

REALITY, TRUTH AND PERSPECTIVE IN THE FICTION OF C.S. LEWIS

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Abstract

This dissertation is a critical examination of the fictional works of C.S. Lewis, focussing upon the concepts of reality, truth and perspective as they are expressed in the fiction. The discussion follows the narrative of each work in turn, thus orienting the reader by means of the works themselves, rather than by means of rubrics concerning their subjects or themes. The intent is to follow Lewis's precept, that the good reader should attend to any work of literature as something made as well as something said. The introduction surveys the development of Lewis's thought on the nature of reality and truth, and of the role of the imagination and the reason in apprehending these things. Evidence from Lewis's letters (including unpublished letters), essays, apologetics, addresses and autobiography is considered. A survey of the major criticism of Lewis's fiction is included in the introduction. A chapter of analytical discussion is then devoted to each of the books of the Ransom trilogy, to the Chronicles of Narnia as a series, and to Till We Have Faces.

Lewis came to believe in the existence of an ultimate, central Reality in the person of God, in whom all lesser realities focus, and from whom they depend. He believed also in man's ability to perceive truth -- valid assertions concerning these realities -- through the exercise of the reason, and adherence to the moral law. Mythopoeic and symbolic literature had, in Lewis's estimation, the

unique ability to convey reality whole into the mind of the receptive reader. The concentration of this kind of literature upon unusual and unexpected subjects, he believed, could serve to correct the reader's perspective upon reality, by furnishing the imagination with those materials which the implicit materialism and naturalism of much of modern "realistic" literature might have kept from the reader's consideration. Lewis's own fantasies -- a science-fiction trilogy, seven fairy-tales, and a novel based on the old myth of Cupid and Psyche -- are unified by their pre-occupation with the importance of an undistorted perspective upon reality, the possibility of perceiving truth, and of distinguishing truth from error, of the dependence of all reality upon an ultimate, central Reality, and of the possibility of knowing that Reality by entering into a personal relationship with God.

To my mother, my father and my wife, for their manifold support through the course of this project, I owe much more than could properly be expressed here. This is dedicated to them, with my love.

For Grace, Cliff and Karey Loney.

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Contents

Introduction	1
I. <u>Out of the Silent Planet</u>	23
II. <u>Perelandra</u>	58
III. <u>That Hideous Strength</u>	95
IV. The Chronicles of Narnia	138
V. <u>Till We Have Faces</u>	204
Conclusion	256
Bibliography	261

INTRODUCTION

In a letter to the Milton Society of America, C.S. Lewis wrote this about himself and his works:

The list of books which I send . . . will I fear strike you as a very mixed bag . . . (but) there is a guiding thread. The imaginative man in me is older, more continuously operative, and in that sense more basic than either the religious writer or the critic. It was he who made me first attempt (with little success) to be a poet. It was he who, in response to the poetry of others, made me a critic, and, in defence of that response, sometimes a critical controversialist. It was he who after my conversion led me to embody my religious belief in symbolical or mythopeic forms, ranging from Screwtape to a kind of theologised science-fiction. And it was of course he who has brought me in the last few years, to write the series of Narnian stories for children.¹

This "imaginative man" in Lewis caused him to turn to science-fiction, fairy tale and mythic novel for the expression of what he had come to see as very truth: the orthodox Christian account of the nature of God and the created universe, the nature of man, his relationship to God and his place within that universe.

Three major aspects of his Christian world view dominate Lewis's fiction. The first is that there is objective reality in the universe which can be known (if imperfectly) by man, and that all such reality depends upon the fundamental Reality of the person

¹An undated letter (probably early 1955) in Letters of C.S. Lewis, p. 260; ellipses in the original.

of God, who is "basic Fact or Actuality, the source of all other Facthood."² The second is that there is objective truth (that is to say, a valid knowledge of reality) which can be discovered by the operation of reason and by the acceptance of the universal moral law (the Tao). Reason and the Tao are true in that they correspond with fundamental reality: they reflect the very character of God. Lewis's third great theme is that a man's perspective dictates his experience of reality, the operation of his reason, and his response to the Tao, and so is of crucial importance in the matter of establishing his relationship to the central Reality, the person of God. Thus the traditional subject of fiction -- how an individual perceives both the world and his own experiences -- is for Lewis a central philosophical and religious issue.

Lewis's works of fiction were all written after his conversion to Christianity in 1931.³ During the 1920's, he had engaged in a protracted philosophical wrangle with his friend Owen Barfield -- "an almost incessant disputation, sometimes by letter and sometimes face to face, which lasted for years,"⁴ on such topics as the nature and function of human reason, the imagination, knowledge and truth.⁵ Although during these "Great War" debates,

²Miracles, p. 95.

³See Chapter IV of C.S. Lewis: A Biography for an account of Lewis's conversion.

⁴Surprised by Joy, pp. 166-167.

⁵The volumes of correspondence which passed between Lewis and Barfield have been well summarized and subjected to exegesis by Lionel Adey, in his monograph, C.S. Lewis's "Great War" with Owen Barfield.

Lewis maintained the highest of the modes of spiritual life to be imagination, "the activity of discerning as Spirit," he denied (what Barfield affirmed) that the imagination could attain truth.⁶ He also drew the firmest possible distinction between myth and fact, preferring to keep separate the life of the "spirit" (imagination) from matters of mere "fact" (that which is "true" in the common sense of demonstrably conforming to reality). A diary entry for 8 February 1927 reveals how deeply committed Lewis was to maintaining the distinction between myth and fact:

A pest on all this nonsense which has spoiled so much beauty and wonder for me, degraded pure imagination into pretentious lying and truths of the spirit into mere matters of fact, slimed everything over with the trail of its infernal mumbo-jumbo.⁷

But when Lewis became a Christian, his hierarchy of spiritual modes underwent a radical revision: he came to see that his "truths of the spirit" might also be plain "matters of fact" without suffering degradation, and without losing that "beauty and wonder" which his imagination had first taught him to love.

Lewis had hoped that the ladder of spirituality would bring him who climbed it to an immaterial and impersonal plane on which there should be no impediment to the operation of pure imagination, that experience of "longing which is also fruition," the recognition "that we are Spirit"⁸ which he elsewhere calls "Joy" or Sehnsucht.

⁶C.S. Lewis's "Great War," p. 55.

⁷C.S. Lewis: A Biography, pp. 90-91.

⁸"The Barfield-Lewis 'Great War,'" C.S. Lewis Bulletin, VI, x, 12.

But his conversion taught Lewis that Joy was not the supreme good, that "all the value lay in that of which Joy was the desiring,"⁹ which was neither state of mind nor indifferent spiritual "force," but a Person "who has purposes and performs particular actions, who does one thing and not another, a concrete, choosing, commanding, prohibiting God with a determinate character."¹⁰ Lewis comments further concerning this new understanding, "I had hoped that the heart of reality might be of such a kind that we can best symbolise it as a place; instead, I found it to be a Person."¹¹

During the "Great War" controversy with Owen Barfield, before his conversion, Lewis had maintained that there was no truth beyond "true assertions," and that the "imagination conveyed meaning, not truth."¹² Some eight years after he became a Christian, he reiterated this concept in "Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare," a study of the relationship between meaning and metaphor. In this essay, Lewis argues that "reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning." "Meaning" he defines as "the antecedent condition both of truth and falsehood, whose antithesis is not error but nonsense."¹³ How then could Lewis, who

⁹quoted by Clyde Kilby, The Christian World of C.S. Lewis, p. 19.

¹⁰Miracles, p. 85.

¹¹Surprised by Joy, p. 184.

¹²C.S. Lewis's "Great War," pp. 17, 35.

¹³Selected Literary Essays, p. 265.

had come to believe wholeheartedly in the validity of the Christian account of reality, express that fundamental conviction in admitted works of the imagination?

The answer comes in the essay "Myth Became Fact," in which Lewis studies the difficulties involved in deriving valid knowledge from experience:

Human intellect is incurably abstract Yet the only realities we experience are concrete -- this pain, this pleasure, this dog, this man. While we are loving the man, bearing the pain, enjoying the pleasure, we are not intellectually apprehending Pleasure, Pain or Personality. When we begin to do so, on the other hand, the concrete realities sink to the level of mere instances or examples: we are no longer dealing with them, but that which they exemplify. This is our dilemma -- either to taste and not to know or to know and not to taste. . . . As thinkers, we are cut off from that which we think about The more lucidly we think, the more we are cut off: the more deeply we enter into reality, the less we can think.¹⁴

Lewis suggests that it is myth which offers a partial solution to this dilemma; that by receiving myth "we come nearest to experiencing as a concrete what can otherwise only be understood as an abstraction."¹⁵ Now among all of the world's myths, that which alone has become fact is the "myth" of Christianity: the pattern of creation, incarnation, redemption, and resurrection. Lewis never referred to the person of God as "Truth," but always as fundamental fact or reality, "the reality with which no treaty can be made," "the heart of reality,"¹⁶ "basic Fact or Actuality, the source of

¹⁴God in the Dock, p. 42.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Surprised by Joy, pp. 182, 189.

of all other facthood . . . the most concrete thing there is . . . too definite for the unavoidable vagueness of language."¹⁷

Propositions or statements about God have meaning in that they are expressed in metaphor created within the imagination ("the organ of meaning"); the truth or falsehood of such propositions must be judged by the reason ("the organ of truth"). Lewis distinguishes between truth and reality by saying that "truth is always about something, but reality is that about which truth is." Thus, "what flows into you from the myth is not truth but reality . . . and, therefore, every myth becomes the father of innumerable truths on the abstract level."¹⁸ This concept is illustrated in a letter to Arthur Greeves, in which Lewis describes the new perspective upon the Christian "myth" which he adopted upon his conversion. Lewis explains that he understands the mythic pattern of Jesus' life and death on earth as "God expressing Himself through what we call 'real things.'" Out of this "myth" men derive truths, "doctrines" or statements of fact about God and His ways. But for Lewis these truths derived from the myth are at one remove from the reality, since "they are translations into our concepts and ideas of that wh. God has already expressed in a language more adequate" -- the "myth" itself.¹⁹

All that is real is, for Lewis, founded in the central reality

¹⁷Miracles, p. 95.

¹⁸"Myth Became Fact," God in the Dock, p. 43.

¹⁹They Stand Together, pp. 427-428.

of the person of God, and it is possible for man to grasp "truth," valid knowledge of that reality, by the exercise of his reason, "the organ of truth":

A mountainous country might have several maps made of it, only one of which was a true one, i.e., corresponding with the actual contours. The map drawn by Reason claims to be the true one. I couldn't get at the universe unless I could trust my reason. If we couldn't trust inference we could know nothing but our own existence. Physical reality is an inference from sensations.²⁰

Lewis believed human reason to be trustworthy because it is a reflection of divine reason. In "Answers to Questions on Christianity," he states that "we do share in God's reason," although this sharing is "imperfect and interrupted . . . because we don't think rationally for very long at a time -- it's too tiring -- and we haven't information to understand things fully, and our intelligence itself has certain limitations."²¹ Myth can circumvent the limitations of human reason in one important way: by conveying reality whole into the mind and heart of the receptive reader. But when human reason does function, it can infer truth -- true propositions concerning reality -- from experience, because reason is itself an aspect of reality.²²

²⁰"Bulverism," Undeceptions, p. 228.

²¹Undeceptions, p. 28.

²²Another of the means toward apprehending truth which Lewis acknowledges is authority: "Authority, reason, experience; on these three . . . all our knowledge depends." ("Religion: Reality or Substitute?" in Christian Reflections, p. 60). But authority is for Lewis really vicarious experience, and reason must judge its veracity: in The Discarded Image he implies that it is a fault of the medieval authors he studies that "they find it hard to believe that anything an old auctour has said is simply untrue." (p. 28)

Lewis accepted another source of truth apart from human reason, another aspect of reality which indeed is impenetrable to human reason, and must be accepted as the premise of reasonable conduct. In The Abolition of Man, he describes what he calls the Tao (a transliteration of the Chinese for "the Way," chosen by Lewis to show the pervasiveness of this code), the universal moral law which helps man to judge between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, sense and nonsense. The precepts of the Tao are, he argues, "really true . . . to the kind of thing the universe is and the kind of thing we are."²³ Because The Abolition of Man is addressed to educators and parents who might be tempted to undervalue its criticism of moral relativism if it were seen to be written from an exclusively Christian point of view, Lewis takes some pains to demonstrate that the precepts he advocates are those common to all of the world's great philosophical systems -- Christianity being, in this sense, but one among many. He suggests that the rightness and pervasiveness of the moral law may be tokens of its supernatural origin, but adds that it is not part of The Abolition's mandate to explore further along that avenue.

We have seen, however, that Lewis discovered the "central reality" of the universe to be the person of God. And in another explanation of the nature of the universal moral law -- the first book of Mere Christianity, entitled "Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe" -- Lewis is explicit in showing that

²³The Abolition of Man, p. 21.

the Tao is true because it is an image of its author, an expression of God's own character. Again, in a letter to Dr. Clyde Kilby, Lewis wrote: "If I had any hesitation in saying that God 'made' the Tao, it would only be because that might suggest that it was an arbitrary creation (sic volo sic jubeo), whereas I believe it to be the necessary expression, in terms of temporal existence, of what God by His own righteous nature necessarily is."²⁴ Thus the precepts of the Tao are true aspects of the unknowable reality of God, which can themselves be known both cognitively and experientially.

Works of mythopoeic and symbolic literature are capable of giving correction to the reader's perspective upon the world, because in them, images of reality are conveyed in modes which do not arouse the defences of preconception and prejudgement. Lewis's own way of viewing reality had been very significantly re-ordered in the course of his "Great War" disputations with Barfield, who convinced Lewis to discard "'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."²⁵ It was his release from this blinkered perspective which enabled Lewis to apply his reason to the "authority" of men of other times who claimed to know the reality of God. "Chronological snobbery" is only one example of those preconceptions which can so distort (by limiting arbitrarily) one's view of reality that one might never

²⁴The Christian World of C.S. Lewis, p. 190.

²⁵Surprised by Joy, p. 167.

meet with that which claims to be reality's centre:

Whatever experiences we may have, we shall not regard them as miraculous if we already hold a philosophy which excludes the supernatural. Any event which is claimed as a miracle is, in the last resort, an experience received from the senses; and the senses are not infallible. We can always say we have been the victims of an illusion; if we disbelieve in the supernatural this is what we always shall say. . . . Experience proves this, or that, or nothing, according to the pre-conceptions we bring to it.²⁶

Sight is useless to the seer unless it operates within a legitimate perspective:

One who contended that a poem was nothing but black marks on white paper would be unanswerable if he addressed an audience who couldn't read. Look at it through microscopes, analyse the printer's ink and the paper, study it (in that way) as long as you like; you will never find something over and above all the products of analysis whereof you can say "This is the poem". Those who can read, however, will continue to say the poem exists. . . . What is required . . . is not merely knowledge but a certain insight; getting the focus right.²⁷

This matter of perspective, of "getting the focus right," is of fundamental importance to an understanding of what Lewis was about in his fiction. He wrote science-fiction, fairy-tales and a mythic novel, all of which convey myths, and come under his general definition of fantasy: "any narrative that deals with impossibles and preternaturals."²⁸ Lewis's design in writing these fantasies was, in part, to give his reader just that sort of material which the modern materialistic and naturalistic perspective has kept from

²⁶"Miracles," Undeceptions, pp. 5,6.

²⁷"Meditation in a Toolshed," Undeceptions, p. 98.

