. What is obvious, too, was that he was so grateful at his own salvation that he would eagerly have endorsed these sentiments from Plato's simile of the Cave episode:

When he thought of his first home and what passed for wisdom there, and of his fellow prisoners, don't you think he would congratulate himself on his good fortune and be sorry for them?¹⁸

The last sentence in *Out of the Silent Planet* has it that, due to Weston's interference, 'the way to the planets lies through the past; if there is to be any more space-travelling, it will have to be time-travelling as well' (p.187). Lewis had commenced but failed to complete a time-travel sequel, *the Dark Tower*¹⁹, and *Perelandra*, occasionally known as *Voyage to Venus*, is next in the series. If critics stress the tension in his corpus between Lewis, qua artist, and Lewis, qua polemicist, the majority find that this publication stands closer to the lyric and furthest from the dogmatic pole. Consider William Gray's:

As a mythical embodiment of 'the land of longing, the Earthly Paradise' (AOL, 75) *Perelandra* is for many readers, including Lewis himself, one of his greatest literary achievements... The book is in part a prose-poem, in part a philosophical dialogue, and in part...a kind of opera. (p.375)²⁰

¹⁸ Plato, *The Republic*. Translated by Desmond Lee, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974, p.319.

¹⁹ See C. Walsh, *op.cit.*, pp.96-98.

²⁰ W. Gray, *op.cit.*, p.39.

In the meeting with Aldiss previously alluded to, Lewis was keen to put to rest a commonly held assumption that he concocted his stories with an overtly didactic purpose in mind. He countered with ‘The starting point of... *Perelandra*, was my mental picture of the floating islands,’²¹ and this literary *modus operandi* was confirmed elsewhere.²² Lewis affirmed, ‘the story itself should force its moral upon you. You find out what the moral is by writing the story.’²³ However, about the year he was writing *Perelandra*, he wrote to a correspondent that, because of the generally religiously ignorant climate, ‘any amount of theology can now be smuggled into people’s minds under cover of romance without their knowing it.’²⁴

Since Lewis stands in the forefront of twentieth-century mythmakers, with *Perelandra* before us, the critical urgency is to get to the heart of what he meant when technical terms such as allegory and myth are raised. Whilst showing mastery of allegory in the complex and sophisticated *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, Lewis occasionally played down the value of the form, aware that readers of his day demanded something else.²⁵ A letter composed in 1929 may clear up the seeming ambiguity: ‘the essence of a myth being that this should have no taint of allegory to the maker and yet should suggest incipient allegories to the reader’²⁶ Afterwards, in *The*

²¹ C.S. Lewis, ‘Unreal Estates,’ *Of Other Worlds*, p.87.

²² C. S Lewis, ‘It all began with a picture,’ and ‘Sometimes fairy-stories may say best what’s to be said,’ *Of Other Worlds*, pp. 35,42.

²³ C. S. Lewis, ‘Unreal Estates’ in *the last*, p.88.

²⁴ W. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.167.

²⁵ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, Oxford University Press, 1959 (Orig. 1936), p.1.

²⁶ H. Carpenter, *The Inklings*, p.30.

Allegory of Love, he spoke of ‘sacramentalism or symbolism’ as opposed to allegory, continuing:

The allegorist leaves the given – his own passions – to talk of that which is confessedly less real, which is a fiction. The symbolist leaves the given to find that which is more real. To put the difference in another way, for the symbolist it is we who are the allegory.²⁷

Lewis found in the Platonic dialogues the view that: ‘The Sun is the copy of the Good. Time is the moving image of eternity. All visible things exist just in so far as they succeed in imitating the Forms.’²⁸ This was what he was looking for to construct his own formula for myth and romance. Another letter re-enforces distinctive traits which these modes exemplify:

A good myth (i.e. a story out of which ever varying meanings will grow for different readers and in different ages) is a higher thing than an allegory (into which *one* meaning has been put). Into an allegory a man can put only what he already knows; in a myth he puts what he does not yet know and could not come by in any other way.²⁹

In ‘On Stories,’ Lewis professed to seeking out narratives which, whilst taking him to another place altogether, also embodied ‘the sheer state of being,’ that tale wherein the plot is but ‘a net of time and event for catching what is not really a process at all’³⁰. Whether as a reader or writer caught up in romance, fantasy, children’s books or science fiction, the ideal he wanted was the story in which as he stated elsewhere, ‘the marvellous is in the grain of the whole work.’ Furthermore, whereas the best novels are ‘comment on life,’ literary works of Lewis’s preferred

²⁷ C.S. Lewis, *ibid.*, p.45.

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp.45-46.

²⁹ W. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.271.

³⁰ C.S. Lewis, ‘On Stories,’ in *Of Other Worlds*, p.20.

kind are ‘actual additions to life’ which leave behind ‘sensations we never had before. and enlarge our conception of the range of possible experience.’³¹

Lewis showed himself open to Carl Jung, and in an essay he wrote positively about

a much more civil and humane interpretation of myth and imagery... advanced by Jung... Miss Bodkin and Dr Tillyard, ... the doctrine of Primordial Images or Archetypal Patterns.³²

His final significant statement on myth is found in the fifth chapter of his most systematic account of literary criticism, *An Experiment in Criticism*, (1961), where he begins his analysis by reference to ‘a particular kind of story which has a value in itself – a value independent of its embodiment in any literary work’ (p.41). To appreciate this is to understand why, in spite of their stylistic deficiencies, Lewis rated Lindsay and Macdonald so highly. He proceeds to point out that in his estimation a myth embodies these components:

- (1) Extra-literary.
- (2) Depends hardly at all on such usual narrative attractions as suspense or surprise... is chiefly valuable in introducing us to a permanent object of contemplation.
- (3) Human sympathy is at a minimum. We do not project ourselves at all strongly into the characters.
- (4) Is ‘fantastic.’
- (5) The experience may be sad or joyful but it is always grave.
- (6) Awe-inspiring. We feel it to be numinous.³³

In a different context he spelt out how:

³¹ C.S. Lewis, ‘On Science Fiction,’ *ibid.*, p.70.

³² C.S. Lewis, ‘Psychoanalysis and Literary Criticism’ (1941), *They Asked for a Paper*, p.133.

³³ C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, Cambridge Uni. Press, Cambridge, 1961, pp. 43-44.

In poetry the words are the body and the ‘theme’ or ‘context’ is the soul. But in myth the imagined events are the body and something inexpressible is the soul.³⁴

Today the word ‘mythopoeic’ well covers the type, and perhaps some examples from his list of favourites will help in elucidating what we are attempting to come to grips with: ‘MacDonald’s *Phantastes*, *Lilith*, and *The Golden Key*, Eddison’s *Worm Ouroboros*, Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, ...Mervyn Peake’s *Titus Groan*. Some of Ray Bradbury’s stories’.³⁵

Lewis had long confirmed that ‘in a certain sense we spoil a mythology for imaginative purposes by believing in it,’³⁶ and for years he had been content to keep separate what is factually and what is imaginatively true. Nonetheless, as he eventually accepted that the goal of *Sehnsucht* was accounted for in the person of Jesus Christ, he became increasingly convinced there existed a single myth which simultaneously equated with Reality-as-it-is. In ‘Myth became Fact’ (1944) Lewis had distinguished the intellect’s necessity for abstraction from the person’s concrete experience. Usually these cannot co-exist, but thesis and antithesis get resolved in a synthesis; and furthermore, Lewis contended,

As myth transcends thought, Incarnation transcends myth. The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, without ceasing to be myth, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history.³⁷

³⁴ Cited in L. Rossi, *The Politics of Fantasy: C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien*, UMI Research Press, Michigan, 1984, p.20.

³⁵ C.S. Lewis, ‘On Science Fiction,’ in *Of Other Worlds*, p.71.

³⁶ C.S. Lewis, ‘Is Theology Poetry?’ in *They Asked for a Paper*, p.152.

³⁷ C.S. Lewis, ‘Myth became Fact,’ in *God in the Dock*, p.66.

The opening chapter of *Perelandra*, immediately brings in an *eldil*. The inclusion of both alien creatures and these highly conscious, free-willed non *hnau* agents results in it being very unlikely we can fit the deep space texts into any save an exceptionally open-ended meaning of the term ‘novel.’ *Eldila* are ‘very different from any planetary creature... they do not eat, breed, breathe, or suffer natural death’, and so akin to ‘thinking minerals’ (p.7), stand outside conventions of time and space. In his depictions, Lewis makes them seem as solid as bread, whilst he also confronts readers by mixing concepts that are often separated into watertight compartments.