²⁸An Experiment in Criticism, p. 50.

him, upon which to exercise his reason and his imagination:

Popularized science, the conventions or "unconventions" of his immediate circles, party programmes, etc., enclose him in a tiny windowless universe which he mistakes for the only possible universe. There are no distant horizons, no mysteries. He thinks everything has been settled.²⁹

Lewis was an author quite consciously out of step with other authors of his own time. In his inaugural address at Cambridge, "De Descriptione Temporum," he described himself as one of the last living specimens of "Old Western Man," and a "dinosaur."³⁰

More whimsically, in a letter acknowledging the offer of membership in the Walnut Creek, California "Society for the Prevention of Progress," Lewis wrote:

While feeling that I was born a member of your Society, I am nevertheless honoured to receive the outward seal of membership. I shall hope by continued orthodoxy and the unremitting practice of Reaction, Obstruction, and Stagnation to give you no reason for repenting your favour.³¹

The justification for Lewis's deliberate anti-modern stance in his fiction is perhaps best inferred from these comments from his preface to The Great Divorce:

I do not think that all who choose wrong roads perish; but their rescue consists in being put back on the right road. A wrong sum can be put right: but only by going back till you find the error and working it afresh from that point, never by simply going on.³²

²⁹"Christianity and Literature," Christian Reflections, p. 41.

³⁰"De Descriptione Temporum," They Asked for a Paper, p. 25.

³¹Letters of C.S. Lewis, p. 204.

³²pp. 7-8.

Lewis earnestly believed that much of modern thought and writing had indeed "taken the wrong road," and so took it upon himself to persuade his own readers to retrace their steps with him. His fiction offers an image of reality very different from the "tiny windowless universe" of modern assumption, an image more like that which he describes in A Preface to Paradise Lost, as "packed and tingling with . . . life."³³ In a note to Owen Barfield in 1945, Lewis wrote that "one of the main points about any experience is that it shows experiences of that sort to be possible, e.g. the real trouble of meeting a ghost wd. be that you'd then know you might meet another."³⁴ C.S. Lewis's fiction fills the reader's imagination with such "ghosts," preparing him to acknowledge in fact what has been entertained in the reading of the fiction. Truth is a response ordinate to the whole of reality, and not merely to that part which we have perceived hitherto to be real: "the world which we mistake for reality is the flat outline of that which elsewhere veritably is in all the round of its unimaginable dimensions."³⁵

Lewis never asks his reader to assent to the literal truth of his images of possible worlds; indeed, he argues that, since "no

³³p. 75.

³⁴An unpublished letter (dated 23-7-45) #107 in the Marion E. Wade Collection, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; it is Lewis's reply to a note from Barfield (dated 16 July 1945) on "Barfield and Barfield" stationery. Lewis's reply is scribbled across the face of Barfield's note.

³⁵The Allegory of Love, p. 45.

one can deceive you unless he makes you think he is telling the truth . . . admitted fantasy is precisely the kind of literature which never deceives at all. Children are not deceived by fairy-tales . . . adults are not deceived by science-fiction."³⁶ As in his apologetics he took scrupulous care to warn his reader against attempting to believe as very truth those images of divine reality which he offered there, so Lewis presents his fictional worlds principally for the sake of sharing a perspective upon those truths and that reality which exist independent of any thought or image of them. He advised that the good reader's concern should be not so much to alter his own opinion as to enter fully "into the opinions, and therefore also the attitudes, feelings and total experience of other men."³⁷ The author, in turn, "should never conceive himself as bringing into existence beauty or wisdom which did not exist before, but simply and solely as trying to embody in terms of his own art some reflection of eternal Beauty and Wisdom."³⁸ Lewis believed absolutely in the existence of Reality in the person of God, in lesser realities dependent on the greater, and in the existence of certain truth -- true formulations concerning aspects of reality. His life's business was admittedly to help others in the Way which he had discovered to be true, but in his fiction he was content to share a perspective which might enable his reader to

³⁶An Experiment in Criticism, pp. 67-68.

³⁷Ibid., p. 85.

³⁸"Christianity and Literature," Christian Reflections, p. 22.

see for himself those things which Lewis saw. He was content that by sharing this point of view upon reality and truth he might raise the notion within his reader's mind and heart that such things might be possible at least: "a 'Perhaps,'" says Lewis, "is quite enough for the nerves to work upon."³⁹

William Empson has written that man's visions of Truth and Beauty, in fact all of man's "large dreams," are mere shams, images "magic lanterned on the smoke of hell,"⁴⁰ and certainly Empson represents in this a popular modern perspective upon the place of man in a universe which seems to be, at best, merely indifferent to man. But Lewis reminds us in his fantasies that the "smoke" too may have been "magic-lanterned." If we could look for a moment beyond these local assumptions, we might discover what the universe truly is. If we could, for a time, step through the wardrobe door, and adopt again the perspective of a child, we might learn that some things of value and beauty which we had thought lost with childhood itself wait for us yet -- still true, still full of meaning. If we could remove those veils which distort our perspectives and hide our selves from ourselves, we might discover that the heart of reality is indeed a Person who seeks to meet us "face to face."

The first work of literary criticism to address seriously Lewis's themes and accomplishments in fiction was Clyde Kilby's The Christian World of C.S. Lewis (1964). Although it does not have the attention to detail of some criticism which has followed it,

³⁹Surprised by Joy, p. 142. ⁴⁰"This Last Pain," Collected Poems, p. 32.

Kilby's work remains a very valuable introduction to the study of Lewis's fiction; the discussion of Till We Have Faces, illumined by letters from Lewis in response to Dr. Kilby's queries concerning the novel's themes, is particularly good.

The most useful single volume of criticism on Lewis's achievement in fiction is a Festschrift published in 1977, entitled The Longing for a Form: Studies in the Fiction of C.S. Lewis, edited by Peter Schakel. Two of the collection's essays on Lewis's practice of the art of fiction in general are Scott Oury's "'The Thing Itself': C.S. Lewis and the Value of Something Other," and Janice Neulieb's "The Creative Act: Lewis on God and Art." Oury's article concentrates on Lewis's mythopoeic imagination, and its product, the "imaginative shape" in the works of fiction. The article's title comes from what Oury describes as Lewis's love of, and insistence upon our attention to, objective reality in the created universe. While the expression of this theme in mythical terms within the fiction is touted as Lewis's great achievement, Oury criticises Lewis's tendency to express the same thing in a didactic or pedantic manner, which when indulged produces serious flaws in the fiction. Mrs. Neulieb's essay is a valuable examination of Lewis's treatment of the subject of the will of God, and ingeniously demonstrates that the form of fiction can itself illustrate the complementary truths of a divine plan and mortal freewill in the particulars of that plan:

The reader, having finished the novel, looks at the whole and says it must have been so, but the character within the frame of the picture sees choice and freedom. The advantage of a good creative work is that one may reread it; a second reading provides the opportunity to experience

both the controlled whole and the chosen moment. A second reading offers one a chance to experience time as the Divine nature might, viewing the entire panorama as one grand scene.⁴¹

The criticism of Lewis's science-fiction trilogy which has been included in The Longing for a Form is not particularly noteworthy. Of the four essays offered, only Margaret Hannay's "A Preface to Perelandra" offers significant critical insight: it examines Lewis's treatments of the story of Eden in his criticism of Milton (A Preface to Paradise Lost) and in his own fiction (Perelandra). The offerings on the Chronicles of Narnia are better; of the four essays, two -- Charles Huttar's "C.S. Lewis's Narnia and the 'Grand Design,'" and Eliane Tixier's "Imagination Baptized, or 'Holiness' in the Chronicles of Narnia" -- are very good. Huttar's essay establishes its commentary upon the concept that the Chronicles take their form from the pattern of the Bible as a whole work of literature, and Eliane Tixier's paper is a fresh examination of the devotional dimension of the stories. Miss Tixier provides the most cogent gloss which I have seen on the idea that Lewis's stories for children serve as praeparatio evangelica.

It does not matter that we do not actually believe in giants or in fauns dancing on lawns, for our readiness to conceive these things while the tale lasts makes us capable of conceiving other things, nearer to truth and more lasting than the story we are reading, things which may have been stumbling blocks in our real world, where we tend to push aside what is not immediately evident or verifiable through our senses.⁴²

⁴¹The Longing for a Form, p. 121.

⁴²Ibid., p. 148.

The Festschrift's three essays on Till We Have Faces each examine one aspect of Lewis's last great work of fiction. Clyde Kilby's "Till We Have Faces: An Interpretation" performs what Kilby's work has always done best for students of Lewis: it provides a scholarly examination of the principles of Christian faith embodied in or suggested by the details of the fiction. Steve Van Der Weele's "From Mt. Olympus to Glome: C.S. Lewis's Dislocation of Apuleius's 'Cupid and Psyche' in Till We Have Faces" complements Dr. Kilby's work by demonstrating how Lewis has altered Apuleius's version of the old story to better convey his own (Christian) themes. And Joe Christopher's "Archetypal Patterns in Till We Have Faces" notes some echoes of the Bible and Dante in Lewis's novel.

Chad Walsh's The Literary Legacy of C.S. Lewis (1979) is a critical overview of most of Lewis's creative writing, including the poetry, The Pilgrim's Regress, The Screwtape Letters, The Great Divorce, the fiction, and some of the apologetic works, and follows on Walsh's pioneering C.S. Lewis: Apostle to the Skeptics (1948). The Literary Legacy's focus is upon Lewis as literary craftsman rather than mere apologist. Because Walsh had of course not written on Narnia or Till We Have Faces in his earlier work, these books command much of his attention in The Literary Legacy. Although less than a third of the book is devoted to criticism of the fiction, Walsh's commentary on Lewis's thematic intentions, and his critical judgement on Lewis's literary achievements, are helpful, particularly in the chapter on the Narnian stories. Walsh very rightly concentrates upon the figure of Aslan as that which "infuses

[the Chronicles of Narnia] with the spirit of great myth."⁴³

Thomas Howard's The Achievement of C.S. Lewis (1980) is really neither discussion nor critical commentary, but an eloquent meditation upon Lewis's works of fiction. Howard very rightly concentrates upon the otherness of things which Lewis brings before his readers in his effort to convince them that their own view of reality has been shaped by the philosophy of a period and place. The facts that our particular period is the twentieth century, and our place the modern western culture, do not of themselves lend our point of view any particular authority: so Howard interprets Lewis's argument. There have been other ways of seeing, and some of them have been more accurate than our own.

Evan Gibson's C.S. Lewis: Spinner of Tales (1980) is, as the subtitle suggests, "A Guide to [Lewis's] Fiction" which is intended not for scholars, but for "the ordinary reader who feels an enthusiasm for Lewis's tales and would like to understand more clearly their ethical and theological implications."⁴⁴ Gibson's discussion of the fiction is illustrated with complementary passages from Lewis's biography, autobiography and apologetics. He concentrates on the warmth of Lewis's own voice, which seems to resonate through all of his works of fiction, the voice of the amiable raconteur: "this speaking voice is the warp of the narrative fabric, the background thread which makes a single

⁴³The Literary Legacy, p. 137.

⁴⁴p. vii of the Preface.

tapestry of the varying texture of bright islands and gray cities, of dancing dryads and bloody offerings to the Shadowbrute."⁴⁵

C.S. Lewis: The Art of Enchantment (1981), by Donald Glover, is a full length study of the fiction which begins with a review of Lewis's critical precepts as they have been expressed in his letters and in formal works of literary criticism. Glover's focus is upon Lewis's craftsmanship, his skill in arranging the marriage of form and content. Thus Glover's highest praise is reserved for those works of fiction (such as That Hideous Strength and the Narnia series) in which, by his judgement, "the style unites organically with the meaning to sanctify that meaning";⁴⁶ he censures those works (such as Perelandra) in which he feels that "the imaginative matrix . . . shrinks to a subordinate position to become mere allegorical embellishment for the theological theme."⁴⁷ Much of Dr. G's disapproval of individual works can be traced to his personal concept of the appropriate pacing of the action for a work of fiction: the science fiction works and children's stories often come in for the criticism that the climax of action is not concurrent with the thematic climax, or that either of these is not concurrent with the "spiritual" climax.

Robert Houston Smith's Patches of Godlight: The Pattern of Thought of C.S. Lewis (1981) is an examination of Lewis's

⁴⁵Spinner of Tales, p. 260.

⁴⁶The Art of Enchantment, p. 208.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 100.

"Christian Objectivism" and its debt to Platonic thought, which Smith feels to be the philosophical foundation of Lewis's writings, at the core of which is "the conviction that everything in the universe is a manifestation of a single reality . . . [which reality is] good, timeless, immutable and incomparably magnificent."⁴⁸ While Smith's study of Lewis's thought is organized according to subjects such as "Reality and God," "The Self," he does illustrate his analysis of Lewis's philosophy with numerous passages from the fiction, and provides an excellent index, so that this book is of significant interest to those who wish to understand Lewis's fictional achievement in the context of his own philosophy.

The first full-length work of criticism of the Chronicles of Narnia (and still the best single work) is Kathryn Lindskoog's The Lion of Judah in Never-Never Land (1973), which concentrates on Lewis's orthodox concepts of Nature, God and Man, as they are conveyed through the tales for children. A companion piece to Mrs. Lindskoog's book is Walter Hooper's Past Watchful Dragons (1979), which collects much of what Father Hooper (who was for a time Lewis's personal secretary) has written concerning the Chronicles of Narnia. Hooper provides a valuable account of how the Narnian stories came to be written, and discusses Lewis's intention to assert his view of reality through the medium of the fairy tale. Hooper also comments on the thematic elements of each tale, and employs his rich acquaintance with Lewis's canon to show the

⁴⁸Patches of Godlight, pp. 1-2.

relationship of some of the Narnian themes to other works by Lewis.

A survey of the criticism available to students of Lewis's fiction -- even so brief a survey as this -- demonstrates that there is a preponderance of that kind of analysis which seeks to illumine the precepts of Lewis's Christian faith which are latent in his fiction, and so to demonstrate the essential unity of vision of the apologist who was also a storyteller. It is perhaps because the Chronicles of Narnia are so very ripe for this sort of reading that they have received a disproportionate amount of critical attention. This type of analysis often seeks to be encyclopaedic, so as to show the pervasiveness of Christian themes throughout the Lewis canon; to consider with the fiction the letters, the apologetics, the criticism, and those works which (like The Great Divorce and The Screwtape Letters) have the popular appeal of Lewis's novels, but which are perhaps more properly considered as part of the apologetics.

In his advice to "good readers" of literature in An Experiment in Criticism, Lewis has included a warning against treating works of the imagination as if they were mere statements of philosophy:

What guards the good reader from treating a tragedy . . . as a mere vehicle for truth is his continual awareness that it not only means, but is. It is not merely logos (something said) but poiema (something made). The same is true of a novel or a narrative poem. They are complex and carefully made objects. Attention to the very objects they are is our first step.⁴⁹

⁴⁹p. 82.