We tend to think about non-human intelligences in two distinct categories which we label “scientific” and “supernatural” respectively. We think, in one mood, of Mr. Wells’ Martians... or his Selenites. In quite a different mood we let our minds loose on the possibility of angels, ghosts, fairies, and the like.

(*Perelandra*, p.9).

Having met the Oyarsa of Malacandra, the narrator and character Lewis offers a description of him backed up by a quotation concluding:

Not, of course, that Natvilcius knew anything about multi-dimensional geometry, but that he had reached empirically what mathematics has since reached on theoretical grounds.

(*Perelandra*, p.19)³⁸

Lewis over-turned the rationale of the secular status quo by asserting that his evidence for believing in spiritual beings is not merely speculative; instead it is grounded in actual experience as has frequently been recorded. Moreover, a sub-group of *eldila*, rebels bound to Earth, have been granted increased substantiality by associating them with another life-form, the existence of which, if also unseeable to the naked eye, leaves little room for doubt:

³⁸ See C.S. Lewis, *An Allegory of Love*, Appendix I, p. 362 on Bernardus Sylvestrus and angelic beings.

Like the bacteria on the microscopic level, so these co-inhabiting pests on the macroscopic permeate our whole life invisibly and are the real explanation of that fatal bent which is the main lessory of history.

(*Perelandra*, p.11)

Lewis does not deny scientific or religious elements their rightful place in the scheme of things. The point to emphasize is that he remained closer in spirit to the medievalist than the modern, for the former recognized theology as the queen of sciences and to these the physical realm was accorded secondary attention.

Lewis manoeuvres his audience into accepting the normality of the 'other', and the entire opening chapter brings to mind the sort of fluid movements between the ordinary and the super-mundane and the highly charged religious thriller atmosphere so successfully established in Charles Williams's seven unusual fantasies.³⁹ Tension drops with Ransom's arrival, yet he assures his guest that his fears were not merely subjectively caused, and predicts how, with his forthcoming trip to Venus, 'the siege was beginning to draw to an end' (p.23). We hear too, how, when the terran tragedy occurred a unifying factor, the original or proto language, 'Old Solar, *Hlab-Eribol-e/Cordi*' (p.26) had been lost.

Landing on Venus, rather than undergoing fearful anticipation as he initially had on Mars, Ransom experiences a state of awed merriment and the prevalent shifting, floating islands evoke a rare, colourful and exceptionally benign aura. When he swallows a mouthful of water, 'It was almost like meeting Pleasure itself for the first time' (p.38), whereupon he speaks of a 'warm, maternal, delicately gorgeous

³⁹ These are: *War in Heaven* (1930), *Many Dimensions* (1931), *The Place of the Lion* (1931), *The Greater Trumps* (1932), *Shadows of Ecstasy* (1933), *Descent into Hell* (1937), *All Hallows' Eve* (1945).

world...altogether pleasurable' (p.39). In an entirely beneficial fashion, 'There was something in Perelandra that might overload a human brain' (p.46). On eating some tasty fruit, he finds that it elicits a previously unknown type of pleasure and this is so intense that his own kind would betray or kill for it. Simultaneously he feels no desire to repeat the act, regarding such indulgence as excessive and unbalanced.

Ensuing chapters swiftly present on a number of occasions the collision of the factual and the fabulous. Eyeing a fruit-laden tree, a small dragon curled at its base, Ransom swore he had arrived at the Garden of the Hesperides. Then connecting the remembered *séroni* with Homer's Cyclops, he asks himself, 'Were all the things which appeared as mythology on earth scattered through other worlds as realities?' (p.49) Later, drenched by a strong scent dripping from spherical objects, 'he had a sensation not of following an adventure, but of enacting a myth' (p.52). On meeting the Green Lady he fears she may be 'another myth coming out into the world of fact – perhaps a more terrible myth, of Circe or Alcina?' (p.61) but, finding in her a measureless calm and seeing her surrounded by trusting animals, he decides 'There was no category in the terrestrial mind which would fit her' (p.71). Whilst 'obviously a goddess,' she is not Venus Aphrodite, but an unfallen Eve – a unique, human-shaped female owning characteristics shared by 'a Madonna...Artemis...a Mænad' (p.72).

Ransom is surprised to learn from her that the Incarnation of Maleldil on Earth had irreversibly altered everything, and, as the woman says, 'Since our Beloved became a man, how should Reason in any world take on another form... That is all over' (p.69). 'So' the author implies, 'humans are not mere chemical matter lacking any purpose, but have significance,' and one of them, Ransom, has been brought to another world to fulfil a unique mission. By degrees we are shown that, like the

Malacandrians, Tinidril and Tor and the *eldila* share more than disconnected perceptions of the spiritual and think and act within a theological frame-work.

Weston's arrival sees vital myth challenged by that humdrum, hubristic substitute set up by future-looking scientism, 'a dream begotten by the hatred of death upon the fear of true immortality' (p.92), the weavers of which nightmare are spurred on by no love for creation, intellectual curiosity or any enthusiasm over cultural exchanges. Of course, Lewis preferred fertile to desolate scenarios and, espying mer-folk, his hero queries, 'were the old myths truer than the modern myths? Had there in truth been a time when satyrs danced in the Italian woods?'(p.115) Eventually sensing that the battle against Weston demanded physicality, Ransom deems: 'It would degrade the spiritual welfare to the condition of mere mythology.' Then it dawns on him how:

Long since on Mars, and more strongly since he came to Perelandra, Ransom had been perceiving that the triple distinction of truth from myth and both from fact was purely terrestrial – was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall...the Incarnation had been the beginning of its disappearance.

(Perelandra, p.163.)

This volume may give us a prose variant on the subject of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Tor (an Adam as father-figure) receives here a slight and secondary role, and the Green Lady proves a more exceptional figure than Milton's Eve, the expulsion from this new Eden being unnecessary because the heroine and mother of her race resists the lure of the symbolic apple. Thus Tinidril manages to become familiar with conceptual thought without losing her innocence and so Paradise remains intact. If there are similarities with the *Genesis* account, there are differences as well, in part because 'Maleldil never repeated Himself' (p.164) and since this planet was to be

saved, ‘not through Himself but through Himself in Ransom.’ Considering which, Ransom infers:

‘You might just as well call Perelandra, not Tellus, the centre. You might look upon the Perelandian story as merely an indirect consequence of the Incarnation on earth: or you might look on the Earth story as mere preparation for the new worlds of which Perelandra was the first.’

(Perelandra, p.165.)

This whole narrative is replete with mythical influences and associations, and, reminiscent of the dream sequences in *Phantastes*, it differs from the other trilogy texts in harbouring few novelistic features. Resting from battling the Unman, Ransom ‘recited all that he could remember of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Aeneid*, the *Chanson de Roland*, *Paradise Lost*, the *Kalevala*, the *Hunting of the Snark*’ (p.199). Previously a professor reading and teaching legends, Ransom is now to be found a hero in a story which will be recounted through the ages. A clear line is drawn to distinguish nature and supernature (p.193), and yet older fables standing within the *Tao* are given their due. Ransom ends up somewhere that makes him wish to ‘renew the old Pagan practice of propitiating the local gods of unknown places in such fashion that it was no offence to God Himself’ (p.211). Obviously, then, Lewis, like Tolkien, stands inside that long tradition within Christendom which allows a space for the elder gods despite those suspicious of them. This conflict is far from over, as recent quibbles about J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series make clear.

The plot reaches its climax in the wedding and crowning ceremonies of Tor and Tinidril, whereby the author propounds his beliefs concerning monarchy, hierarchy and cosmic order, and reflects his enthusiasm toward ceremony and pageantry. To Lewis the trappings of medievalism, including flags, pennants, crowns, sceptres, wands and flamboyant clothing represented an era when drabness was not uniform and everything was in its proper place. In communication with the *Oyéresu*

of Malacandra (Ares) and Perelandra, (Aphrodite), Ransom concludes that mythology is ‘gleams of celestial strength and beauty falling on a jungle of filth and imbecility’ (p.232), and so the classical gods actually are not to be confused with the one and only Creator since they, too, are His ‘sub-creations.’

In the transformed regal pair, of whom Ransom claims ‘I have never before seen a man or a woman. I have lived all my life among shadows and broken images’ (p.235), Platonism is again strikingly apparent. Also informing the depiction of the couple is that special tone, one lent by MacDonald’s of *Unspoken Sermons*, afforded by Lewis the preacher who, in a sermon at Mansfield College, spoke inspiringly of ‘a society of possible gods and goddesses’, each of whom could end up ‘a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship.’⁴⁰

Character delineation is, of course, one of the major functions of the novel, and certainly Lewis thought that the formation of strong and sound character stood high amongst those pre-requisites governing the station of men and women in this world. Therefore, against the lower, still fallen human types, as are Weston and Devine, and set far, too, above the more successful specimen exemplified by Ransom, Lewis portrays an ideal of glorified humanity which he believed formerly existed in the Garden of Eden, and will occur again in the transformed Earth as explained by Christian eschatology. In Ransom’s perception of Tor and Tinidril that which Aristotle had merely defined is envisioned:

Animal rationale – an animal, yet also a reasonable soul: such, he remembered, was the old definition of Man. But he had never till now seen the reality. For now he saw this living Paradise, the Lord and Lady, as the resolution of discords, the bridge that spans what would else be a chasm in creation, the keystone of the whole arch.

(*Perelandra*, p.238.)

⁴⁰ C.S. Lewis, ‘The Weight of Glory,’ in *They Asked for a Paper*, p.210.

Ransom is farewelled as ‘Friend and Saviour’ (p.256). Yet, before quitting the scene, he is given a grand vision of the ever-occurring, ‘Great Game’ or ‘Great Dance’ (p.246), what has been called ‘the music of the spheres,’ this leading to his complete acceptance of the way things are. Finally, we have been left these lines refuting any collectivist formula for redemption:

Where Maledil is, there is the centre... Each thing was made for Him... Because we are with Him, each of us is at the centre. It is not as in city of the Darkened World where they say that each must live for all.

(Perelandra, p. 249.)

Despite the powerful impact of the different planet’s local inhabitants, in a sense the environment is the tale’s hero or heroine, and in his incisive study, Colin Manlove has avowed, notably of the second in the trilogy, that ‘the fantastic, numinously filled landscapes are as much the centre of interest as the stories,’ adding that, despite difficulties involved in the Green Lady’s inner struggles, the presentation is intelligently and sensitively handled.⁴¹ Green and Hooper thought *Perelandra* ‘Lewis’s supreme imaginative triumph in the creation of another world so vivid that any other picture of Venus becomes preposterous.’⁴² As for Chad Walsh, he recorded the view that the inventor had, ‘created a world in which goodness is at least as convincing as evil,’ leaving behind ‘a rare and unsettling flavor.’⁴³ However, what is to be made of the incongruity between the joyous magic of the ride upon the dolphin-like creatures and its interruption by Weston and Ransom’s sober debating? And in some passages there is that certain looseness of style that Lewis accused Macdonald

⁴¹ C. Manlove, *op.cit.*, p.134.

⁴² R.L. Green and W. Hooper, *op.cit.*, p.170.

⁴³ C. Walsh, *op.cit.*, p.109.

of, including unfortunate choices of diction of which only a novice should stand guilty.⁴⁴

If St Paul urged his flock that ‘whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus’ (*Colossians* 3:17), to Lewis his admonishment fell on willing ears. As Lewis’s became a thorough-going and integrated spirituality, it becomes requisite to examine how this affected his view of the arts, and to uncover the kernel of his critical theory. In ‘Christianity and Literature,’ he wrote: ‘The rules for writing a good passion play or a good devotional lyric are simply the rules for writing tragedy or lyric in general,’ and went on to distinguish authorial intent from capability, certain that what possesses a correct ethic or immense integrity is not of itself necessarily a superior artefact.⁴⁵ Lewis’s cogent literary evaluation was founded upon a genuine passion for, and deep and wide familiarity with, three thousand years of the Western heritage, and in lieu of close textual analysis he offered different strengths; notably an ability to get behind and penetrate into aspects of the dominant intellectual matrix of various cultural phases. Discerning a vast divide separating Christian and modernist attitudes, he brought instant illumination to earlier mental climates, as this juxtaposition of leading words and phrases shows:

What are the key-words of modern criticism? *Creative*, with its opposite, *derivative*; spontaneity, with its opposite, *convention*; *freedom* contrasted with *rules*. Great authors are innovators, pioneers, explorers; bad authors bunch in schools and follow models. Or again, great authors are always ‘breaking fetters’ and ‘bursting bonds.’ They have personality, they ‘are themselves.’⁴⁶

⁴⁴ E.g., the complete overkill of ‘horror’ and its variants, pp. 121, 141, 144, 148, 161, 162, 163, 196 (3 times), etc.

⁴⁵ C.S. Lewis, ‘Christianity and Literature,’ *Christian Reflections*, p.1.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p.3.

It is hardly surprising to find Lewis's criteria match Tolkien's at crucial points. In 'On Fairy Stories,' supposing humans formed in the image of a Maker, Tolkien had substituted 'sub-creator' as an appropriate term for artistic persons.⁴⁷ In agreement,⁴⁸ from the paper under discussion, Lewis gives an image of a universal hierarchy, God at the top, with 'some original divine virtue passing downwards,' and where 'imitation, reflection and assimilation' from above are advised to practitioners.⁴⁹ Lewis believed that contemporary criticism upheld technical and formal skills to the detriment of all higher aspects of artistic creativity. He went on to strike at a leading facet of modernist aesthetics, the high value granted to so-called 'originality,' preferring instead the necessity of 'trying to embody in terms of his own art some reflection of external Beauty and Wisdom.'⁵⁰

Many of the same themes were dealt with the ensuing year in 'Christianity and Culture,' where Lewis opposed secular theories of art as proposed by Matthew Arnold, Benedetto Croce and I.A. Richards. From the perspective of serious religious tomes, for instance *The Republic*, *The New Testament* and certain patristic texts, these idolatrous boasts, Lewis deemed, were nonsensical or dangerous. After weighing up pros and cons in the debate over the arts' ability to uplift, Lewis concluded: 'for some it is a good beginning. For others it is not; culture is not everyone's road into

⁴⁷ J.R.R. Tolkien, 'On Fairy Stories,' *Tree and Leaf*, Unwin Books, London, 1973, p.28. (Originally, in a shorter version, an Andrew Lang Lecture delivered in 1938 at the University of St Andrews).

⁴⁸ In W. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, he writes, 'There is not a vestige of real creativity *de novo* in us,' p.203.

⁴⁹ C.S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections*, p.5.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p.7. As regards 'originality,' see, too, *Mere Christianity*, pp.188-9.

Jerusalem, and for some it is a road out.⁵¹ A letter written in the same year (1940) furnishes a typical Lewis tenet on the arts when he maintains they can only be salutary under one or two conditions, '(a) admittedly aiming at nothing but innocent recreation or (b) definitely the handmaids of religious or at least moral truth.'⁵²

In 'Good Work and Good Works' he re-affirmed what many, including Sidney and Shelley in their own outstanding defences of the poetic art, had thought obvious for centuries that 'the business of the artist was to delight and instruct his public.'⁵³ Hence his disinterest in Yeats' hierophantic pretensions, or Nietzsche's reckless assertion that the superior soul can supersede accepted codes of behaviour in achieving his or her special ends. Lewis was certainly unimpressed by that Wildean pose of the poet-entertainer as of equal value to the work he had produced. Readers of 'Hamlet – the Prince or the Poem?'⁵⁴ and *The Personal Heresy*,⁵⁵ may themselves there verify, that art, *not* the artist, was definitely C.S. Lewis's focus.

Lewis constantly implied that the ego has to get left behind if art is to have a profound and positive influence, much like Leo Tolstoy's success in a book he much admired, *War and Peace*. From his final and most comprehensive survey on the subject of quality literature, this extract identifies a leading article of his belief:

Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining
the privilege of individuality... in reading great literature I

⁵¹ C.S. Lewis, 'Christianity and Culture,' *Christian Reflections*, p.23.

⁵² W. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.182.

⁵³ C.S. Lewis, 'Good Work and Good Works', *The World's last Night*, p.78. The texts referred to are: (Sir) Philip Sidney, *Apology for Poetry* (1595) and P.B. Shelley, *The Defence of Poetry* (1821).

⁵⁴ C.S. Lewis, 'Hamlet: the Prince or the Poem,? *They Asked for a Paper*, pp.51-71.