The present analysis of Lewis's fiction concentrates upon what I take to be Lewis's central themes: reality, truth and perspective -- and these are philosophical themes. It may thus seem that I leave myself open to Lewis's own charge, of treating his works of the imagination as if they were merely so many "vehicles for truth." But I have sought to attend to poiema as well as logos, by making this discussion conform to the narrative shape of each tale in turn, rather than by arranging the commentary according to rubrics of subject, theme or technique. The design of this discussion is thus intended to be in itself a reminder that the real object under consideration is that body of literature discussed, and not the discussion. The concentration is upon Lewis's ideas of reality, truth and perspective as he has expressed them in these works of the imagination, because I consider these ideas to be fundamental to Lewis's own purpose, at the heart of what the fiction is, as well as what it says. The first three chapters examine the science-fiction trilogy, showing how Ransom's interplanetary adventures effect a re-ordering of his perspective upon the created reality of the universe, tearing down some of the preconceptions which had cluttered his mind, and so preparing for the entrance of new truth. The discussion of the trilogy demonstrates also the thematic centrality of Ransom's personal relationship with Maleldil as it develops through the course of the trilogy. The fourth chapter is devoted to a consideration of each of the Chronicles of Narnia in turn, demonstrating that it is Lewis's concentration upon Aslan as the centre of reality in the Narnian world, and

upon the perspective which it is necessary to adopt in order to have valid knowledge of the Lion and his creation, which lends unity to this group of tales of such diverse character. And the fifth chapter is a critical discussion of the story of Orual's long struggle to deny the truth available to her, of the end of that struggle, in which she endures a painful and radical re-ordering of her perspective upon reality, and of the final exultant moment of her union with the Person of reality, whom she had so long hated, and whose love she had so long denied.

I

OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET

Dr. Elwin Ransom, the protagonist of Lewis's space trilogy, is introduced in the first pages of Out of the Silent Planet as a man who sets fortitude against reluctance, whose habitual attitude is to endure rather than to enjoy. When he is quite unreasonably refused shelter at one inn, he stoically shoulders his burden and makes for the next, "with the determined stride of a good walker who has lately realized that he will have to walk farther than he intended." (p. 7) Ransom is stopped on his way by a distraught woman who mistakes him for her son, Harry. She is worried because her boy, who is "a little simple," is late getting home. He learns also that "The Rise," the house in which Harry is employed as a menial, is occupied by two men to whom the woman refers as "the Professor and the gentleman from London." (p. 8) These two bits of information elicit from Ransom two responses which counsel the same action: his duty is best served by calling at the Rise to have Harry sent home to his worried mother; his comfort may best be served by doing the same, for it is his hope that "the Professor" at least might feel the social duty to provide a colleague with shelter.

Once at the Rise, however, Ransom's enthusiasm is dampened by a dark and cheerless house, a locked gate and a thick

and thorny hedge:

His first inclination, tired as he felt, was to continue his journey to Sterk: but he had committed himself to a troublesome duty on behalf of the old woman. He knew that it would be possible, if one really wanted, to force a way through the hedge. He did not want to. . . . He became very angry with the woman, and with himself, but he got down on his hands and knees and began to worm his way into the hedge.

(pp. 10-11)

Ransom mutters to himself that his promise to Harry's mother had been foolishly given and is likely to give more than reasonable trouble to himself; but when he hears the two men struggling with the boy among the outbuildings of the Rise, the voice of duty in him proves once again to be stronger than the timid voice of reluctance:

The last thing Ransom wanted was an adventure, but a conviction that he ought to investigate the matter was already growing upon him when a much louder cry rang out in which he could distinguish the words, "Let me go," and then, a second later, "I'm not going in there. Let me go home."

Throwing off his pack, Ransom sprang down the steps of the porch, and ran round to the back of the house as quickly as his stiff and footsore condition allowed him.

(p. 12)

In short, the Ransom whom we meet in the first chapter of Out of the Silent Planet is that very familiar creature in whom the will to do good is quite often at odds with the will for personal comfort and safety. He is to become a pilgrim of the solar system against his own firm inclination, and it is the forced journey he undertakes which is to goad his spirit from its accustomed timidity and irresolution to that boldness of will and action which springs from a sure perspective upon reality.

The unresolved, contrary impulses which occupy Ransom in

the first chapter of the novel are echoed in the physical details of the second, in which he is first drugged by Devine and Weston, and then subdued by force to become their prisoner. It is the mixture of disparate emotional elements in the room where Ransom is first "entertained" which is so unsettling to him, and this unsettling atmosphere is communicated through him to the reader. The "strange mixture of luxury and squalor" in which "cigars, oyster-shells and empty champagne-bottles jostled with tins of condensed milk and opened sardine-tins, with cheap crockery, broken bread, and teacups a quarter full of tea and cigarette-ends" (p. 15) cannot easily be accommodated by the ordering faculty within us: no perspective upon the scene is adequate to resolve it into one or the other definite impression, and Ransom's response to the situation lacks resolution accordingly. While Devine (an acquaintance from undergraduate days whom he had never liked nor trusted, and whom he has lately discovered in at least one blatant lie) pumps him for information concerning the likelihood of Ransom's being missed by family or employer, Ransom's only thought is bent upon the still unopened bottle of whisky cradled in Devine's hands; because of Ransom's preoccupation Devine is able to drug the man's drink, on the pretext of providing the water with which to mix the spirits.

What follows the drugging is an interesting portrayal of Ransom's emotional landscape. After the fact, Ransom himself tells the reader (through the narrator) that the vision which he had while in the grip of the narcotic might have been "merely an

irresponsible dream." (p. 20) But it is certain that at the level of the novel's composition, the dream is, while (as most dreams) surrealistic in its progression, anything but irresponsible:

It seemed to him that he and Weston and Devine were all standing in a little garden surrounded by a wall. The garden was bright and sunlit, but over the top of the wall you could see nothing but darkness. They were trying to climb over the wall and Weston asked them to give him a hoist up. Ransom kept on telling him not to go over the wall because it was so dark on the other side, but Weston insisted, and all three of them set about doing so. Ransom was the last. He got astride on the top of the wall, sitting on his coat because of the broken bottles. The other two had already dropped down on the outside into the darkness, but before he followed them a door in the wall -- which none of them had noticed -- was opened from without and the queerest people he had ever seen came into the garden bringing Weston and Devine back with them. They left them in the garden and retired into the darkness themselves, locking the door behind them. Ransom found it impossible to get down from the wall. He remained sitting there, not frightened but rather uncomfortable because his right leg, which was on the outside, felt so dark and his left leg felt so light.

(pp. 20-21)

Some of the details of this vision anticipate major themes which are to be developed in this novel and in the two others which follow. Weston's determination to "get over the wall," to reach beyond the boundaries of the Earth in the quest of eternal existence for Man, is obvious. Ransom's own inability to descend from the wall speaks first of his habitual vacillation, at root of which is his fear of the "dark," that unknown void beyond the atmosphere. It is later in the story, when he has been for a time on Malacandra, that Ransom discovers the "sunlight" of reason and of beauty to shine elsewhere in the universe; that it is not restricted to shining merely on Earth's little "garden." It is on Malacandra also that Ransom learns of a "door in the wall" of

Earth which has long been shut in the siege of the Silent Planet, but which may once again suffer the passage of celestial travellers. Ransom is to learn too of extra-terrestrial races which may be indeed "the queerest people he [has] ever seen," but which nonetheless are indisputably rational -- hnau is the word he will learn for them -- and they will certainly cause Weston and Devine to be brought again within the moon's pale, which is the spiritual and military boundary between Earth and the heavens in Lewis's "silent planet" myth. Even Ransom's sensation of darkness on one side of him and intense light on the other is fulfilled in the voyage to Malacandra -- with the celestial "noon" continually blessing the sunward side of the ship, and the dazzling midnight of heaven dominating the other -- and is ultimately fulfilled when the piebald Ransom is later called to another duty on the planet Perelandra. But more than this, Ransom's inability to come down from the wall between "void" and garden is an anticipation of the new perspective upon the real nature of the universe which Ransom is to achieve by means of his voyage beyond the silent planet -- Ransom sees from the wall what beccmes of Weston and Devine at the hands of the "queer people" of the dream, and goes on seeing reality on both sides of the "wall" of Earth's imposed boundary, even after Weston and Devine have been "locked in" on the garden side once more.

When his last desperate attempt at escape is thwarted, Ransom is bundled senseless into the spaceship and left in his own chamber to recover consciousness. Upon awaking from the stupor

in which Weston's blow to the head had left him, Ransom takes in the details of the strange vessel in which he has been forced to travel. The outlandish nature of the ship's construction, the persistent random tapping of particles against the outer walls of his prison, the marvellous clarity of the stars, "pulsing with brightness as with some unbearable pain or pleasure," and most of all the shining globe which grows moment by moment from the corner of his skylight to fill it almost completely, work upon Ransom's psyche to induce in him again his old sensation of poised opposites within himself, but opposites of now immense mass and energy:

Ransom was by now thoroughly frightened -- not with the prosaic fright that a man suffers in a war, but with a heady, bounding kind of fear that was hardly distinguishable from his general excitement: he was poised on a sort of emotional watershed from which, he felt, he might at any moment pass into delirious terror or into an ecstasy of joy.

(p. 26)

Ransom begins to acknowledge within himself that the "moon" which continues to grow across the skylight, flooding his chamber with more and more of its light, cannot in fact be a moon at all: "No moon could really be that size; and he realized now that he had known this from the first but had repressed the knowledge through terror." (p. 23) Just as (at the Rise) the edge of Ransom's legitimate mistrust of Devine had been blunted by his disorientation and fear, so now he discovers his own terror to be an enemy to understanding: "He did not even know what he was afraid of: the fear itself possessed his whole mind, a formless, infinite misgiving." (p. 27) Once Weston makes him understand that

he is in fact even now far beyond Earth and hurtling toward another planet, Ransom's incapacitating fear slackens. The agony of indecision has been put by, and Ransom's fortitude begins to assert itself as it had done when he recognised that the throwing of his pack over the gate at the Rise had irrevocably committed him to a definite action.

Once Ransom manages to reassert some control over his own emotional and visceral responses to an admittedly unenviable situation, he challenges Weston to give a reason for his kidnapping and transport, and Weston responds with a short statement of his own perspective upon life. Weston had earlier revealed his contempt for the simple Harry, whom he considered "Incapable of serving humanity . . . the sort of boy who in a civilised community would be automatically handed over to a state laboratory for experimental purposes." (pp. 21-22) Here, in debate with Ransom, Weston expands upon that concept of human progress suggested by his earlier chilling use of the term "civilised":

"We have learned how to jump off the speck of matter on which our species began; 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."
(pp. 29-30)

Ransom's contrary opinions are stated briefly, but Lewis does not much dwell upon them in this conversation. Instead, using Ransom's voice, Lewis deflates Weston's rhetoric by translating it into unambiguous language:

"Well," said Ransom, "you hold all the cards, and I must make the best of it. I consider your philosophy of life

raving lunacy. I suppose all that stuff about infinity and eternity means that you think you are justified in doing anything -- absolutely anything -- here and now, on the off chance that some creature or other descended from man as we know him may crawl about a few centuries longer in some part of the universe."

(p. 30)

This debate between the fictional characters introduces explicitly some of the themes of Lewis's own intellectual experience. In a letter to Dom Bede Briffiths, Lewis has described a conversation with an "intelligent infidel"

[who] said that he pinned all his hopes for any significance in the universe on the chance that the human race by adapting itself to changed conditions and first planet jumping, then star jumping, finally nebula jumping, could really last forever and subject matter wholly to mind.¹

And in Surprised by Joy, Lewis records making the acquaintance of

an old, dirty, gabbling, tragic, Irish parson who had long since lost his faith but retained his living. By the time I met him his only interest was the search for evidence of "human survival." . . . What was especially shocking was that the ravenous desire for personal immortality co-existed in him with (apparently) a total indifference to all that could, on a sane view, make immortality desirable. He was not seeking the Beatific Vision and did not even believe in God. He was not hoping for more time in which to purge and improve his own personality. He was not dreaming of reunion with dead friends or lovers; I never heard him speak with affection of anybody. All he wanted was the assurance that something he could call "himself" would, on almost any terms, last longer than his bodily life. . . . And his state of mind appeared to me the most contemptible I had ever encountered.²

What makes "Westonism" so contemptible is the fact that it sets

¹Letter dated June 1937, #21-22, the Marion E. Wade Collection, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

²pp. 162-163

up a small good -- survival -- in the place of a whole ethic, and by so doing twists even that small good and renders it evil. This concept pervades all of Lewis's fiction, but is particularly dominant in this first novel of the science fiction trilogy, as we shall observe.

While Ransom is attempting to discover as much information about his new situation as is possible, he finds that his very faculties of perception seem able to expand, in order to receive the intense sensations offered them in the translunary spheres. Just as Ransom's will had "grown" to reassert his own fortitude in the face of new and extraordinary perils, so his senses now "grow" to accomodate the celestial heat and light:

Both were present in a degree which would have been intolerable on Earth, but each had a new quality. The light was paler than any light of comparable intensity that he had ever seen; it was not pure white but the palest of all imaginable golds, and it cast shadows as sharp as a floodlight. The heat, utterly free from moisture, seemed to knead and stroke the skin like a gigantic masseur: it produced no tendency to drowsiness: rather, intense alacrity. His headache was gone: he felt vigilant, courageous and magnanimous as he had seldom felt on Earth.

(p. 32)

The new emotional vigour which Ransom enjoys is of two distinct but related sources. He feels himself to be "a second Danaë . . . 'sweet influence' pouring or even stabbing into his surrendered body." (p. 35) (This sensation is accounted for in a more prosaic fashion by Weston, who attributes it to the effect of cosmic radiation unfelt on Earth.) The other source of Ransom's joy is his release from a terrible burden of fear; his former nightmare vision of the unforgiving void of "Space" is lifted away from him

when he experiences the translunary for himself:

He had read of "Space": at the back of his thinking for years had lurked the dismal fancy of the black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness, which was supposed to separate the worlds. He had not known how much it affected him till now -- now that the very name "Space" seemed a blasphemous libel for this empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam. . . . He had thought it barren: he saw now that it was the womb of worlds, whose blazing and innumerable offspring looked down nightly even upon the earth with so many eyes -- and here, with how many more!

(p. 36)

The images of "black, cold vacuity" which have filled Ransom's mind come from the kind of space fiction for which H.G. Wells is celebrated. Consider, for example, Bedford's desolate view from the moon in The First Men in the Moon:

Over me, about me, closing in on me, embracing me ever nearer, was the Eternal, that which was before the beginning and that which triumphs over the end; that enormous void in which all light and life and being is but the thin and vanishing splendour of a falling star, the cold, the stillness, the silence -- the infinite and final Night of space.

The sense of solitude and desolation became the sense of an overwhelming Presence, that stooped towards me, that almost touched me.³

Ransom's experience contests the validity of these images, for it has revealed to him a "space" which is not void, cold, still and silent, but positively full of life and light. Thus the amorphous fear which had filled Ransom's mind is displaced by a better knowledge of what the heavens really are. Ransom's perspective has had to undergo a radical change since he has found life, light and warmth -- "the heavens" -- where he had thought to find only death and darkness and unendurable cold -- "outer space."

³Chapter 18: "Mr. Bedford Alone."

Unfortunately, the first great fear is no sooner cast out by winning this truth than another fear sprouts from its shoulders.

Ransom chances to overhear Weston and Devine discussing their plans for him once they reach the planet, and it is revealed that they have fetched him along to be presented to the sorns -- which Ransom guesses to be the name of the creatures which dominate Malacandra -- presumably as a human sacrifice. Memories of the same myths of "space" which had filled him with a dread of the illimitable night beyond Earth's atmosphere now supply fantastic and horrible images for that shadowy fear which springs to his mind upon overhearing the words "sorn" and "sacrifice" in the same conversation:

He saw in imagination various incompatible monstrosities -- bulbous eyes, grinning jaws, horns, stings, mandibles. Loathing of insects, loathing of snakes, loathing of things that squashed and squelched, all played their horrible symphonies over his nerves. But the reality would be worse: it would be an extra-terrestrial Otherness -- something one had never thought of, never could have thought of. In that moment Ransom made a decision. He could face death, but not the sorns.