⁵⁵ C.S. Lewis, and E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Personal Heresy: A Controversy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1939.

become a thousand men and yet remain myself... Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do.⁵⁶

His aversion to someone recognised by many as the father of modernist verse, T.S. Eliot, brings illumination. Jealousy over his own neglect as a poet is perhaps a cause for his putting Eliot into *The Pilgrim's Regress* as Mr Neo-Angular. Whilst Lewis's dislike for, say, *Prufrock* might be easily comprehended, it is odd he never appreciated any of the later Eliot, and, surely, pig-headedness that he failed to support, or ever mention, Eliot's similar sounding insights. For had not 'the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality,'⁵⁷ come from Eliot's pen? And would not Lewis have agreed with his statement 'The greatness of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards, though we must remember that, whether it is literature or not, can be determined solely by literary standards?'⁵⁸ Their difference was one of temperament rather than of religious outlook, for Eliot was ever a (neo)-classicist, while Lewis, like Huxley, disavowed that way in favour of romanticism.⁵⁹

We move on to presentations of the religious in the sole volume in the trilogy where the action takes place entirely on Earth, *That Hideous Strength*. To start with, it is subtitled 'a modern fantasy-tale for grown-ups,' and although the text initially seems to have two disparate units, in the 'Preface,' Lewis insists that he walks in the

⁵⁶ C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, pp.140-1.

⁵⁷ T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent,' in J. Hayward, ed., *T.S. Eliot: Selected Prose*, Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1969, p.15.

⁵⁸ T.S. Eliot, 'Religion and Literature,' in the last *ibid.*, p.21.

⁵⁹ For Lewis's attitude to classicism, *Surprised by Joy*, p.118, and for Huxley's see his *Vulgarity in Literature*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1930, p.18.

steps of ‘the traditional fairy-tale’ in starting his adventures amongst homely acres before proceeding to the extra-mundane. So, beginning in the manner of the realistic novel, and detailing situations surrounding a certain familiar profession, that of scholars at a University, *That Hideous Strength* by degrees metamorphoses into a plot filled with the supernatural, even as, in some ways, it is also filled with the macabre of the horror tale. As is to be expected, then, in the earlier chapters character depiction is highlighted, and in several short, but succinct passages respectful of a character’s actions, Lewis says that he very much believes in free will and individual choice.

The struggle by academics, Jane and Mark Studdock, to keep their marriage intact, and a conflict which opens the ‘novel,’ becomes in effect, a microcosmic version of the greater war occurring on the macrocosmic scale. The part played by each of these minor but representative figures is that of the quester forced to confront sham and deception and, after suffering trials and tribulations, to endeavour to embrace the Higher Self within, and, taking into account the author’s theological premise, to commence communion with his or her Maker. The lead female figure, Jane, is half-heartedly engaged with her Ph.D thesis on John Donne, and yet she is unaware of those fundamentals enabling her to fuse with her subject: for she has neither Donne’s earnest religious convictions nor his passionate and erotic nature. Whilst preferring to emphasise the metaphysical poets, ‘triumphant vindication of the body’ (p.10), the twenty three year old’s barrenness of soul leads to her denial of the feminine, a cold and often empty marriage bed, and a preference for a university career over child-raising and domesticity.

Jane, besides getting married, has not been to church since her schooldays and becomes embarrassed when her guest, Mother Dimble, prays (p.90). Similarly, Mark

grows uneasy on hearing Straik pronounce the name, ‘Jesus,’ despite his having ‘lectured on abortion or perversion to an audience of young women without a qualm’ (p.92). Jane’s main battle turns out to be accepting graciously her gift as seer for, akin to Lewis, the call of Heaven was the last thing she wanted.

At Edgestow campus, the selling of its attendant Bragdon Wood is endorsed by the negative faction easily impressed by lawless science, irresponsible business and shady politicising. An elderly don, Canon Jewel, speaks up in opposition to the sale, but if respectful of traditional values, he is ineffectual against ill-mannered and worldly men. When Jane meets the team, whom she is soon to join, we read of her friends and co-conspirators, the Dimbles, that their ‘garden was famous’ (p.30). The Dimbles’ house is frequently filled with students, and the couple enjoy all sorts of weather outdoors. The alliance at St Anne’s appear to be an easy-going and cheerful bunch of friends and fellow combatants sharing their fortunes with some much-loved animals, notably the bear, Mr. Bultitude, and a raven, Baron Corvo. At St. Anne’s the garden is also a significant feature, Jane now seeing it in legendary proportions (p.71). As for Bragdon Wood, as one presses deeper in one senses, ‘a gradual penetration into a holy of holies’ (p.18), at the heart of which is found a spot from which ‘all the legends’ (p.20) about Merlin and his lore had come. And nearby this Druidic presence there lies ‘a sweet, Protestant world... of Bunyan or of Walton’s *Lives*’ (p.18).

None of this means anything to the so-called ‘progressives’. Instead, the apostate clergyman and current bursar, James Busby, thinks that by attracting the N.I.C.E to their town Curry had done more for the cause of religion ‘than Jewel has done in his whole life’ (p.40). Their type despises small-scale ‘English agriculture’ (p.101) and so they assist in ‘the conversion of an ancient woodland into an inferno of

mud and noise and steel and concrete' (p.108). In urban areas we see these fruits of the N.I.C.E's arrival: prices become exorbitant, there are queues for everything, obtrusive newcomers crowd out the locals and boss them about. Later crimes by the N.I.C.E against citizenry include bashings, rape, torture and even murder. The core lesson here is clear: those on the side of 'right' stand for the organic, for fertility, lawful sexuality, and adherence to natural order. In contrast, the shadow-folk represent destruction, sterility, perversion and, underneath all their bravado, rank conformity; also, at the worst end of the spectrum, their total enslavement to Diabolic Forces. Withers, who hardly sleeps, and at times seems merely a ventriloquist's dummy, assures Mark the N.I.C.E are, 'like a single personality' wherein no individual can be allowed 'to stand on his rights' (p.144).

Following St. Augustine, Lewis held that evil was only a corruption of good, or in Platonic terminology, a mere shadow of the Good⁶⁰ and, in that paradigm, the inner circle of the N.I.C.E can be seen as a distortion or parody of the St. Annes's company. Similarities to *The Lord of The Rings* are obvious. The nine sinister wraith-riders, servants of the tyrant and death-dealer, Sauron, bound together by a will of hatred, stand in enmity against the nine aligned with the positive, free-spirited and distinctly different personalities making up the fellowship of the ring.

Grace Ironwood, stalwart supporter of St. Annes, and 'all that's left of Logres' (p.238), refers to 'Our little household, or company, or society, or whatever you like to call it' (p.137). Dr Ransom, also known as 'Mr. Fisher-King,' is at its head. Spiritually immature, Jane is at least perceptive enough to want 'to be with Nice people, away from Nasty people' (p.166). As she is drawn into the correct circle.

⁶⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, posits, 'Goodness is, so to speak, itself: badness is only spoiled goodness.' p.46.

Ransom tells her that integrity must remain paramount if their side is not to follow their enemies in an attempt to ‘possibly do some vague good to humanity in the remote future’ (p.175). That is, the light-bearers have to keep within the bounds of the *Tao* and to stay focused in the present. Although Lewis was always quick in defending reason, he did not neglect the place of the will in directing events. Decisions based on logic are desirable, but these can be subverted by a lack of, or an errant, purpose.

With regard to Lewis’s specifically political beliefs, he cared little for the machinations of Empire and State, had little confidence in the ordinary person’s ability as a political animal, and supported the democratic model as the lesser of several evils, of which theocracy was the gravest⁶¹ system. Lines by the Scottish poet, William Dunbar, (1460? – 1520?) which he enjoyed quoting, show his inclinations lay elsewhere:

Man, please thy Maker and be merry,
And give not for this world a cherry.

It is imperative to stress Lewis’s other-worldliness, to point out how little the then popular collectivist mood attracted him, and how he would rather promote the Protestant inclination toward individual rights and personal obligations. His accusations against ‘chronological snobbery,’ too, referred not just to his contemporaries’ desire for the latest in ideas or inventions. It also assumes those spheres informed by mundane time, including the realms of science, business, and low-level pleasures are of greater relevance than the promise of eternal life. Societies are temporal, a man or woman is immortal, and the need is to keep priorities in proper

⁶¹ C.S. Lewis, ‘Is Progress Possible?’ *God in the Dock*, p.315.

order. All the same, as might any citizen, Lewis voiced his opinion on public matters, and a January, 1940 letter is worth quoting from:

Fascism and Communism, like all other evils, are potent because of the good they contain or imitate...you will presently see both a Leftist and a Rightist pseudo-theology developing – the abomination will stand where it ought not.⁶²

The reader, far from being taken to some silly, somewhat meaningless sword and sorcery scenario, in *That Hideous Strength* is transported to 1940's England, 'to the N.I.C.E and their 'filthy abomination' (p.239) which Dimble, continuing, describes as:

A criminal's brain swollen to superhuman proportions and experiencing a mode of consciousness which we can't imagine, but which is presumably a consciousness of agony and hatred.

(*That Hideous Strength*, p. 240).

During forty years Lewis's work-place was the university, a place which can be a nest of political intrigues, and now and then Lewis was active in the arena of college politics. Literature so often reflects day-to-day events, and his pupil John Lawlor appreciated the solidity of this aspect of the text, asking, 'Had anyone before C.P. Snow described a College meeting more vividly than Lewis'?⁶³ The last named ever had more catholic reading interests than did Tolkien, yet backed up Tolkien when he worked to remove the study of Victorian literature as mandatory in the English School. Why, too, their circle occasionally chose to back unsuitable

⁶² W. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.176. For a discussion of the complexity of Lewis's political opinions refer to Suzanne Bray, 'C.S. Lewis and Politics,' in *VII: An Anglo-American Literary Review*, Vol. 20 (2003).

⁶³ John Lawlor, 'The Tutor and the Scholar', J. Gibb, ed., *Light on C.S. Lewis*, p.81.

candidates for preferment, as with the Oxford professorship of poetry.⁶⁴ For one who upheld principles of truth and justice on occasion, Lewis, like Dr Samuel Johnson whom he admired, showed just how much the success of his side meant to him, and he was not as impartial as he might have wished.

During a conversation Jane Studdock and Dr. Dimble have the singular Celtic character, Merlin, introduced into the narrative. Chief counsellor of the legendary King Arthur and reputed to uphold and direct the heritage of Camelot and Logres, Merlin is:

An odd creation... He's not evil: yet he's a magician. He is obviously a druid: yet he knows all about the Grail. He's... the last trace of something the later tradition has quite forgotten about – something that became impossible when the only people in touch with the supernatural were... either... priests or sorcerers.

(*That Hideous Strength*, p.33).

Reminiscent of Tolkien's own sub-creation, Gandalf, Merlin has been a white wizard battling dark forces, except that in later ages Christ's descent to Earth has made his magic both redundant and forbidden.⁶⁵ According to Dimble, Merlin is 'Buried but *not* dead' (p.34), and, like Jesus Christ, is to be resurrected when England's need is greatest, whilst Ransom seems likely to follow Arthur to 'where he sits in the House of Kings in the cup-shaped land of Abhalljin, beyond the seas of Lur in Perelandra' (p.337).

The NICE's inner core, as well as its enemies, want to enlist Merlin's aid, and this is why the former purchase Bragdon Wood. For a while it is uncertain where the

⁶⁴ H. Carpenter, *op.cit.*, accuses that in electing minor talent, Adam Fox, to this position they were 'behaving like an Inner Ring of the more unscrupulous sort' (p.163).

⁶⁵ So Ransom would not have countenanced those heroic practitioners of so-called 'white magic' seen in television series currently getting aired in Australia: Channel Ten's *Charmed* and Prime's programme entitled *Beastmaster*.

magician's allegiance may lie. Lewis typically adds his own slant on Arthurian myth and so in this volume the art of Merlin is 'something brought to Western Europe after the fall of Numinor,' when the duality of mind and matter did not exist, – thus giving it links with the earliest Tolkienian ages as found in the later published *The Silmarillion*. Ties are also forged with Plato's *Timaeus*, viz 'the last vestiges of Atlantean magic' (p.246). Lewis was suspicious of pre-Christian religions, but, if Uncle Andrew in *The Magician's Nephew* represents the false 'Renaissance Magic' (p.246), Lewis is eager to distance himself from, on this occasion the author appears to legitimise aspects of occidental paganism, a factor for which he has been chastised.⁶⁶

The search to find Merlin made clear to St. Anne's that their foes were 'not concerned solely with modern or materialistic forms of power... there was Eldilic energy and Eldilic knowledge behind it' (p.246). Also, with the Celtic idea that the universe might better be thought of as a multiverse in mind,⁶⁷ the author says: 'not all the times that are outside the present are therefore past or future,' a definite challenge to Marxism or scientism's pre-supposition of time as linear. In addition, because the type of power propelling black magicians and technocrats is the same, if the NICE's desire to unite these is realized the 'Hideous Strength' may become unbeatable. Merlin submits to Ransom's authority, to be informed he was re-awakened, so that his 'own soul should be saved' (p.357), and we learn that, as the sole person capable of

⁶⁶ Eg, C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) on <http://www.rapidnet.com/j.beard/bdm/exposes/lewis/general.html> retrieved 30-7-05.

⁶⁷ A potent symbolic example of this notion is the pools-in-the-woods sequences, *The Magician's Nephew*, chapter three, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. More thoughts on such matters appear in Michael Murrin, 'The Dialectic of Multiple Worlds. An analysis of C.S. Lewis's Narnia Stories', in *VII: An Anglo-American Literary Review*, Vol 3, 1982, pp.93-112.

such feats, he is to act as a bridge for the powers of the *Oyéresu* to be activated on Earth. Merlin's fulfilment of this action causes the 'doom of gibberish' (p.431) to befall the Belbury banquet that starts to undo the villains. Crying in Latin, 'they that have despised the Word of God, from them shall the word of man also be taken away' (p.435). Merlin 'liberated beasts and men' (p.435) and then disappears.

Before an examination of Ransom, the chief religious figure in the trilogy, let us return to another major character, Jane Studdock, to trace her spiritual quest. After rejecting her calling as St. Anne's 'seer' (p.138), Jane's decision to trust the group comes down to her complete acceptance of its Director, who tells her 'you do not fail in obedience through lack of love, but have lost love because you never attempted obedience' (p.178); and then he explains that, if equality before the law is fine, her opinions about equality of souls are not. St. Anne's has a salubrious effect on Jane, and part of her education consisting of a redirection in her reading material, she asks Grace Ironwood to bring 'the *Curdie* books... and *Mansfield Park* and Shakespeare's *Sonnets*' (p.198).

Jane would have appreciated the domestic arrangements at St. Anne's, where males share the house-work, but feminists are not so convinced by Lewis's general attitude to gender.⁶⁸ As Humphrey Carpenter relates, 'he was well aware of the Greek doctrine that Form is masculine and Matter feminine' and approved of this, and, once a Christian, he added into this framework the belief that 'the relationship of the created to the Creator is that of female to male.'⁶⁹ What mainly wins over Jane is the friendliness and integrity of her new found friends. Finally, in the garden at St.

⁶⁸ Writing in the nineteen nineties, Kath Filmer, *op.cit.*, concentrated much of her criticism against Lewis on his supposed gender issue problems, especially in chapters six to eight.

⁶⁹ H. Carpenter, *The Inklings*, p.164.

Anne's, after a period of contemplation and self-analysis, she puts past experiences of religious people behind her, aware that the company 'never talked about Religion... They talked about God' (p.393). All of a sudden, 'the change came... A boundary had been crossed. She had come into a world, or into a Person, or into the presence of a Person' (p.394). The most significant event in her life had just happened: she had had a 'religious experience' (p.395), an encounter with 'the other,' who proves to be a personal being rather than impersonal energy. Henceforth she will be able to understand Donne from *within* his metaphysic, and her marriage is saved and will be made fruitful. Thus, as was the case with her husband, Jane has become not a less but a more solid personality once she has changed.

The 'Pedestrian' we meet at the opening of *Out of the Silent Planet* sounds much like the author. He is about Lewis's age at the time of publication, and his dress sense matches Lewis's, since, akin to Ransom, he was definitely no 'man of the world.' Elwyn ('friend of the elves') is a 'philologist' (p.5) leading some, including Carpenter, to think Tolkien was Ransom's model,⁷⁰ whilst Lee Rossi posits Lewis himself.⁷¹

Ransom's essential decency and altruism are immediately evident in his attempt to rescue Harry. Then, on board the space vehicle, he graciously accepts his own captivity, whilst awaiting a chance to escape. Fearing running into savage monsters, Ransom momentarily thinks about suicide; however, if hope is a major Christian virtue, despair is held to be a great wrong, and to his credit Ransom overcomes this. Largely throughout his journey Ransom's response is born of a

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.182.