(p. 40)

For the remainder of his voyage to the planet of the sorns, Ransom's spirit struggles under the crushing weight of this new terror. Lewis has furnished his reader with an objective correlative of Ransom's increasingly debilitating fear, in his account of the spacecraft's entry into the Malacandrian gravity and atmosphere:

their bodies, in response to the planet that had caught them in its field, were actually gaining weight every minute and doubling in weight with every twenty-four hours. They had the experiences of a pregnant woman, but magnified almost

beyond endurance.

At the same time their sense of direction -- never very confident on the space-ship, became continuously confused. . . . all of them were afflicted with vomiting, headache and palpitations of the heart. The conditions grew worse hour by hour. Soon one could only grope and crawl from cabin to cabin. All sense of direction disappeared in a sickening confusion. . . . Sensations of intolerable height and of falling -- utterly absent in the heavens -- recurred constantly. . . . Ransom ached, licked his dry lips, nursed his bruised limbs and prayed for the end.

(p. 43)

Part of the agonies endured by the three men -- the sensations of heat, heaviness and constriction -- are caused by their entry into Malacandrian atmosphere and gravity. But the more significant problems -- vertigo and nausea -- are due to their enforced adoption of the strong Malacandrian "vertical" after a voyage of some days in which all direction had been defined by the structure of the spaceship itself. It is a token that Ransom's most difficult problem on this planet will be to establish a perspective appropriate to his surroundings, and this is indeed his first discovery on Malacandra.

Ransom finds that his senses need to be re-educated. The faculties of human perception, he discovers, are intricately interwoven with terrestrial memory, and can tell him nothing truthful concerning the Malacandrian landscapes until the elements of those landscapes are accommodated^m by the intellect and imagination, related to (terrestrial) things known already:

He gazed about him, and the very intensity of his desire to take in the new world at a glance defeated itself. He saw nothing but colours -- colours that refused to form themselves into things. Moreover, he knew nothing yet well enough to see it: you cannot see things till you know roughly what they are.

(p. 46)

After the first shock of the nervous system has subsided, Ransom makes an important discovery, and one which should teach a man of his habits of mind rather more than it does in fact:

Before anything else he learned that Malacandra was beautiful; and he even reflected how odd it was that this possibility had never entered into his speculations about it. The same peculiar twist of imagination which led him to people the universe with monsters had somehow taught him to expect nothing on a strange planet except rocky desolation or else a network of nightmare machines. He could not say why, now that he came to think of it.

(p. 47)

Ransom has now discovered that his space-fiction-schooled preconceptions concerning the nature of things beyond the earth have misled him about "space" itself and about the possible landscapes of the planets. If his reason were free to operate on this discovery, he might well begin to doubt the identification of the sorns with the images of loathsome and cruel monsters which he has met in the same kind of popular stories. But working strongly against such an inference is the overheard testimony of Devine and Weston, who, although they are untrustworthy in almost every way, have actually met the sorns, and are of the opinion that what the sorns want of them is a human sacrifice. When finally Ransom sees with his own eyes the alien giants across the water from the landed spacecraft, his concept of them is modified by a better knowledge of their physical appearance (he jettisons the Wellsian images of "insect-like, vermiculate or crustacean" horrors for "Giants -- ogres -- ghosts -- skeletons," pp. 40,53), but his preconceptions concerning their character are unchanged. Lewis is here preparing his reader, rather in advance of Ransom, for the

conquering of Ransom's next great hurdle, his coming to knowledge of the true nature of the sorns. The list of fears which now occupy Ransom's mind are quite apparently childish fears, and Lewis uses for them the word "infantile" with its full emotional charge. I think this a misjudgement in taste, but its use here is clearly calculated to warn the reader about the book's major character. Ransom at this stage of his odyssey is at best a very reluctant hero; he does not at all find the mantle of the conventional intrepid explorer of worlds to be comfortable to his shoulders. Moreover, he is too much like ourselves to be trusted implicitly in at least his early perceptions and judgements.

Alone in the forest, the flood of prosaic physical reality which surrounds Ransom -- the unequivocal sights and sounds of the Malacandrian landscape -- begin to heal his wounded mind of the hurts which its own fears have inflicted upon it. His psyche first delights in recognizing a herd of grazing animals and the mountains of the planet for what they are, organizing and accom^modating the new impressions which his organs of sense communicate to his mind. But very soon Ransom sees a sorn in the distance, and fear is once again his master. His headlong flight brings him before yet another terror:

He noted in a dry, objective way that this was apparently to be the end of his story -- caught between a sorn from the land and a big, black animal from the water. . . .

Then something happened which completely altered his state of mind. The creature, which . . . had obviously not seen him . . . opened its mouth and began to make noises. This in itself was not remarkable; but a lifetime of linguistic study assured Ransom almost at once that these were articulate noises. The creature was talking. It had a language. If you are not yourself a philologist, I am

afraid you must take on trust the prodigious emotional consequences of this realization in Ransom's mind.
(p. 61)

The information that Ransom's academic discipline is philology was first revealed by Devine, when he introduced him to Weston as "'the Ransom, you know, the great philologist.'" (p. 8) Lewis had certain practical reasons for making Ransom a philologist, and the first of these is about to be exploited in this passage, where Ransom will recognise language (and therefore reason, "the organ of truth") in a native creature of Malacandra. Philology enables him to learn the Malacandrian language very quickly and thus to find quick entrance into the planet's societies. It will later develop that it is important to Lewis's theme of exposing the unreason of "Westonism" that Ransom should have a fluency in the language superior to Weston's own, for Ransom is to translate the obscure tenets of "Westonism" into such terms as will make the meanness and unreason of the physicist's beliefs plain. And in Perelandra, Ransom finds that Maleldil is sending him to Venus because of his knowledge of the Old Solar tongue acquired on Malacandra.

Lewis never called himself a philologist; he preferred to use the term in its strictest modern sense, of one who studies the origins and nature of language. Indeed, in Surprised by Joy he writes that his acquaintance and subsequent friendship with the philologist J.R.R. Tolkien marked the end of an old prejudice: he had been warned on his arrival into Oxford's faculty of English

"never to trust a philologist."⁴ Lewis's decision to make Ransom an academic enabled him to give his protagonist a discipline of thought which might be useful in one way or another for interplanetary adventures: if reason itself submits to discipline, emotion might well submit to the discipline of the reason, and the hero might thus be able to function credibly even amidst the terrifying "otherness" of things beyond the earth. But the specific discipline of philology invokes Lewis's own concept of the relationship between words and meaning, and ultimately between meaning, truth and reality itself. In "Bluspels and Flalansferes," Lewis demonstrates (with an eye to Owen Barfield's arguments in Poetic Diction) the relentlessly metaphorical nature of all language, and concludes that the man whose words will be fullest of meaning is the one who has "at once the tenderest care for old words and the surest instinct for the creation of new metaphors" -- a poet, or, alternatively, a man like Ransom, who combines an intimate knowledge of the foundations of language with the imagination required to grasp and to invent significant metaphor, since "all our truth, or all but a few fragments, is won by metaphor."⁵ Thus the philologist Ransom is the ideal protagonist: able to mediate between a terrestrial and an extra-terrestrial system of metaphor, and so in a unique position to discover truths which both systems seek to express. Lewis's argument that there is "a kind of psycho-physical parallelism (or more) in the universe"⁶ is another theme which Ransom's vocation

⁴p. 173.

⁶Ibid.

⁵Selected Literary Essays, p. 265.

will suit him to explore, somewhat later in the narrative.

Ransom's reason, informed by his special knowledge of linguistics, wins for him the truth that the Malacandrian whom he confronts is also a rational creature; this truth tempers his fear and enables him to stand his ground. But he continues to resist the concept that a non-human creature should enjoy that which, in our world, separates man from the rest of creation. Gradually he discovers that his repugnance stems from an arbitrary terrestrial perspective:

when the rationality of the hross tempted you to think of it as a man . . . it became abominable -- a man seven feet high, with a snaky body, covered, face and all, with thick black animal hair, and whiskered like a cat. But starting from the other end you had an animal with everything an animal ought to have -- glossy coat, liquid eye, sweet breath and whitest teeth -- and added to all these, as though Paradise had never been lost and earliest dreams were true, the charm of speech and reason. Nothing could be more disgusting than the one impression; nothing more delightful than the other. It all depended on the point of view.

(p. 65)

Here again, Lewis explicitly raises the matter of perspective, which is at once "point of view" and those basic presuppositions which are (consciously or unconsciously) assumed by the one who "views." The hross whom he has met is truly rational, but whether that truth inspires disgust or delight depends upon the perspective which Ransom adopts. He discovers that his accustomed point of view is too limited, too tightly bound to familiar (terrestrial) fact, to allow his experiences of Malacandra to win truth for him there: certain aspects of his habitual perspective have been mere prejudice. These prejudices must be discarded if his reason is to operate upon

the new sorts of experience in this place with that degree of freedom which is necessary to understanding.

Once Ransom's perspective has been suitably re-ordered, he begins to learn the language and ways of the hrossa very quickly. He finds them to be more knowledgeable in matters of pure science than he is himself, and that a very high standard of moral and ethical behaviour is instinctive to them. Hyoi, the hross whom Ransom first met, explains the simple faith of his people in the providence of order depending from "Maleldil" (the Malacandrian name of God), which faith is so unshakeable that it seems to Ransom (as he reverts temporarily to a terrestrial prejudice) almost supercilious. Hyoi does not regard even the dangerous water beasts of Malacandra, the hneraki (singular, hnakra) to be evil: evil, says Hyoi, could come only from a rational creature (hnau) whose will was "bent" -- turned in defiance from the will of Maleldil. It is Maleldil Himself from whom all joy, knowledge, truth, reality itself depend in Malacandra.

The extent of Ransom's entry into the Malacandrian spirit is shown vividly when the hnakra hunt on which he has fearfully but stoically embarked with the hrossa is interrupted by an eldil (or angel⁷) whose voice Ransom can hear, although as yet he can see nothing of the messenger. The eldil's message is that Ransom is wanted by Cyarsa, the ruler of the planet, at his seat in Meldilorn. So far has Ransom come in the schooling of his fears that he objects

⁷Cf. the novel's postscript, p. 179.

to cancelling the hunt, but the hrossa with him are preparing to put him ashore for the start of his journey to Meldilorn when the hnakra comes, and the fight is thrust upon them. Together the man and the two hrossa kill the great beast, but no sooner is the thing accomplished than Hyoi is himself killed by a shot from Weston's rifle. With biting irony, Lewis describes the sound of the shot which kills Hyoi as "a terrestrial, human, and civilized sound" (p. 92) -- and leaves implicit the contrast between the great-hearted hrossian society of spear-throwing hunters of the hnakra, with the "bent" human society of rifle-wielding murderers. In an agony of guilt for bringing death upon Hyoi by his presence, Ransom confesses to the hross that men are "'only half hnau.'" This comment is the index of Ransom's assumption of Malacandrian perspective: his own race is now judged by him to be less rational by half than the hrossa whose own rationality he had formerly doubted, under the cloud of his terrestrial prejudices. In spite of Ransom's protests, he is set upon the road to Maldilorn and told to seek Augray at his tower high above the valley in which the hrossa live.⁸

As he struggles upward from the stream and forest, Ransom considers his own reluctance to make the journey demanded of him

⁸In "The Reeducation of the Fearful Pilgrim," Chad Walsh mistakenly remarks that Ransom here "steadfastly seeks the very sorns he had so frantically tried earlier to avoid." (The Longing for a Form, p. 70) In fact, although Ransom knew "that the harandra, which he had to cross, was the home of the sorns," (Out of the Silent Planet, p. 96) he did not know that Augray was himself a sorn.

(a reluctance which translates itself to his nervous system as an impulse to give himself over to Weston and Devine) and takes steps to deny it. In simple terms, Ransom puts himself under authority, the authority of the eldil's charge to him, and his hallucinations and misgivings are dispelled by appealing to the oath of the quest which he has undertaken. Thus the unreal, the ephemeral shifts of mood and inclinations to other possible courses, are held in check by the real, the words of the eldil, and Ransom's own declared intention to perform them. Thus his terror is again countered by his glimpse of truth. Ransom himself recognizes the spiritual distance which he has travelled since his sorry arrival on Malacandra:

He looked back on that time as on a nightmare, on his own mood at that time as a sort of sickness. Then all had been whimpering, unanalysed, self-nourishing, self-consuming dismay. Now, in the clear light of an accepted duty, he felt fear indeed, but with it a sober sense of confidence in himself and in the world, and even an element of pleasure. It was the difference between a landsman in a sinking ship and a horseman on a bolting horse: either may be killed, but the horseman is an agent as well as a patient.

(pp. 97-98)

Ransom's new strength is tried very severely on his journey, for the great cold and lack of oxygen near the high plains of Malacandra have nearly killed him before he arrives at the tower of Augray. Lewis's description of this arrival is a part of the adventure story heritage of Out of the Silent Planet which he is quite happy to appropriate, as the climactic moment at which the hero wins through a severe test of his mental and physical resources turns suddenly into a new and greater test -- harbour becomes maelstrom:

The light within was an unsteady one and a delicious wave of warmth smote on his face. It was firelight. He came into the mouth of the cave and then, unsteadily, round the fire and into the interior, and stood still blinking in the light. When at last he could see, he discerned a smooth chamber of green rock, very lofty. There were two things in it. One of them, dancing on the wall and roof, was the huge, angular shadow of a sorn; the other, crouched beneath it, was the sorn himself.

(pp. 101-102)

The next chapter, which describes Ransom's meeting with Augray the sorn, takes its relaxed tone from Ransom's own supposed state of mind: a quietude of resignation, produced by an earlier excess of fear and of mental and physical exertion. After the highly coloured journey from the hrossian lowlands to the mountains of Malacandra, Lewis allows his reader to relax with Ransom, and to prepare for the somewhat difficult conversation between man and sorn which is to follow. Ransom's terrors gradually subside as he responds to Augray's solicitude and obviously civilised rationality. There is but one moment at which Ransom's fears crowd in on him again, when Augray's description of the sorns' culture of certain beasts for milking and cheese-making suddenly brings to mind the picture of another man on an odyssey, entertained by another giant who was also a shepherd. But Ransom's fears soon dissipate under the pressure of conversing with the erudite Augray on the subject of Oyarsa and the eldila, which leads to a consideration of the relativity of sensory impressions, in which Augray comments on the apparent substance and apparent nullity of various bodies in the universe. This long passage is worth quoting at length, because it shows Lewis's skill in expressing an esoteric and sophisticated

argument in very plain and yet very precise language. His purpose is clear: he writes for a popular readership, but wishes to deal with matters which are more commonly dealt with in a very specialized vocabulary by a handful of the learned. The ostensible purpose (within the narrative frame) for the use of this simplified language is that Ransom is as yet not completely adept in the hrossian tongue which Augray uses. How charitable Lewis is to those of us who are perhaps rather less adept in our own tongue than he! In reply to Ransom's query as to why the eldila should be invisible to him and not to the hrossa or the sorns, Augray says that many kinds of bodies are invisible to other species, and continues with an examination of the properties of "body" -- a Malacandrian primer on the theory of relativity:

"Body is movement. If it is at one speed, you smell something; if at another, you hear a sound; if at another, you neither see nor hear nor smell, nor know the body in any way. But mark this, Small One, that the two ends meet."

"How do you mean?"

"If movement is faster, ~~than~~ that which moves is more nearly in two places at once."

"That is true."

"But if the movement were faster still -- it is difficult, for you do not know many words -- you see that if you made it faster and faster, in the end the moving thing would be in all places at once, Small One."

"I think I see that."

"Well, then, that is the thing at the top of all the bodies -- so fast that it is at rest, so truly body that it has ceased being body at all. . . . We do not truly see light, we only see slower things lit by it, so that for us light is on the edge -- the last thing we know before things become too swift for us. But the body of an eldil is a movement swift as light; you may say its body is made of light, but not of that which is light for the eldil. . . . And what we call firm things -- flesh and earth -- seem to him thinner, and harder to see, than our light,

and more like clouds, and nearly nothing. To us the eldil is a thin, half-real body that can go through walls and rock: to himself he goes through them because he is solid and firm and they are like cloud. And what is true light to him and fills the heaven, so that he will plunge into the rays of the sun to refresh himself from it, is to us the black nothing in the sky at night. These things are not strange, Small One, though they are beyond our senses.

(pp. 106-107)

According to Augray's very reasonable expression of this difficult concept, the apprehension of truth (of a particular kind: the true existence and nature of things -- entities and forces -- which fill the phenomenal universe) is dependent upon its speed of "movement," and upon the faculties within the subject which translate that movement into sensory impressions. Furthermore, each subject in the universe is able by virtue of the nature of the sensory apparatus bestowed upon it to apprehend directly certain of the objects with which it shares the universe, and unable to apprehend certain others. Thus what is "miracle" or merely "superstition" to us of five senses may be perfectly ordinary to those creatures whose senses apprehend movement at speeds above or below the range to which we are accustomed. Lewis shows once again that the justice of distinctions made between the rational and the irrational, the real and the unreal, that which is true of reality and that which is false, depends upon the experience of the one who is making the judgement, and that the experience may in turn depend upon the perspective from which it is viewed. To deny summarily the very existence of something which does not happen to commend itself to our own five senses at a given time and in a given place is thus a sort of provincialism.

Brought to Meldilorn by Augray, Ransom is surprised and delighted to find it a place of great beauty; his senses are stirred by the fine architecture, sculpture and engraving, the fragrance of great flowers "taller than a cathedral spire," (p. 118) and the music of the waters. Ransom's design in this place is quite simply to give to Oyarsa as full and truthful an account of himself and his adventures as he is able, to "make a clean breast." (p. 121) This insistent devotion to the truth further schools Ransom's excited senses, to enable him to experience for himself the presence of the eldila there, and to arrive at an understanding of what he finally decides to be a diagram of the solar system engraved on one of the monoliths lining the great avenue of Meldilorn. At first, Ransom's inward critical response to the engraving is patronising, but gradually his provincial ignorance is dissolved and he is able to comprehend something of the intricacy of the work, to perceive pattern where he had not expected it:

The sun was there, unmistakably, at the centre of the disk: round this the concentric circles revolved. In the first and smallest of these was pictured a little ball, on which rode a winged figure something like Oyarsa, but holding what appeared to be a trumpet. . . . The first ball was Mercury, the second Venus -- "And what an extraordinary coincidence," thought Ransom, "that their mythology, like ours, associates some idea of the female with Venus." The problem would have occupied him longer if a natural curiosity had not drawn his eyes on to the next ball which must represent the Earth. When he saw it, his whole mind stood still for a moment. The ball was there, but where the flame-like figure should have been, a deep depression of irregular shape had been cut as if to erase it. Once, then -- but his speculations faltered and became silent before a series of unknowns.

(pp. 125-126)

Ransom has learned from the engraved diagram the reason for the

Malacandrian's name of Thulcandra, "the silent planet," for Earth. He had learned from the sorns (p. 107) that Thulcandra had no Oyarsa of its own, but he had not realized that a deposed Oyarsa was part of the history of his home, and he pauses to reconcile this information with his own knowledge of terrestrial history, secular and "religious." These early hints of what may have been Earth's past are substantiated and enlarged upon by Oyarsa himself when Ransom is called before him.

The interview between the intelligence of Malacandra and the man Ransom begins with Oyarsa's questions concerning Ransom's great fear, that impediment to Ransom's understanding upon which our attention has been focussed from the beginning. Although Ransom thinks that his fears stem from his alien status in Malacandra, Oyarsa tells him that it is not so; that he and Ransom are alike more than they are unlike, by the fact of their common origin: both are "'copies of Maleldil.'" (p. 135) It is determined that Ransom's fears are (as we know who have been able to see them dissolve, proportionate to the firming of his conception of the truth) founded in ignorance. Ransom's ignorance of the order and charity of the universe is locally due to the design of his captors Weston and Devine, who deliberately kept from him what knowledge of Malacandra they possessed, so as to keep him powerless and incapable of independent action. But the radical cause of Ransom's deafness to the voice of truth, as indeed of Weston's and Devine's, is that his home is the "silent planet", that part of the solar system which has, time out of mind, been held in

siege by the ministers of Maleldil. The history hinted at by the engraved picture of the solar system which he had studied earlier is explained to Ransom by Oyarsa:

"Once we knew the Oyarsa of your world -- he was brighter and greater than I -- and then we did not call it Thulcandra. It is the longest of all stories and the bitterest. He became bent. That was before any life came on your world. Those were the Bent Years of which we still speak in the heavens, when he was not yet bound to Thulcandra but free like us. . . . We did not leave him so at large for long. There was great war, and we drove him back out of the heavens and bound him in the air of his own world as Maleldil taught us. There doubtless he lies to this hour, and we know no more of that planet: it is silent. We think that Maleldil would not give it up utterly to the Bent One in Thulcandra. But of this we know less than you; it is a thing we desire to look into."

(pp. 136-137)

"A thing we desire to look into" -- Lewis has here put the very words of I Peter 1:12⁹ into the mouth of the Oyarsa of Malacandra, establishing the identification of the celestial eldila with terrestrial accounts of "angels," and beyond that showing explicitly for the first time in this work that the God of the Bible, the divine Father of Christianity, is the one whom Malacandrians call "Maleldil."¹⁰

⁹"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you . . . which things the angels desire to look into." (I Peter 1:10,12b)

¹⁰Thus when Oyarsa told Ransom that they both were "copies of Maleldil," he meant precisely what the words of Genesis 1:27 say of Man: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." Oyarsa's account of the war between Maleldil and the Bent One also echoes the biblical account of the casting-out of Satan and his angels from the presence of God to the earth:

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And

Oyarsa's desire to "look into" the matter of the fall of Satan, to discover from Ransom what he knows of the matter from his knowledge of terrestrial history, must be postponed when Ransom is interrupted by the arrival of some hrossa and two other creatures in procession to an audience with Oyarsa. In the account of this procession as it is seen through Ransom's own eyes, Lewis plays yet another of his tricks with perspective, in order to bring to the reader once again an awareness of the extreme difficulty of apprehending an unsuspected truth. In this passage, Ransom gives a straightforward account of his own perceptions, and of the sudden revolution within him from a Malacandrian to a terrestrial perspective, which comes as he innocently considers the approach of these two strange creatures which are apparently in the custody of the hrossa:

They were much shorter than any animal he had yet seen on Malacandra, and he gathered that they were bipeds, though the lower limbs were so thick and sausage-like that he hesitated to call them legs. The bodies were a little narrower at the top than at the bottom so as to be very slightly pear-shaped, and the heads were neither round like those of the hrossa nor long like those of sorns, but almost square. They stumped along on narrow, heavy-looking feet which they seemed to press into the ground with unnecessary violence. And now their faces were becoming visible as masses of lumped and puckered flesh of variegated colour fringed in some bristly, dark substance. . . . Suddenly, with an indescribable change of feeling, he realized that he was looking at men. The two prisoners were Weston and Devine and he, for one privileged moment, had seen the human form with almost Malacandrian eyes.

(p. 141)

prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev. 12:7-9)

The account of Ransom's shift in perspective serves to reinforce the irony which Lewis has employed at the expense of Ransom's parochial prejudices, and here it is the signal that these prejudices have been almost completely purged from Ransom.¹¹

When Weston and Devine are brought before Oyarsa, their fears, ignorance, and arrogant assumption of the superiority of the human race are put on display. The failings which have been largely remedied in Ransom by his pilgrimage are magnified in Weston. In the august assembly before Oyarsa at Meldilorn, the great physicist Weston is, with his philosophy, reduced to an absurd spectacle, and his grand words are similarly reduced into a painful pidgin dialect.¹² Weston's calm assumption of superiority brings him to treat his highly intelligent interlocutor and audience as if they were infants or savages, and Lewis dwells on the ridiculous lengths to which such a prejudice can lead a Weston:

To Ransom's intense discomfort, Weston . . . whipped out of his pocket a brightly coloured necklace of beads, the undoubted work of Mr. Woolworth, and began dangling it in front of his guards, turning slowly round and round and repeating, "Pretty, pretty! See! See!"
(p. 144)

Later in this same audience with Oyarsa, when Weston is forced to

¹¹Lewis probably saw the potential for this shift in Ransom's perspective in his reading of H.G. Wells. Donald Watt, in "The View from Malacandra" (C.S. Lewis Bulletin, VI, ix, 5), quotes from The First Men in the Moon Cavor's report of his own shyness in the presence of the Grand Lunar: "I felt amidst these slender beings ridiculously thick and fleshy and solid; my head all jaw and black hair."

¹²This too is a reminder of Cavor's first attempt to communicate with the Selenites, in The First Men in the Moon.

recognize the power and intelligence (if not the authority) of the great eldil, he attempts to show in a grand speech the rightness of the cause of "Westonism." Lewis exposes the absurdity latent in Weston's philosophy by stripping it of its high-flown rhetoric, no longer by rendering it in the ridiculous pidgin which Weston has used till now with Oyarsa, but by having Ransom translate Weston's speech into the hrossian tongue (which is then supposedly re-translated for the benefit of the reader):

"Life is greater than any system of morality; her claims are absolute."

"He says," began Ransom, "that living creatures are stronger than the question whether an act is bent or good -- no, that cannot be right -- he says it is better to be alive and bent than to be dead -- no -- he says, he says -- I cannot say what he says, Oyarsa, in your language."

(p. 154)

The message is, in spite of Ransom's apologies, very clear indeed: reduce Weston's philosophy to unambiguous language and its unreason is patent, its ignorance of truth glaring, its perspective upon reality monomaniacal and contemptible.¹³ We are reminded that the same man who here claims ultimate pre-eminence for Life had been more than willing to bring Ransom to the sorns to be (as he thought) a human sacrifice, that he had very clearly considered the life of the simple Harry ("only too likely to propagate idiocy") negligible, that he had murdered the hross Hyoi. But Oyarsa can find even in Weston's twisted devotion to Life something which retains a vestige of truth:

¹³See the note to p. 21, above.

"I see now how the lord of the silent world has bent you. There are laws that all hnau know, of pity and straight dealing and shame and the like, and one of these is the love of kindred. He has taught you to break all of them except this one, which is not one of the greatest laws; this one he has bent till it becomes folly and has set it up, thus bent, to be a little, blind Oyarsa in your brain. And now you can do nothing but obey it, though if we ask you why it is a law you give no other reason for it than for all the other and greater laws which it drives you to disobey."

(p. 157)

The laws of the Tao to which Oyarsa alludes, the laws that all rational beings know, are the foundation of rational thought and behaviour, the repository of truth concerning man's ordinate response to reality. By abstracting a single aspect of this truth and claiming for it the place due to the whole, Weston has turned the truth, that one should care for one's own kind, into the lie that the only real value is survival of the species. This is entirely consistent with Lewis's concept of the relationship of falsehood to truth and evil to good:

A sound theory of value demands . . . that good should be original and evil a mere perversion; that good should be the tree and evil the ivy; that good should be able to see all round evil (as when sane men understand lunacy) while evil cannot retaliate in kind; that good should be able to exist on its own while evil requires the good on which it is parasitic in order to continue its parasitic existence.¹⁴

Though the conflict seems ultimate yet one of the opposites really contains, and is not contained by, the other. Truth and falsehood are opposed; but truth is the norm not of truth only but of falsehood also.¹⁵

¹⁴"Evil and God," Undeceptions, p. 3.

¹⁵The Allegory of Love, p. 315.

Oyarsa demonstrates that Weston's philosophy has taken him from that initial glimpse of truth into absurdity and unreality; Weston's desire, that man should preserve his species by colonizing and exploiting planet after planet infinitely, is contrary to reason: even if the dream of unhindered space travel could be realized, yet the seed of man could not be propagated infinitely, because the universe and all of its elements, including men and worlds, were created finite. We recall Hyoi's words to Ransom: "'a world is not made to last forever, much less a race: that is Maleldil's way.'" (p. 100) Reality itself, as it depends from the ultimate Reality, strives against Weston's dream, and that is why Lewis writes that "The stars in their courses were fighting against Weston." (p. 139)

Oyarsa continues his answer to Weston, telling him that this "bent" desire for immortality of the species, which springs ultimately from the terror of death, at one time afflicted some Malacandrians, and that they had to be prevented from doing the same sort of thing which Weston is now determined to do. When Weston counters that Oyarsa's prevention of the colonizing of other planets has doomed the races of Malacandra to an earlier extinction, Oyarsa explains that his world has rejected an illusory good (the mirage of an everlasting Malacandra) for the real good of peace:

"one thing we left behind us . . . : fear. And with fear, murder and rebellion. The weakest of my people does not fear death. It is the Bent one, the Lord of your world, who wastes your lives and befouls them with flying from what you know will overtake you in the end. If you were subjects of Maleldil you would have peace."

(p. 158)

In the unfallen Malacandra, fear is cast out by submission to the perfect will of Maleldil, which does not provide that hnau or worlds should remain perpetually in those forms in which they were first created. This is an important aspect of Lewis's "silent planet" myth. The assumption he seeks to undermine is that man's significance in the universe has been earned by his struggle to the top of the evolutionary ladder, at the behest of some blindly thrusting Force. Lewis posits an alternative concept for the source of man's significance: that perhaps it has been, quite simply, granted to man in order that man might fulfil a rôle within the universe chosen for him from before time itself, a rôle which involves relationship with the One who has granted that significance.

His voyage of discovery has acquainted Ransom with such truth concerning the reality of the created universe as has cast out virtually all of those fears in him which were born of parochial prejudice and ignorance. As he begins the last leg of his odyssey, bound for Earth in Weston's spaceship, Ransom looks back to the surface of Malacandra to consider the few shards of information which he carries back with him, and of how such truths might be received among the men of his own world. His eye is drawn to the handramits, the valleys or canals which Oyarsa had caused to be cut into the surface of the planet to preserve its air and warmth for the time allotted to it by Maleldil:

They were gigantic feats of engineering, about which he had learned nothing; feats accomplished, if all were true, before human history began . . . before animal history began. Or was

that only mythology? He knew it would seem like mythology when he got back to Earth (if he ever got back), but the presence of Oyarsa was still too fresh a memory to allow him any real doubts. It even occurred to him that the distinction between history and mythology might be itself meaningless outside the Earth.

(p. 164; ellipsis in the original)

Ransom guesses that the terrestrial distinction between myth and fact might be a matter merely of one's perspective. From the "silent planet," where the operations of the eldila and of Maleldil Himself are seen but as "though a glass, darkly," it is often assumed that the "natural order," the local manifestations of physical reality, constitute the whole of reality. (Thus Weston assumed that the one facet of truth which he approved must constitute the whole of truth for man.) Since one does not ordinarily experience the existence of non-material entities on the "silent planet" (argues the materialist) such entities do not exist in fact, and the pretence that they do exist belongs to myth. But if (as Ransom now knows) eldila are real, and their explanation of the structure of the universe true, and if their reality should for some reason (like a kidnapping to Malacandra) impinge upon human life, then that contact between the natural order and the greater celestial order would be itself a part of history (viewed from "above") which would look (from "below") very like myth.