⁷¹ L.Rossi, *op.cit.*, p.31. The late Professor G. Hough, Lewis's Cambridge colleague, also held this view. (J.S. Ryan).

healthy curiosity, and, as might Lewis have done, he is ‘wholly absorbed in a philosophical speculation’ (p.44) the moment he sets foot on Mars. Unlike his captors, Ransom’s travels are relatively trouble-free and, delighting in the unfamiliar, he slips easily into friendship with the *hrossa*.

Although ‘He had grown up’ (p.93) in successfully carrying out the hunt of the *hnakra*, the consequence of his procrastination to visit Oyarsa, as ordered, leads to the death of Hyoi. Despite, as Lewis maintained, conforming to the *Tao*, moral action alone is not enough, at which point he brings in specifically religious requirements such as obeying one’s spiritual superiors and letting oneself be led by will instead of emotion. Thus Whin urges Ransom to leave forthwith, and, wracked by doubt, Ransom finally complies, making ‘a strong resolution, defying in advance all changes of mood, that he would faithfully carry out the journey to Meldilorn if it could be done’ (p.98).

Ransom’s lack of xenophobia and his willingness to expand in consciousness can be espied in his changing perception of the sorns, and from terror early in the piece: ‘A new conception... began to arise in his mind: the ideas of ‘giant’ and ‘ghost’ receded behind those of ‘goblin’ and ‘gawk’ (p.106). Shortly thereafter he muses no more upon ‘Ogres,’ since ‘Titans’ or ‘Angels’ (p.117) seem more appropriate terms. Brave and decent the hero may be, and if he shares some common human frailties, he is well on the way to embodying qualities which had Chad Walsh aver that ‘The principal reason for the story’s success lies in the author’s creation of the character Ransom.’⁷²

In Oyarsa’s estimation this visitor is ‘guilty of no evil... except a little fearfulness (p.166) and, because his exchanges with the inhabitants were entirely

⁷² C. Walsh, *op.cit.*, p.95.

open, benign and accommodating, he is allowed a chance to remain there. Ransom chooses to return home, whereupon he is told by Oyarsa to stay vigilant as to Weston and Devine's movements. His equanimity is seen on the homeward trip, where he shares in the navigation. Novelistic realism asserts itself when the vessel lands, when Ransom is grateful to re-connect with the everyday, 'rain... grass... cows' (p.176). Ransom is pleased, too, to find himself located outside a pub, and licking his lips as he asks for 'A pint of bitter, please.' (p.177)

Lastly, we learn it was Ransom who initially comprehended the profundity of these interplanetary journeyings, and who enlists the help of the fictive invention, Lewis 'to publish in the form of fiction what would certainly not be listened to as fact' (p.179). And here we have disclosed a reason the author rates his imaginative works so highly: they may possess 'the incidental advantage of reaching a wider public' (p.179), and cause havoc to Weston's version of events. Lewis's potency of envisioning is re-enforced in the Postscript where, 'the original of 'Dr Ransom''(p.180) evokes highlights of the Malacandrian landscape and gives glimpses of the heterogeneity of its *hnau* races. At the book's close, then, boundaries between fact and fiction are blurred, albeit this in no wise resembles the chaos and illogicality of Alice's Wonderland.

Perelandra had opened with Lewis-as-narrator setting out from 'Worchester' station to meet a man unique in having had adventures on Mars, as well as for the changes these had wrought in him. The visitor wonders whether Ransom is a dupe and traitor before reason asserts itself and he decides that whatever else is wrong, 'Ransom was sane and wholesome and honest' (p.12). Then, as against those basic fears experienced when he had arrived on Mars, on landing on Venus a new fear engulfs Ransom, that state of aloneness strongly captured in William Cowper's poem,

Solitude. Nevertheless, he is soon absorbed in newly met pleasures, for which he is thankful. He also distinguishes the main difference from his first visit to an alien planet: ‘here he knew that he was part of a plan... no longer unattached, no longer on the outside’ (p.56). He is now in communion with the Lady who commends his wisdom and skills in teaching her how to undergo a ‘stepping out of life into the Alongside and looking at oneself living as if one were not alive’ (p.67), and he says he thinks Maleldil has sent him for a reason, and when he asks her what this might be she, in her turn, queries whether he was meant to bring death. If Weston is the would-be deliverer of death and mortality, on a higher plane Ransom gently helps her to be freed from her limited self by drawing forth an adult self-consciousness. He is unable to hide anything here, and deprived of his crutch, tobacco, must find different tools to enable him to cope.

Chapter Seven has Ransom explain Christian principles to his adversary, for all along he sincerely hopes for a change of heart in Weston. In tune with the air of sanctity on Perelandra, he is sickened by his own ‘small lie’ (p.79) and he tells the Lady that he is totally disgusted by the depravity of the Unman’s cruelty to animals. Interestingly, Weston accuses Ransom – as do many critics Lewis himself – of remaining ‘of that intensely male and backward – looking type’ (p.150), afraid of the new and wishing to keep women subdued. Closer to the mark is Ransom’s misfortune in ‘losing his temper’ (p.150), as well as his re-occurring doubts. Eventually he realises he is a match for Weston in combat, and that ‘He himself was the miracle’ (p.160) destined to keep this world intact.

At this point the Voice tells him, ‘It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom,’ as well, ‘My name also is Ransom’ (p.168). Just as the speaker, Maleldil, gave himself as an offering on Earth, so Ransom’s surname registers his function as

the specific substitute for Harry and more generally for every *hnau* race in the Solar System. Elwyn has arrived at that place where ‘predestination and freedom were apparently identical’ (p.170), and whilst his intellectual sorties against Weston’s ruses are laudable, the physical offensive taken by him is what is needed.

Ransom has also been called thither, ‘in order to realise Nature as a thing in her own right’ (p.183). Ever cautious of slipping into pantheism, Lewis emphasised what he thought was the utter division separating the natural, created feminine order and the supernatural, creative and masculine entity, as posited in the ensuing:

Only the Supernatural really sees Nature. You must go a little way from her, and then turn around, and look back... to treat her as God, or as Everything, is to lose the whole pith and pleasure of her... She is herself. Offer her neither worship nor contempt. Meet her and know her.⁷³

Tor, the king, confirms Ransom’s own significance by telling him, ‘Maleldil has taken us where He meant us to be: but of Maleldil’s instruments in this, you were the chief’ (p.239). Ransom is then enabled to discern the ever immanent Cosmic Dance and he acts as a spokesman for Lewis’s theological beliefs before heading home in the casket. To find out what happened after his return the reader must revert to Chapters Two and Three, where it is written, ‘he came back from Venus even more changed than he had come back from Mars’ (p.35), and learn that the raconteur had been ‘astonished at the form which had risen... almost a new Ransom, glowing with health and rounded with muscle and seemingly ten years younger’ (p.32). Even his dietary preferences had altered, and in lieu of the typical English fried breakfast he hankered after ‘fruit... bread or porridge’ (p.33).

⁷³ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p.67.

The plot in *That Hideous Strength* revolves around no mere simple struggle between two main protagonists, and besides the secondary theme of the embattled Studdocks aligned on separate sides, here those waging war have grouped together. Jane is informed that their company ‘is run by a Mr. Fisher-King’ (p.137), a title only recently assumed by Ransom, and taken from his sister’s married name. Allied to a ‘great native Christian mystic... The Sura,’ his sister left him a substantial amount of money to be used to gather a force to defend the human race against attack. Denniston also now refers to him as ‘the Pendragon’ and ‘the Head’ (p.139).

The wise-woman Grace Ironwood warns Jane against assuming the man’s age, and when she does meet him, despite her scepticism and her resolve to remain unimpressed, ‘instantly her world was unmade,’ as ‘all the light in the room seemed to run towards the gold hair and the gold beard of the wounded man’ (p.171). Also entitled the Director, although an invalid, he is physically strong and so striking is his presence that Jane is at once convinced he is exceedingly special. In this volume Ransom has taken on the mantle of hallowed splendour Lewis saw few people wear, and if Macdonald was one of them, Charles Williams was another, and before him Jane ‘tasted the word *King* itself with all its linked associations of battle, marriage, priesthood, mercy, and power’ (p.172). The Director welcomes her, but tells Jane her opinions on marriage and relationships are irrelevant, and what matters is ‘how my Masters look on it’ (p.177).