As he contemplates what may be his own fate on his return journey, Ransom's thoughts illustrate how his perspective upon life and death, and upon the universe which surrounds him, and the life which fills it, has been altered by his experience of Malacandra:

He could not feel that they were an island of life journeying though an abyss of death. He felt almost the opposite -- that life was waiting outside the little iron egg-shell in which they rode, ready at any moment to break in, and that, if it killed them, it would kill them by excess of its vitality. . . . the sense of unseen presences even within the space-ship became irresistible. It was this, more than anything else, that made his own chances of life seem so unimportant. He and all his race showed small and ephemeral against a background of such immeasurable fulness. His brain reeled at the thought of the true population of the universe, the three-dimensional infinitude of their territory, and the unchronicled aeons of their past; but his heart became steadier than it had even been.
(pp. 165-166)

Oyarsa had earlier cautioned Ransom that certain details of the cosmic history and geography are not easily accom^modated by the human mind, and Ransom now finds it to be so. Yet his heart is steadied by virtue of his new perspective on "space" and the worlds and created beings of space: he is conscious of an unutterable fulness of life; aware that the legions of eldila which surround him are the local representatives of Maleldil Himself; and he understands that all truth -- including that which must remain beyond his own comprehension -- ultimately concerns that Person who is the source and centre of all that is real.

II

PERELANDRA

In the first book of Ransom's interplanetary adventures, Lewis sets out the myth of the "silent planet" as an alternative to the prevalent conception of the universe as void, lifeless, at worst cruelly hostile and at best coldly indifferent to man. Ransom's journey to Malacandra awakens his perception to the fulness and vitality of an ordered and peopled universe in which all authority and reality depend from the person of Maleldil. It is the re-ordering of Ransom's perspective upon reality in the first tale of his adventures which prepares him to act in a manner ordinate to that reality in the second. Lewis has said that Out of the Silent Planet describes Ransom's "enfance";¹ in Perelandra Ransom comes of age, to take up that particular rôle in the cosmic drama chosen for him from eternity. In the second book of his science-fiction trilogy Lewis continues to challenge the validity of the accepted distinctions between myth, fact and history, by translating the potent terrestrial story of the temptation and fall of man into the terms of Ransom's new conception of the structure of the universe. Thus what is often dismissed as a merely mythic account of the origin of man's bent to evil -- "mythic" here in the sense of being untrue or

¹ Biography, p. 179.

imaginary -- is enacted as if it were historical fact -- a part of planetary, though not terrestrial, history. Terrestrial "myth" in this sense becomes as it were Perelandrian fact. This pattern will find completion in That Hideous Strength, where some of the celestial elements of the "silent planet" myth are to be brought to earth as they were historical fact.

Perelandra begins with two chapters of introduction, in which the "Lewis" persona (introduced at the conclusion of Out of the Silent Planet) wrestles with a problem which had greatly occupied Ransom's mind during his time on Malacandra: the reconciliation of reason with imagination. Ransom's reason had gradually asserted itself over his imagination on Malacandra, as truth -- accurate information concerning Malacandrian and cosmic reality -- gradually displaced the erroneous perceptions fostered by his reading of Wellsian space-fiction. Now "Lewis," summoned to Ransom's cottage to help him prepare for a new interplanetetary journey on Maleldil's own service, finds his emotions and imagination to be at war with his reason: the reasonable desire to help a good and true friend is at odds with an unreasoning fear of the eldila themselves and of becoming involved personally in matters of "interplanetary politics." As "Lewis" examines his fear of the eldila, he reflects that a meeting between himself and one of these creatures would necessitate a radical re-ordering of his own perspective upon reality:

We think, in one mood, of Mr. Wells' Martians (very unlike the real Malacandrians, by the bye), or his Selenites. In quite a different mood we let our minds loose on the possibility of angels, ghosts, fairies, and the like. But

the very moment we are compelled to recognize a creature in either class as real the distinction begins to get blurred: and when it is a creature like an eldil the distinction vanishes altogether. . . . The distinction between natural and supernatural, in fact, broke down; and when it had done so, one realised how great a comfort it had been -- how it had eased the burden of intolerable strangeness which this universe imposes on us by dividing it into two halves and encouraging the mind never to think of both in the same context. What price we may have paid for this comfort in the way of false security and accepted confusion of thought is another matter.

(pp. 9-10)

If the assumed distinctions between nature and supernature, fact and myth are discovered to be matters merely of custom and consensus, they cannot be trusted to define accurately the cosmos and its creatures, spiritual and corporeal. Ransom learned this lesson in perspective at last on Malacandra; "Lewis" struggles against it on earth, and his struggle leads him even to doubt Ransom himself -- is the man a dupe of the eldila, a channel for their invasion of the earth, even the willing agent of conquest? But this avenue of thought is swiftly blocked by what "Lewis" calls the "rational part" of his coiling intellect, which offers Ransom himself as a touchstone:

The rational part of my mind, even at that moment, knew perfectly well that even if the whole universe were crazy and hostile, Ransom was sane and wholesome and honest. . . . What enabled me to go on was the knowledge (deep down inside me) that I was getting nearer at every stride to the one friend: but I felt that I was getting nearer to the one enemy . . .

(p. 12)

When Ransom arrives at the cottage, to explain that he is bound for Perelandra (Venus) by the hand of Malacandra's Oyarsa, he shows "Lewis" that he understands very well the conflict in "Lewis" between the reason's grasp of truth and the imagination's response

to truth:

"Do you feel quite happy about it?" said I, for a sort of horror was beginning once more to creep over me.

"If you mean, Does my reason accept the view that [Oyarsa] will (accidents apart) deliver me safe on the surface of Perelandra? -- the answer is Yes," said Ransom. "If you mean, Do my nerves and my imagination respond to this view? -- I'm afraid the answer is No. One can believe in anaesthetics and yet feel in a panic when they actually put the mask over your face. I think I feel as a man who believes in the future life feels when he is taken out to face a firing party. Perhaps it's good practice."
(p. 28)

In his apologetics, C.S. Lewis has written of faith that it is most often attacked not by the reason, but by the senses and the imagination. He saw no real conflict between the truth won by reason and that understanding attained by the exercise of faith, since there is but one centre of reality, and all truth is ultimately His truth. "Our faith," he writes, "wavers not so much when real arguments come against it as when it looks improbable -- when the whole world takes on that desolate look which really tells us much more about the state of our passions and even our digestion than about reality."² This certainly reflects upon the space trilogy's preoccupation with the subject of perspective: obviously one's perspective must suffer correction from time to time and by various agencies if one is not forever to be at the mercy of one's emotions and viscera; we have observed Ransom's own view of reality undergoing just such a process of re-ordering on Malacandra. Ransom's explanation that the earth's dark eldila too are responsible for some of the fictional "Lewis"'s misgivings

² "Religion: Reality or Substitute?" Christian Reflections, p. 63.

about Maleldil's service demonstrates the contention of the real Lewis concerning faith's relation to truth:

Reason may win truths; without Faith she will retain them just so long as Satan pleases. There is nothing we cannot be made to believe or disbelieve. If we wish to be rational, not now and then, but constantly, we must pray for the gift of Faith, for the power to go on believing not in the teeth of reason but in the teeth of lust and terror and jealousy and boredom and indifference that which reason, authority, or experience, or all three, have once delivered to us for truth.³

Ultimately it is his faith in Ransom's own goodness which enables the "Lewis" persona to retain his own rationality in the face of fears and eldilic oppression.

Perelandra is, in part, a story which illustrates the necessity of enlisting faith against error, of Ransom's obligation to go on believing in those things he has once known for truth, and to act upon them even in the midst of terrible assaults upon his body and mind. Ransom's perspective upon reality suffers many further adjustments and refinements, but it is imperative for his success in Maleldil's service on Perelandra that he should continue to act in a manner consistent with the reality which the ever-increasing light of truths won reveals to him.

The first section of Ransom's actual adventures on the planet Perelandra, from the time of his departure from earth until his first meeting with Tinidril, suggests by its abundance of birth and infancy metaphors that Ransom's enfance is not yet fully past.

³ "Religion: Reality or Substitute?" Christian Reflections, p. 63

The ice-white coffin in which he is transported to Venus is first unyielding, then becomes a viscous membrane which ruptures to leave Ransom adrift in the sweet amniotic waters which cover the planet. Because the only "land" available to Ransom is one of Perelandra's floating islands, which are held together by the matted fibres of their fantastic vegetation, and undulate according to the ever-changing contours of the waves which bear them, he discovers that his first task here is to learn to walk. In several ways then, Lewis has suggested that Ransom has come "as a little child" to Perelandra, so that his perspective might be fresh and untainted by the kind of preconceptions which had made his early experiences on Malacandra so difficult, and which had hidden the truth from him in that place for so long.

His introduction to Perelandrian food teaches Ransom that -- again, like a child -- there is something about the planet which commends the quiet acceptance of that which simply "comes" to one, and discourages terrestrial "grasping." When he discovers a remarkable gourd which satisfies both hunger and thirst instantly -- with such wild excitement of pleasure that "on earth wars would be fought and nations betrayed" for a single taste of it --

His reason, or what we commonly take to be reason in our own world, was all in favour of tasting this miracle again; the child-like innocence of fruit, the labours he had undergone, the uncertainty of the future, all seemed to commend the action. Yet something seemed opposed to this "reason."

(p. 47)

The same ineffable intuition comes over Ransom when he discovers a sort of tree which bears shining bubbles on its branches: when one bursts over him the sensation is intensely pleasant, but he

does not immediately indulge himself in bursting another.

Similarly, he discovers some berries (with bright red centres) to be more savoury than others on the same bush, but chooses to eat each berry he comes to in turn, instead of eating only the red-hearted kind and discarding the others. His experiences lead to speculation concerning his own theory of values:

This itch to have things over again, as if life were a film that could be unrolled twice or even made to work backwards . . . was it possibly the root of all evil? No: of course the love of money was called that. But money itself -- perhaps one valued it chiefly as a defence against chance, a security for being able to have things over again, a means of arresting the unrolling of the film.

(p. 53)

"Now on earth," thought Ransom, "they'd soon discover how to breed these redhearts, and they'd cost a great deal more than the others." Money, in fact, would provide the means of saying encore in a voice that could not be disobeyed.

(pp. 54-55)

Ransom's decision not to listen solely to the voice of his own desires is prompted again by a mysterious "something," an "inner advisor." We are reminded by this that when "Lewis" was plagued by an "inner tormentor" on his journey to Ransom's cottage, Ransom himself put the voice down to the influence of the dark eldila of earth who seek to thwart the purposes of Maleldil. It seems that Lewis has deliberately echoed that "inner tormentor" in writing of Ransom's "inner advisor" here, suggesting that the good counsel enjoyed by Ransom is somehow a gift from Maleldil, whether directly or through the agency of the (good) eldila. Hearing the voice of Maleldil for himself here on Perelandra makes for one of the great differences between the flavour of Ransom's experiences on

Malacandra and that of those events which come upon him now: "he knew that he was part of a plan. He was no longer unattached, no longer on the outside." (p. 56) If fear is an impediment to knowledge, knowledge is a hedge against fear: Ransom has proved within himself that to know one's place in the plan of an ordered universe is to release an intolerable and quite useless burden of fear.

It is Ransom's first meeting with a Perelandrian creature which causes him to wonder if this great universal order of which he now feels himself to be a part is not perhaps much more intricate than he had at first suspected:

he saw reality, and thought it was a dream. He opened his eyes and saw a strange heraldically coloured tree loaded with yellow fruits and silver leaves. Round the base of the indigo stem was coiled a small dragon covered with scales of red gold. He recognised the garden of the Hesperides at once.

(p. 49)

Ransom here suffers something of that which gave "Lewis" such fear in the early chapters. If what we are accustomed to regard as myth ("the garden of the Hesperides") should present itself to our senses as fact, the comforting boundary between illusion and reality must dissolve. The boundary had been comforting because it had settled for us the question of appropriate response, and had left to formula that which might now require real thought. Ransom's mind begins to toy with the possibilities:

He remembered how in the very different world called Malacandra -- that cold, archaic world, as it now seemed to him -- he had met the original of the Cyclops, a giant in a cave and a shepherd. Were all the things which appeared as mythology on Earth scattered through other

worlds as realities?

(p. 49)

Ransom's musings turn again to the matter of perspective: it seems to him now very likely that the preconceptions which one brings to experience are capable of rendering one utterly blind to the truth latent within that experience. So well has Ransom learned to discount his own terrestrial prejudices that he begins to feel on Perelandra "a sensation not of following an adventure but of enacting a myth." (p. 52) He no longer seeks comfort in the customary distinctions between myth and historical fact, because of his intuition that within a reality whose ultimate design his finite intellect cannot grasp, those local distinctions might be simply irrelevant. His own significance does not derive from what he can understand of the larger design, but from his faithfulness in enacting that part of the design intended for him. Lewis is of course rendering in terms of his own myth a fundamental principle concerning Christian grace: that it is bestowed in order to equip the Christian for a certain task, and comes upon him even as the task is taken up.

Ransom's tranquil acceptance of those things which simply come to his hands on Perelandra is tested when he first glimpses Tinidril, the beautiful green Lady of the planet (who is Lewis's "Eve" in this temptation drama). The contact of sight is tantalising, because at every moment the contours of the islands and the waters between them change with the waves, and Ransom is in a terror of loneliness for human companionship, fearing that the seas might separate the two islands forever. When he understands

that night is coming swiftly -- greatly compounding the risk of separation -- Ransom first speaks to Tinidril, and then flings himself into the water in an attempt to swim across to her. But the impetuous action nearly ends in disaster when night falls and an exhausted and disoriented Ransom is left flailing in the sea and expecting to drown at every moment. At last he blindly fetches up against an island, and pulls himself onto it before falling into an exhausted sleep. Next morning, the light reveals two facts to him in a heart-breaking anticlimax: that he has in the darkness merely thrashed his way back to the island on which he stood originally, and that the Lady's island is now separated from his own by only a very short stretch of millpond-calm water. Ransom has, of course, very nearly spent his life, and miscarried in the mission for which Maleldil has brought him to Perelandra, by failing to remember the lessons of the gourds and berries and bubble trees: he has risked all in an effort to sustain a pleasure -- in this case the pleasure of human company. He has not been content to receive the companionship which came to him without his asking, he has "grasped."

The first conversations between Ransom and Tinidril, the green Lady, are in their way as tantalising as their first frequently-interrupted sight of each other from the floating islands. Ransom discovers that the Lady knows Maleldil, and experiences His presence and hears His voice in modes the nature of which Ransom can only guess at. At some points in their conversation, the sense of the Lady's unbroken communion with

Maleldil impinges upon Ransom with great force, and changes his sense of "enacting a myth" into a sense of utter impotence -- "the whole of this adventure seemed to be slipping out of his hands." (p. 69) Ransom is troubled by the manner in which the Lady is able to receive truth as it were directly from the Source; for her, the traditional media of knowledge are quite often unnecessary. That these media are not always unnecessary for the Lady is implied in Ransom's very presence there, and in her repeated statement that the things he has to tell her are making her "older" (more wise, acquainted with more truth). Later, when Ransom asks about the Lady's family, and specifically about her mother, the reply sets up in him the same reverberations of awe, as he himself comprehends a tiny portion of truth in that manner which is customary to the Lady:

"I have a mother?" said the Green Lady, looking full at him with eyes of untroubled wonder. "What do you mean? I am the Mother." And once again there fell upon Ransom the feeling that it was not she, or not she only, who had spoken. No other sound came to his ears, for the sea and the air were still, but a phantom sense of vast choral music was all about him.

(p. 74)

All of the elements of the Perelandrian landscape, and Tinidril herself, and that "myth" in which she and Ransom participate, are channels of truth, capable of imparting an understanding of certain aspects of Maleldil's awesome Reality to Ransom. Ransom's principal difficulty in their conversation is that Tinidril's is a new and as yet unfallen world. She and the King, her husband, are the only rational creatures on Perelandra. When the Lady discovers that Ransom's home is not like hers, she is intrigued by the differences,

and early on suggests that the significant difference is the absence, in her world, of death. She wonders aloud if Ransom has been sent to teach her death (p. 75) and has difficulty understanding how one should wish to avoid whatever came one's way, "any of those waves . . . which Maleldil is rolling toward us."

(p. 76) At this juncture we are advised by the narrator that Ransom is goaded into debating the matter "against his better judgement."

(p. 76) He makes Tinidril understand the difference between the given good and the imagined good, and quite innocently raises in her mind the co re lative truth, that Maleldil might be contradicted by one who chooses the thing imagined over that given:

"One goes into the forest to pick food and already the thought of one fruit rather than another has grown up in one's mind. Then, it may be, one finds a different fruit and not the fruit one thought of. One joy was expected and another is given. But this I had never noticed before -- that at the very moment of the finding there is in the mind a kind of thrusting back, or a setting aside. The picture of the fruit you have not found is still, for a moment, before you. And if you wished -- if it were possible to wish -- you could keep it there. You could send your soul after the good you had expected, instead of turning it to the good you had got. You could refuse the real good; you could make the real fruit taste insipid by thinking of the other."

(p. 77)

The Lady's calm assurance on the matter nettles Ransom because he, like all his race, cannot share it. His petulance expresses itself in a frown and a shrug, and when she challenges him about them, he is prompted to lie:

"They mean nothing," said Ransom hastily. It was a small lie; but there it would not do. It tore him as he uttered it, like a vomit. It became of infinite importance. The silver meadow and the golden sky seemed to fling it back at him. As if stunned by some measureless anger in the very air he stammered an emendation: "They mean nothing I

could explain to you."

(p. 79)

The evasion will not do because of Ransom's sense of the imminent, almost palpable presence of Maleldil in Perelandra, He whose own person is the centre of reality, whose standard of truth is absolute. Ransom's sense of this overwhelming Presence causes him some difficulty as he makes further adjustments to the notion of his own part in a cosmic design:

At first it was almost intolerable . . . "There seemed no room." But later on, he discovered that it was intolerable only at certain moments -- at just those moments in fact (symbolised by his impulse to smoke and to put his hands in his pockets) when a man asserts his independence and feels that now at last he's on his own. When you felt like that, then the very air seemed too crowded to breathe; a complete fullness seemed to be excluding you from a place which, nevertheless, you were unable to leave. But when you gave in to the thing, gave yourself up to it, there was no burden to be borne. It became not a load but a medium, a sort of splendour as of eatable, drinkable, breathable gold, which fed and carred you and not only poured into you but out from you as well. Taken the wrong way, it suffocated; taken the right way, it made terrestrial life seem, by comparison, a vacuum.

(p. 80)

We are reminded of Ransom in Out of the Silent Planet discovering the heavens to be an ocean of light and life instead of the abyss of death he had been led to expect. The lesson continues; here Ransom is learning to walk with Maleldil much as the Lady walks with Him. Of course it will be difficult for Ransom to achieve by art what is, apparently, Tinidril's by nature. But what is required of him is surely to adopt a slightly different perspective.

The floating island upon which are Ransom and the Lady is within sight of a substantial island of rock and soil such as one might expect to find rising from a sea on Earth. The two decide to

go to the island, called by the Lady "the Fixed Land," but she reveals to Ransom that Maleldil has forbidden her to remain on the Fixed Land overnight. It is of course impossible for Ransom, even had he wished it, to conceal from her the fact that the men and women of Earth are not under the same prohibition on their world, nor indeed could they be. This is a source of some trouble to the Lady, who had not before considered that it might be the case "that good is not the same in all worlds; that Maleldil has forbidden in one what He allows in another." (p. 83) Thus Ransom and Tinidril begin each to adjust the perspective of the other upon Maleldil's reality. What might in a less sophisticated tale have been a very simple relationship as between teacher and pupil becomes in Lewis's hands a mutual inquiry, by which the man and the woman are to assist each other in the discovery of truth.

Having introduced the major themes of his story in Ransom's discovery of what it is to accept the unfolding design of Maleldil and in Tinidril's musings on what it is to know Maleldil's will of a certainty; Lewis now brings onstage the "serpent" of the Perelandrian Eden. This rôle is to be played by Professor Weston, whom the reader met in Out of the Silent Planet. While Ransom and Tinidril first observe floating in the sea the space ship which has brought Weston to Perelandra, Lewis take the opportunity to remind his reader of that philosophy which had been Weston's motive for kidnapping Ransom to Malacandra:

It is the idea that humanity, having now sufficiently corrupted the planet where it arose, must at all costs contrive to seed itself over a larger area: that the vast

astronomical distances which are God's quarantine regulations, must somehow be overcome. This for a start. But beyond this lies the sweet poison of the false infinite -- the wild dream that planet after planet, system after system, in the end galaxy after galaxy, can be forced to sustain, everywhere and for ever, the sort of life which is contained in the loins of our own species -- a dream begotten by the hatred of death upon the fear of true immortality, fondled in secret by thousands of ignorant men and hundreds who are not ignorant. The destruction or enslavement of other species in the universe, if such there are, is to these minds a welcome corollary.

(pp. 91-92)

It seems that Lewis the novelist has for the moment forgotten the distance which he is obliged to maintain between himself and his persona. That phrase of qualification, referring to non-human, rational beings in the final sentence of the passage just quoted -- "if such there are" -- can hardly be the voice of "Lewis" the narrator. Perelandra began with the narrator's terrified introduction to the reality of the existence of eldila in Ransom's cottage. For a moment, in his fervent opposition to the very real and present "philosophy" gleaned from the sources mentioned in the quoted passage, Lewis has let slip the narrative fiction.

Weston reveals to Ransom that he has had something of a change of heart concerning his doctrine of the right of man to conquer the universe for himself. Weston's new philosophy is a form of "emergent evolutionism" -- prostration before, and service to, what Weston calls "the unconsciously purposive dynamism" (p. 102) inherent in the universe:

"The majestic spectacle of this blind, inarticulate purposiveness thrusting its way upward and ever upward in an endless unity of differentiated achievements towards an ever-increasing complexity of organisation, towards spontaneity and spirituality, swept away all my old conception of a duty to Man as such. Man in himself is

nothing. The forward movements of Life -- the growing spirituality -- is everything."

(p. 102)

It would seem that for the reader the lines have been clearly drawn, and that we are free to judge the relative validity of the opposing philosophies which have been presented by Weston and Ransom. But of course Ransom is Lewis's man, and Ransom's Christianity is Lewis's. Thus Lewis is very careful to undermine "Westonism" even by the way in which it is related to Ransom. While Ransom himself believes in the opposition of good and evil, God and devil, his comments are on a single tone throughout the conversation: rational, articulate and measured. Weston, who believes that "all is one," cannot preserve a unified tone in his advocacy. His accustomed manner and tone is that of the pedantic public lecturer, over-assured of the importance his own thought, ponderous. But the detail of Weston's delivery which most clearly cautions us against his philosophy is the fact that he often lapses into "a gangster's or a schoolboy's whisper . . . a croaking whisper," (p. 104) or "cackling laughter, almost an infantile or senile laughter." (p. 106) The implicit message is clear: Weston is out of control, unable to keep disparate elements of tone from his own voice, even in the midst of celebrating his own brand of monism. On Weston's "mission," such reflections of Maleledil's character as justice, mercy, loyalty, and truth itself are jettisoned. His heated defense of his own position escalates to raging monomania, and thence to something still more terrible:

"I am the Universe. I, Weston, am your God and your Devil. I call that Force into me completely. . . ."

Then horrible things began happening. A spasm like that preceding a deadly vomit twisted Weston's face out of recognition. As it passed, for one second something like the old Weston reappeared -- the old Weston, staring with eyes of horror and howling, "Ransom, Ransom! For Christ's sake don't let them --" and instantly his whole body spun round as if he had been hit by a revolver-bullet and he fell to the earth, and was there rolling at Ransom's feet, slaving and chattering and tearing up the moss by handfuls.

(p. 109; ellipsis in the original)

Although Ransom may wonder "whether this were a stroke or an epileptic fit," (p. 109) it is certain that Lewis is here reminding his reader of that which the reader may have read first in the gospels:

When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

(Mark 5:2-5, NIV)

Of course it is a dramatic convenience for Lewis that Weston should be demon-possessed. Much of the horror of Ransom's coming battle on Perelandra is to derive from the amphibious man/devil nature of his opponent, and in that respect the myth of Perelandra profits. But there remains the taint of the argumentum ad hominem in Lewis's tactic here: introducing the fact of Weston's possession by a demon into the tale at this point invites the reader to pre-judge the debates between Weston and Ransom which follow, concerning the rightness of implicit obedience to God. Certainly it was available to Lewis to demonstrate Weston's demon-possession after giving

Ransom the opportunity of exercising reason against the demonic arguments for disobedience.

Ransom is left with the comatose Weston on the Fixed Land to spend the night -- half afraid and half hoping that the man is dead. Next morning he discovers that Weston has left that island, and Ransom must ride on the back of one of the great fishes of Perelandra in an effort to prevent Weston from meeting the Lady or her husband, Tor. As the fish brings him to the Lady, Ransom sees in the depths over which he passes a race of mermen, the people of the Perelandrian seas:

He remembered his old suspicion that what was myth in one world might always be fact in some other. He wondered also whether the King and Queen of Perelandra, though doubtless the first human pair of this planet, might on the physical side have a marine ancestry. And if so, what then of the man-like things before men in our own world? Must they in truth have been the wistful brutalities whose pictures we see in popular books on evolution? Or 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)

Here again is a murmur of that hypothesis which we have heard before from Ransom, that the precincts of myth and of history and of truth itself might not be so sharply delineated as our traditional "terrestrial prejudices" have made them out to be. This is something of a leitmotiv in the novel, that the reality created by Maleldil must be, in all its fullness, more intricate and varied than even the clearest and best-directed of merely human perspectives can assimilate.

Ransom finds himself at last in the stygian blackness of the Perelandrian night, on one of the floating islands, and hears the

voices of Weston and the Lady engaged in a perilous dialogue:

"But you remember that we are not to live on the Fixed Land."

"No, but He has never forbidden you to think about it. Might not that be one of the reasons why you are forbidden to do it -- so that you may have a Might Be to think about, to make Story about as we call it?"
(p. 118)

"you could become more like the women of my world . . . They are of a great spirit. They always reach out their hands for the new and unexpected good, and see that it is good long before the men understand it. Their minds run ahead of what Maleldil has told them. They do not need to wait for Him to tell them what is good, but know it for themselves as He does. They are, as it were, little Maleldils. . . ."

(pp. 119-120)

In Genesis 3:5, the serpent says to Eve, "God doth know that in the day ye eat [of the forbidden fruit], then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Thus the nature of the confrontation on Perelandra has been explicitly established in these passages: we now know Weston's role, and that of the Lady, and we know also that prohibition which is for her what the warning not to eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree was to Eve. What is less clear, even to himself, is Ransom's part -- but the drama begins nonetheless. Weston's purpose is both simple and horrifying: when he tells the innocent Lady that he has come to her so that she might "have Death in abundance," (p. 130) it is as if the reader were the impotent witness of the seduction or the mutilation of a child.⁴ The Perelandrian tempter borrows the

⁴Weston's statement is a demonic inversion of the words of Christ: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

argument from Milton's Satan that Maleldil would surely "praise [Her] dauntless virtue whom the pain / Of death denounced, whatever thing death be."⁵ In all this the reader is made to feel the same frustration that Ransom feels, as he witness the temptation of Perelandra's witness without knowing what he can do to intervene. The first major assault by Weston is to make Tinidril believe that the prohibition against living on the Fixed Land is but the apparent will of Maleldil, and that His true will is that she should break His commandment. The Lady answers by saying that she cannot believe this to be true; she understands reality to be all one with the will of her God, that "'To walk out of His will is to walk into nowhere.'" (p. 132) Weston reiterates that perhaps the prohibition has been made only to allow the Lady to disobey. (p. 133) At this point Ransom intervenes and gives an alternative reason for the injunction: "'I think He made one law of that kind in order that there might be obedience. . . . Where can you taste the joy of obeying unless He bids you do something for which His bidding is the only reason?'" (p. 134) And with this reasoning the Lady joyfully concurs: "'We cannot walk out of Maleldil's will: but He has given us a way to walk out of our will. And there could be no such way except a command like this. Out of our own will.'" (pp. 134-135)

When it seems that the first repulse has been successful, Ransom feels himself falling into a further difficulty, and one not manageable by argument. Weston contradicts Ransom flatly, telling

⁵Paradise Lost, IX, 693-695.

the Lady that although Ransom calls him "young" (that is, foolish or ignorant), Weston does not agree: "'He says I am young, but I say not.'" (p. 135) And Weston, or the Unman which uses Weston's body, claims what Ransom cannot in truth deny: that the demon is "older" (in time) than his human opponent, greater in the created hierarchy, of much fuller experience. Thus the meaning of the word "older" as it has been used throughout their conversation is now wrested so as to cloak truth, and we are reminded of Satan quoting Scripture in Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. Ransom is tempted to use the weapon of the Enemy, and knows that he must not do so, at all costs: "The falsehood which sprang to his mind died on his lips. In that air, even when truth seemed fatal, only truth would serve." (p. 135) Ransom's immediate vocal response is what it must be -- regardless of the peril, his answer adheres strictly to the truth: "'In our world to be older is not always to be wiser.'" (p. 135) But when Weston goes on to tell the Lady that it was an action such as he now commends to her which brought Maleldil Himself to the earth as a man, a complaint which mounts to a great fear rises in Ransom's mind: "Unfair . . . unfair. How could Maleldil expect him to fight against this, to fight with every weapon taken from him, forbidden to lie and yet brought to places where truth seemed fatal?" (p. 137; ellipsis in the original) As Weston attempts to show Tinidril that Eve's disobedience had indirectly brought much good on Earth, Ransom begins even to doubt whether the real temptation might not be directed at himself, for the partial truth in Weston's rendering of felix peccatum Adae dismays him. But Ransom counters by showing that,

although ultimately good may indeed come from evil (because of Maldildil's power to make good of whatever comes), yet "the good He had prepared" would be by the act of disobedience "lost forever." (p. 138) Ransom presses on by challenging the demon in Weston to step further into the light of truth than he dares:

He turned to the body of Weston. "You," he said, "tell her all. What good came to you? Do you rejoice that Maleldil became a man? Tell her of your joys, and of what profit you had when you made Maleldil and death acquainted." . . . The body that had been Weston's threw up its head and opened its mouth and gave a long melancholy howl like a dog.

(pp. 138-139)

"Weston"'s sudden and complete loss of control gives Ransom a clearer idea of the nature of the thing he faces. Ransom recognizes that the apparently human actions and qualities of Weston are in fact the result of manipulation by the spirit in possession rather than a true indwelling; that most or all of what "humanity" remains in Weston is counterfeit:

Ransom had the sense of watching an imitation of living motions which had been very well studied and was technically correct: but somehow it lacked the master touch. And he was chilled with an inarticulate night-nursery horror of the thing he had to deal with -- the managed corpse, the bogey, the Un-man.

(p. 139)

This knowledge brings with it its own horrors. In the earlier part of his experiences on the planet Malacandra, Ransom had been haunted by fears of what that planet's creatures might be, imagining monstrosities in which bestial cruelty might combine with superhuman intelligence. What was then a mere phantom in his mind is now plain cold fact.