Ransom dines on bread and wine, Eucharistic symbols, and a frugal diet which confirms his unworldliness, while his easy empathy with the animal kingdom brings to mind Saint Francis of Assisi. Ivy Maggs is sure that ‘There isn’t a creature in the place that would go for another or for us once he’s had his little talk with them. Just the same as he does with us,’ for there is no political posturing at St Anne’s.

Nonetheless, Margaret Dimble can offer qualification where appropriate, saying that although wise, ‘he *is* a man, after all, and an unmarried man at that’ (p.204).

With the descent of the *Oyéresu*, an experience paralleling that undergone by the disciples at Pentecost occurs, and Ransom knows ‘heavenly pleasure. He found himself sitting within the very heart of language’ (p.398). Supported by the cautious McPhee who states that despite his faults the Director is ‘the best man, taking you by and large, that ever I knew or heard of’ (p.472) and deferred to in authority by Merlin, Ransom alone can speak face to face with the planetary archons. Nor, unlike McPhee, is their revered leader disturbed when their animal friends partner and mate, for under the protection of Venus he does not consider this indecent. Jane finds it hard to leave him, but Ransom, in the manner of Enoch, must quit Earth without dying, and is to return to Perelandra for healing. His last words to the now devoted Jane are a blessing, ‘Go in obedience and you will find love. You will have no more dreams. Have children instead. *Urendi Maleldil*’ (p.473).

Diametrically opposed to every religious belief esteemed by Ransom is ‘the Mad Parson’ (p.91), Reverend Straik, based on an actual clergyman met years before (*SBJ*, p.160). Condoning improper societal thought and methods, including severe violence, this unsettling reprobate is eager to ‘repudiate that damnable doctrine’ about the after-life, and, despising all organized religion and theology, insists that ‘The Kingdom of God is to be realized here – in this world’ (p.92). To Straik, ‘The powers of science are an instrument’ (p.93) in implementing a revolutionary society. A humourless, anti-social figure who, ‘never drank or smoked,’ he had, ‘large, unhappy eyes,’ and, forsaking rational conversation, was prone to ‘burst into loud and prolonged speech, threatening, denouncing, prophesying’ (p.154). In Lewis’s view,

intimations of the higher are continually hampered by the downward pull of the lower, or as Dimble put it:

Something we may call Britain is always haunted by something we may call Logres. Haven't you noticed that we are two countries? After every Arthur, a Mordred; behind every Milton, a Cromwell: a nation of poets, a nation of shopkeepers; the home of Sidney – and of Cecil Rhodes.

That Hideous Strength, p.459.

Twentieth century Christianity presents itself in a multitude of forms, and Lewis constantly assured anyone interested that he was an orthodox 'mere Christian.' In *The Great Divorce* there had been an 'Episcopal Ghost' (p.39) who foregoes a posthumous chance to draw nearer to his Maker in order to rush back to hell and a 'little Theological Society down there' (p.42). Observing this, the guide in Paradise explains how, ultimately, 'There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and those to whom God says, in the end, "*Thy will be done*"' (pp.66-7) A sophisticated, yet doctrinally conventional evangelical, Lewis showed scant sympathy for demythologizers of religion of the calibre of Rudolf Bultmann or Bishop John Robinson of Woolwich with his *Honest to God* (1962), who is lampooned as 'the bishop of Woolworths.'⁷⁴ To Lewis a sincere pagan rated above back-slidden or modernist clergymen, and so in *That Hideous Strength* the essentially sound McPhee, St Anne's 'sceptic: a very important office' (p.224), and amongst Ransom's closest friends, has a good chance of attaining full redemption.

Meanwhile, concerning Teilhard de Chardin, Lewis agreed with a correspondent who wanted to shut this priest up.⁷⁵ In the last chapter of *Mere*

⁷⁴ This was a joke made by Lewis, and was recorded in English newspapers during the period 1971-2 when I resided in the U.K. (R. Franklin)

⁷⁵ W. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.296.

Christianity Lewis had aired his own thoughts surrounding the term ‘evolution.’ Focusing on scientism’s so-called ‘New Step’ in humanity’s growth, he claimed that something similar had ‘already happened,’ which is ‘a change from being creatures of God to being sons of God,’ and ‘something coming into nature from outside.’⁷⁶ Christ is ‘*the* new man, bringing with Him the Zoe, the new life,’ and those who accept Him shall ‘be taken right out of nature, turned into ‘gods’⁷⁷.

Ivy Maggs had confidence that ‘the Director’ll bring it all right in the end’ (p.374), and a prominent feature of the Lewisian romance stands in alignment with Tolkien’s in ‘On Fairy Stories,’ where Tolkien approves of ‘The Consolation of the Happy Ending,’ for which he coined the word ‘Eucatastrophe’⁷⁸. If Christ’s resurrection is the fitting conclusion to the seeming tragedy of human existence, a positive ending is similarly the appropriate dénouement to fairy-tales. Thus, to a charge against him of escapism, a favourite catch-cry of self-avowed realists with their own agenda to push forward, Lewis concurred with his friend’s dismissal. ‘We should not,’ Tolkien argued, confuse ‘the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter,’⁷⁹ and in ‘On Stories’ Lewis put forth similar claims to sustain his thesis.

Select critical comments on *That Hideous Strength* may close our discussion, beginning with A.N. Wilson’s ‘Lewis the satirist cannot resist letting his own ribald loathing of fat bossy women and atheistical science dows intrude into the high cosmic themes’⁸⁰. Chad Walsh had praised Lewis’s ‘sardonic insight’, but on the other hand

⁷⁶ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p.183.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.185.

⁷⁸ J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*, p.68.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.61.

⁸⁰ A.N. Wilson, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography*, Collins, London, 1990, p.189.

was offended by the Arthurian content, remonstrating that Merlin ‘comes close to being a deus ex-machina’⁸¹. To Lee Rossi the text is ‘overtly polemical’⁸², whilst J.S. Ryan maintained that the relationship between:

the symbolic and melodramatic can and does confuse many readers. It lacks both the homogeneity of *Out of the Silent Planet* and the lyricism of *Perelandra* and is... less of a novel than an illustration of Lewis’s theory of myth.⁸³

As specimens of unalloyed or ‘pure’ fantasy Tolkien deemed the first and second in the series successful; however, he was lukewarm about *That Hideous Strength*, and considered it an unsuitable climax to the trilogy.⁸⁴ The work has been branded ‘a Charles Williams novel written by C.S. Lewis,’⁸⁵ and in a letter Tolkien pinned down where, to him, its main fault lay: ‘I was and remain wholly unsympathetic to Williams’ mind.’⁸⁶ Probably he felt towards it what he felt about the realm of Narnia: it was not self-contained, including as it did too many indiscriminate, even discordant, additions from numerous sources⁸⁷. Certainly, whilst the author’s treatment of earlier tales was so unusual that few would accuse him of plagiarism, *That Hideous Strength* does draw upon such an incredible hotch-potch of materials that readers may well have trouble digesting it all. Whilst William Gray alludes to

⁸¹ C. Walsh, *op.cit.*, p.119.

⁸² L. Rossi, *op.cit.*, p.37.

⁸³ J.S. Ryan, *op.cit.*, p.122.

⁸⁴ See H. Carpenter, ed., *The Letters of J.R. Tolkien*, p.32.

⁸⁵ R. Green and W. Hooper, *op.cit.*, p.174.

⁸⁶ H. Carpenter, ed., *ibid.*, p.361.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.352.

Lewis's 'probably just trying to do too many things at once'⁸⁸, Clyde Kilby agrees but interprets this differently, affirming 'the very heterogeneity of the characters and ideas show the richness of Lewis's imaginative resources'.⁸⁹

Impressively steeped in Western culture, Lewis hardly registers as a reliable assessor of many ideologies from beyond the Hellespont. Sympathetic to dualistic systems, for example Zoroastrianism, and competent regarding a straightforward construction such as Confucianism, he was culpable elsewhere. To begin with, it is incorrect, indeed blasphemous to Muslims, to call Islam, 'Mohammedanism' and to Jews and Muslims to call Jesus 'God'.⁹⁰ More pertinently, to any who have sought to penetrate the multi-farious and initially complex and foreign schools of Indian and South-east Asian thought, Lewis failed to get beyond an elementary level. It is one thing to casually advise the seeker to 'save himself time by confining his attention to two systems – Hinduism and Christianity... the two serious options for an adult mind,'⁹¹ but often he simply dismissed the former using a dirty word in his vocabulary, pantheism. Once he attempted to label the Buddha as the eastern saviour, to pull back from this with spurious reasons and assert that 'the Christian world is (partially) saved in a sense in which the East is not'.⁹² Clearly his examination of

⁸⁸ W. Gray, *op.cit.*, p.49.

⁸⁹ C. Kilby, *op.cit.*, p.107.

⁹⁰ Observe his *Mere Christianity*, pp.39, 185.

⁹¹ C.S. Lewis, 'De Futilitate,' *Christian Reflections*, p.71.

⁹² W. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.152.

these subjects was superficial and carried out through the eyes of a missionary zealot.⁹³

Lewis visited Athens whilst failing to reach Jerusalem. If he had travelled further eastwards to visit his former pupil and friend, Dom Bede Griffiths, perhaps Lewis would, like him, have had his spiritual horizons expanded to enable him to get beyond the customary ‘either-or’ predicament which he set up when confronted by, say, Hinduism or Buddhism. As Chad Walsh put the matter, ‘it is conceivable that God can count above two.’⁹⁴ Huxley might have raised the concept of avatar, in which case Christ need not be regarded as the one and only saviour of the orthodox or the merely clever teacher of the secular humanists.

Accounts by some amongst those he mixed freely with portray Lewis as that annoying terrier whose bark is worse than his bite. To Austin Farrer, ‘Lewis risks forfeiting the sympathy of a compassionate reader, for all the evidences of a compassionate heart he abundantly displays.’⁹⁵ Owen Barfield quoted Alan Watts, a scholar of comparative religions, as discerning in Lewis’s work ‘a certain ill-concealed glee in adopting an old-fashioned and unpopular position,’⁹⁶ and sensed himself, ‘a certain psychic or spiritual immaturity’⁹⁷ there when contrasted with Lewis’s mentor, George MacDonald. Love and marriage softened the author, tragedy

⁹³ No few apparently novel ideas are often lifted, almost verbatim, from select favourites such as George MacDonald. On Lewis’s opinions on Asia’s two foremost religious expressions, then, see, G.K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, Part I ch IV and Part II, ch V.

⁹⁴ C. Walsh, ‘C.S. Lewis: Critic, Creator and Cult Figure,’ in *VII: An Anglo-American Literary Review*, Vol.2, 1981, p.7.

⁹⁵ A. Farrer, ‘The Christian Apologist’, J. Gibb, ed., *op.cit.*, pp.40-1.

⁹⁶ O. Barfield, ‘Introduction’, to *ibid.*, p.xi.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p.xvi.

even more so, and his most personal title, *A Grief Observed*, left him as essentially what he ever was, a passionate romantic writer of the first order. Against the intellectual fashions and ephemeral notions of his day he maintained, ‘All that is not eternal is eternally out of date.’⁹⁸ In finishing, these remarks by another upholder of eternal values, the Blake scholar and poet, Kathleen Raine, one of his own favourites, are relevant:

Almost – not quite – alone in the Cambridge of that time he understood that poetry and the other arts are the language of tradition, and exist to serve ends which are not literary. Doubtless he would have agreed with Dom Bede Griffiths... that the function of art is, ‘to evoke the divine presence.’⁹⁹

To bring this section on Lewis to its conclusion, here are two quotations from the myth-maker himself. He said firstly, ‘In science we have been reading only the notes to a poem; in Christianity we find the poem itself.’¹⁰⁰ Secondly, whilst preferring to concentrate on doctrinal belief and that most pragmatic aspect of religion, ethical behaviour, to the detriment of the subject of mysticism, what he did have to say on that topic is worth recording. Denying any place to commonly held and unacceptable interpretations of the word, Lewis maintained that what mystics

seek and get is... a kind of direct experience of God, immediate as a taste or colour. There is no *reasoning* in it, but many would say that it is an experience of the intellect – the reason resting in its enjoyment of its object.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1960, p.156.

⁹⁹ K.Raine, ‘From a Poet’ in J. Gibb, ed., *op.cit.*, p.105.

¹⁰⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p.154.

¹⁰¹ W. Lewis, ed., *op.cit.*, p.231.

Once again, then, the writer has affirmed both the objective existence of the primary ontological entity (that which Huxley named ‘The Divine Ground’), as well as the innate ability of the human mind to perceive the given rational order.

‘And so they all lived happily ever after’ heralds the traditional closure to the fairy-tale, and Lewis would have had it no other way. Nevertheless, as far as actual life went – and to the author this meant also immortal life – a conditional clause, for example, ‘least-wise to you who accept the promise of heaven through Jesus Christ’ would have to be added to the long endorsed ending. Yet, whereas in apocalyptic terms Lewis, the believer, no doubt saw sublunary events in the language of *The Book of Revelations*, Lewis the poet was capable of conjuring up images begotten in the lexicon of far older and explicitly pagan conceptions. So perhaps it is fitting to farewell this lover of the poetic in these lines below. For if in the opening stanza of *Pan's Purge*, a poem published in 1947, it appears that humanity

‘Had crushed Nature finally beneath the foot of Man’ (l. 2),
the reverse occurs and so Lewis had his revenge on the technocratic society he loathed and which he long sought, logically and imaginatively, to replace. After ‘the avalanche’ and ‘the earthquake’ we read:

Towering and cloven-hoofed, the power of Pan came over us,
Stamped, bit, tore, broke. It was the end of Man;
Except where saints and savages were kept from his ravaging,
And crept out when the ravaging
Was ended, on an empty earth. The new world began.’

(Lines 24-28).¹⁰²

What follows in the wake of this gigantic purging is a far cry from the sterile scenario of twentieth century scientism and its accompanying bleak industrialism. History in the mundane world had run its course,

¹⁰² C.S. Lewis, *Poems*, Geoffrey Bless, London, 1964, pp. 5-6. Ed., and with a ‘Preface’ by W. Hooper.

'Flowered turf had swallowed up the towered cities' (l.31), and the sort of pastoral atmosphere found in Virgil and fore-grounded in the best English lyrical verse becomes the stage for, 'the young voice of Man' (Line 35) who, akin to Ransom on Malacandra and Perelandra, sets forth as a free wanderer on an untainted Earth.

To summarize, then, our findings regarding Lewis's religious position as described in the trilogy. Although having a genuine intellectual curiosity as to scientific evidence, Lewis was undoubtedly more absorbed in metaphysics than physics. He saw the cosmos as created by a living Being who in His aspect of Absolute Mind had in consequence made a world able to be rationally apprehended. However, along with a need to convince his audience, Lewis thought, too, that even those under protection are permanently threatened by 'bent' forces led by Lucifer and must rely on strong wills and definitive action as well as clear thought. He thus managed to avoid the anti-rational religious outpourings of the period and put forward a distinct, doctrinally orthodox and Christ-centred theology. Nevertheless, his is also a highly poeticised theology and whilst it rarely over-rides conventional notions the evocation of the imaginative faculty helps to extend the bounds of what is familiar.

Whereas Huxley's spirituality was a solitary affair, Lewis accepted public worship, and Ransom's quest is undertaken in the company of committed like-minds. Lastly, following in Plato's footsteps, there is a feeling in Lewis's texts that whatever happens on Earth merely shadows events in a higher realm, and that the temporal matters little as against the attraction of the eternal.

To return from Malacandra or Perelandra is to come back to the everyday objects and affections of Earth with a fresh sense of wonder and a renewed innocence. Lewis had an additional purpose. J.S. Ryan, much earlier, quoted words by Lewis on

Macdonald, and which he claimed can equally refer to Tolkien's achievement. He said 'all romantics are vividly aware of mutability but most of them are content to bewail it,' adding that the foremost amongst them 'discover what it was made for.'¹⁰³ Lewis, whose outlook might be encapsulated in the phrase 'eternal values,' was himself one of this latter sort of literary romantic.

¹⁰³ J.S. Ryan, on p.118 of his 'Folktale, Fairy Tale and the Creation of a Story,' *Understanding The Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism*, ed. R.A. Zimbardo and N.D. Isaacs, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 2004.