Weston's next action is radically simple and radically malicious: he merely calls out Ransom's name over and over again, incessantly, and when Ransom responds by asking the reason for it (as, many times, he cannot keep himself from doing), Weston replies only "'Nothing.'" (p. 140) Lear heard the word repeated only a few times before it maddened him, and its fatiguing repetition by Weston soon begins to work on Ransom:

For temptation, for blasphemy, for a whole battery of horrors, he was in some sort prepared: but hardly for this petty, indefatigable nagging as of a nasty little boy at a preparatory school. . . . On the surface, great designs and an antagonism to Heaven which involved the fate of worlds: but deep within, when every veil had been pierced, was there, after all, nothing but a black puerility, an aimless empty spitefulness content to sate itself with the tiniest cruelties, as love does not disdain the smallest kindness?
(pp. 140-141)

Lewis allows no grandly heroic evil characters. Evil is manifested in such a way that the reader cannot overlook the meanness and pettiness of its malice. Untruth and evil are, in Lewis's thought, so very nearly "nothing" themselves that the horror they inspire is always nearer to disgust than to awe:

[The Un-man] showed plenty of subtlety and intelligence when talking to the Lady; but Ransom soon perceived that it regarded intelligence simply and solely as a weapon, which it had no more wish to employ in its off-duty hours than a soldier has to do bayonet practice when he is on leave. Thought was for it a device necessary to certain ends, but thought itself did not interest it. . . . It had a whole repertory of obscenities to perform with its own -- or rather with Weston's -- body: and the mere silliness of them was almost worse than the dirtiness.
(pp. 146-147)

The Un-man is eminently practical: his sole purpose on Perelandra is to cause Tinidril to choose disobedience, and he is willing to use anything at all to accomplish that end, tormenting

Ransom by the mindless repetition of his name, performing acts of obscenity and cruelty so as to demoralize Ransom. Even so small a thing as a pocket mirror -- in which Tinidril can see her own physical likeness -- is used to awaken in her the "perilous image of her great soul" (p. 158) as if it were a player on a stage, able to take up one part in preference to another. And in all this Ransom feels himself to be utterly powerless, a mere spectator of Tinidril's temptation.

Ransom is pricked from his despairing lethargy by a renewed intuition of the immediate presence of Maleldil, that central Reality which brooks no evasion. He comes to recognize that in his own obedience to Maleldil he is in fact Maleldil's representative on the planet, that "if the issue lay in Maleldil's hands, Ransom and the Lady were those hands." (p. 161) He sees that the Un-man must succeed in bringing about the Fall of Perelandra unless he, Ransom, prevents it. When it occurs to Ransom that a prosaic physical fight which ended in the death of the body of Weston might foil the indwelling demon, his fear causes him to retreat for a moment into the old blinkered perspective of terrestrial prejudices: he argues with his conscience that such a combat "would degrade the spiritual warfare to the condition of mere mythology." (p. 163) But the memories of his own adventures on the planets remind Ransom that "the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact" simply does not hold in Maleldil's heavens -- that the divine Reality communicates itself to its creation in many modes. And these

truths concerning Maleldil Himself and that part of the great design which Ransom has been entrusted to perform in Maleldil's service seem to Ransom as "terrible jewels" placed in his hands by the "Presence in the Darkness." (p. 164)

Three forces have combined to impel Ransom on a course of action ordinate to created reality: his intellectual honesty which demands true answers of himself concerning his own motives and fears, his Malacandrian-ordered sense of the interpenetration of truth, fact and myth, and his intense consciousness of the "Presence in the Darkness." But Maleldil can bring, in addition to those "terrible jewels," a truth which brings comfort to Ransom: "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom," said the Voice." (p. 168) Ransom's academic discipline of philology had been important on Malacandra, when it had enabled him to win a fluency in the Old Solar language superior to Weston's: Lewis exploited this difference in order to undermine the philosophy of Westonism in Weston's trial before Oyarsa. Because of Ransom's training in philology, he knows that "his surname was derived not from ransom but from Ranolf's son"; (p. 168) that is, Ransom knows of no real philological connection between his own name and the verb "to ransom." But the Voice is the voice of truth, and when it insists upon a real relationship between the name "Ransom" and the name of "a payment that delivers," Ransom understands that the reality is deeper and wider than (merely) philological truth could possibly suggest, that he has borne his name all of his years for the sake of this moment and this action which he is to

perform on Perelandra. Thus there is a real analogy between his own duty here and Christ's duty in the crucifixion, a real analogy between the "myths" of ransom in both worlds. Furthermore, when the Voice suggests that Ransom's name has more than merely philological significance, it is restoring to Ransom something which the relentless nagging voice of the Un-man had taken from him: it restores meaning to Ransom himself by affirming that his very name has had from all time a significance which Ransom himself could never have guessed. Ransom begins to see a truth concerning the nature of cause within the created universe which had not occurred to him before -- that in the omnipotent and omniscient hands of Maleldil the universe must be devoid of random chance:

All in a moment of time he perceived that what was, to human philologists, a mere accidental resemblance of two sounds, was in truth no accident. The whole distinction between things accidental and things designed, like the distinction between fact and myth, was purely terrestrial. The pattern is so large that within the little frame of earthly experience there appear pieces of it between which we can see no connection, and other pieces between which we can. Hence we rightly, for our use, distinguish the accidental from the essential. But step outside that frame and the distinction drops down into the void, fluttering useless wings. He had been forced out of the frame, caught up into the larger pattern.

(p. 168)

Satisfied at last that he is performing as Maleldil's own agent on Perelandra, Ransom accepts his vocation. A terrible physical struggle ensues, between the body which had been Weston's, and Ransom. Ransom has no real advantage in the battle until he finds hatred -- "a torrent of perfectly unmixed and lawful hatred" (p. 177) -- welling up in him against the living corruption he fights. The

energy of hatred allows Ransom to prevail, and the Un-man flees from him across the island and thence into the sea, where two of the Lady's fishes provide mounts for an extended chase across the watery surface of the planet.

In the dimensionless Perelandrian darkness, borne across equally dimensionless seas, Ransom faces three wilderness temptations to abort his quest of the Un-man. The first temptation is an inversion of his perspective upon Perelandrian reality, occasioned by eating some of the seaweed which is the food of the planet's race of mermen:

As soon as he had eaten a few mouthfuls of the seaweed he felt his mind oddly changed. He felt the surface of the sea to be the top of the world. He thought of the floating islands as we think of clouds; he saw them in imagination as they would appear from below -- mats of fibre with long streamers hanging down from them, and became startingly conscious of his own experience in walking on the topside of them as a miracle or a myth. He felt his memory of the Green Lady and all her promised descendants and all the issues which had occupied him ever since he came to Perelandra rapidly fading from his mind, as a dream fades when we wake, or as if it were shouldered aside by a whole world of interests and emotions to which he could give no name. It terrified him. In spite of his hunger he threw the rest of the weed away.

(pp. 185-186)

Ransom's mind refuses to accommodate this alien perspective; although it is but one aspect of the whole of the planet's reality, he cannot assimilate it, for it seems to him that this way of knowing Perelandra and his own way cannot be reconciled. His difficulty arises from the unacknowledged assumption that reality can be ordered from within the understanding of a man or a merman -- this in spite of his better knowledge that it is the person of Maleldil

alone that reality is ordered, whose understanding overarches that of all His creatures. The differences in point of view must be reconciled on a plane to which Ransom's finite mind cannot give him access.

The second temptation rises out of the first: Ransom's imagination is obsessed by the mere fact of his isolation in the wilderness of the seas on an alien planet. He looks increasingly within himself to find a centre which will lend order to the whole of his experience on Perelandra, and, of course, does not find it where he seeks it:

The Empirical Bogey came surging into his mind -- 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. . . . Part of him still knew that the size of a thing is the least important characteristic, that the material universe derived from the comparing and mythopoeic power within him that very majesty before which he was now asked to abase himself, and that mere numbers could not overawe us unless we lent them, from our own resources, that awfulness which they themselves could no more supply than a banker's ledger. But this knowledge remained an abstraction. Mere bigness and loneliness overbore him.

(pp. 187-188)

What had been, for Ransom, the local centre of Perelandrian reality -- Tinidril and her husband Tor, the King whom Ransom has not yet seen, and Ransom's own actions on the planet in defence of Tinidril's innocent obedience to Maleldil -- has been challenged by the apparent indifference of the vast Perelandrian wilderness, and beyond that the cosmic wilderness. Once again Ransom errs in looking to the local order of experience when the ultimate, central

Reality, which alone can order the whole, is, though unseen, immanent. Ransom has very clear testimony in the memory of even that day's events, of the immanence of Maleldil, but his imagination is assailed again with images of a cold and indifferent universe where any man's actions are quite irrelevant, and his confidence in the rightness of his own course falters.

Ransom's third test in the wilderness comes when at last he approaches the Un-man, only to find that Professor Weston's consciousness seems to have re-surfaced briefly within that mutilated body. "Weston" himself attacks Ransom's resolve by the avenue of the imagination, putting forth his own image of the universe as a place in which physical life (that which Ransom seeks to take from him) is the only reprieve from an eternal godless Hades filled with the decaying spirits of the dead:

"all the dead have sunk down into the inner darkness: under the rind. All witless, all twittering, gibbering, decaying. Bogeymen. . . . Picture the universe as an infinite globe with this very thin crust on the outside. But remember its thickness is a thickness of time. It's about seventy years thick in the best places. We are born on the surface of it and all our lives we are sinking through it. When we've got all the way through then we are what's called Dead: we've got into the dark part inside, the real globe. If your God exists, He's not in the globe -- He's outside, like a moon. As we pass into the interior we pass out of His ken."

(pp. 192-193)

Ransom knows that the body of Weston has been, for some time now, "managed" by a demon; thus Weston's own spirit might indeed have journeyed to the world beyond death, and might even now be giving Ransom an accurate account of its own experience. Thus the image of the "hollow globe" cannot be dismissed lightly. Either Weston's

terrifying rantings are lies, or they are something far worse: a reality which makes of that which the living experience a mere convenient fabrication, a fiction of time: "'Real' and 'Unreal,' 'true' and 'false' -- they're all only on the surface. They give way the moment you press them." (p. 193) But these phantoms of the imagination are dispelled from Ransom's mind when he and Weston are confronted by an unequivocal challenge to their physical lives: they hear the sound of breakers on a nearby cliff in the darkness, and Ransom attempts even to lend courage to a raving and cursing Weston: "'Say a child's prayer if you can't say a man's. Repent your sins. Take my hand.'" (p. 196) But as he shouts to the wind and darkness, Weston's arms pinion his legs and drag him deep below the surface of the sea.

When the two again reach the surface, after an agonizingly prolonged descent, there is a confused struggle in the pitch darkness on a pebbled beach, which ends with Ransom choking the breath at last from the body of the Un-man. There by the corpse, Ransom waits out a night which is not ended by dawn, and he finds that Weston has dragged him under the sea to an underground cavern. Unable to return to the outer air by the way he has come, Ransom ascends blindly through the dark caves, until he becomes aware of noises in the darkness which are not the products of his own movement, and must prepare himself to face either a revived Weston or some other horror native to the underlands. He struggles upward to a broad cavern hotly and garishly lit by a river of magma, where phantom images of Hell and subterranean fire fuse and meld in his

mind with what he remembers of Weston's account of the universe, and the combined images pushes Ransom very close to despair:

Suddenly and irresistably, like an attack by tanks, that whole view of the universe which Weston (if it were Weston) had so lately preached to him, took all but complete possession of his mind. He seemed to see that he had been living all his life in a world of illusion. . . . a quarter of a mile beneath the surface, and from thence through thousands of miles of dark and silence and infernal fire, to the very heart of each, Reality lived -- the meaningless, the unmade, the omnipotent idiocy to which all spirits were irrelevant and before which all efforts were vain.
(p. 207)

This is the second part of Ransom's third wilderness temptation, for he is once again tempted into mistaking the immediate circumstance for the ultimate reality. This "underland perspective" threatens to overwhelm Ransom's imagination as the perspective of the mermen had very nearly done, until Weston appears in the cavern, and beside him a huge, insect-like monster of the underland. Coming so hard on the heels of Ransom's last wave of despair, Weston's reappearance convinces Ransom that it was he, the Enemy, who had orchestrated Ransom's own terrors of fire, darkness, suffocation and insects, to unman him. But the tactic achieves the reverse of Weston's intention, for the violation of his mind galvanizes Ransom with a holy rage, and he hurls a stone which crushes at last the head of the Un-man.

After his final victory over the Un-man is accomplished, Ransom renews his ascent through the underlands, until at last he slides into a torrent of water which carries him unharmed through a smooth rock channel to a great pool atop the mountain through which he has climbed. Ransom is, in effect, reborn to "a second

infancy . . . breast-fed by the planet Venus herself: unweaned till he moved from that place." (p. 213) There he is healed of his hurts, except where Weston's teeth have left him with a wounded heel.

In what is generally regarded as a messianic prophecy, Genesis 3:15 says "he [Christ] will crush your [the serpent's] head, and you shall strike his heel," (NIV) and Lewis has followed this suggestion implicitly in the details of the battle between Ransom and Weston. Weston died when Ransom's flung rock crushed his head, and now Ransom lives with a perpetual reminder of Weston's "stroke" on his body. This allusion is a reminder of that which the Voice from the Darkness had revealed to Ransom before the battle, that his very name had been given as token of the analogy between Ransom's "death" on Perelandra and Christ's death on earth.

The last section of Perelandra describes the induction of Tor and Tinidril as Perelandra's King and Queen. Ransom makes his way from his mountain-top infirmary to a sheltered valley between twin peaks of a yet greater mountain, a valley cloaked with red blossoms and so like distant memories of the terrestrial Paradise that Ransom "looked to see an angel with a flaming sword." (p. 222) There to receive him are the tutelary spirit of Malacandra, and the Oyarsa of Perelandra, who is present to commit her planet to the care of its new monarchs.

The two great eldila ask Ransom's advice as to how best they might make themselves appear to Tor and Tinidril, to do them honour at their coronation. Ransom witnesses three separate appearances of the two eldila. The first of these suggest primitive accounts of

the visitation of the earth by gods, or the messengers of the gods -- "darting pillars filled with eyes, lightning pulsations of flame, talons and beaks and billowy masses of what suggested snow." (p. 227) The second appearance is merely an image of "concentric wheels moving with a rather sickening slowness one inside the other." (p. 227)⁶ The third appearance of the eldila, and that which ultimately they adopt in honour of Tor and Tinidril at their coronation, is so true to the image of Mars and Venus which Ransom carries in his mind from his knowledge of terrestrial mythology that he is left wondering how such celestial truth can have penetrated the military boundary of the "silent planet" at all. The eldila explain to him that these truths are the dim echoes of earth's former happy communion with Maleldil, before Satan's fall and before Paradise was forfeited because of man's sin:

In the mind of the fallen Archon under whom our planet groans, the memory of Deep Heaven and the gods with whom he once consorted is still alive. Nay, in the very matter of our world, the traces of the celestial commonwealth are not quite lost. Memory passes through the womb and hovers in the air. The Muse is a real thing. A faint breath, as Virgil says, reaches even the late generations. Our mythology is based on a solidier reality than we dream: but it is also at an almost infinite distance from that base. And when they told him this, Ransom at last understood why mythology was what it was -- gleams of celestial strength and beauty falling on a jungle of filth and imbecility.

(pp. 231-232)

⁶This suggests the four zoa which were a part of Ezekiel's "visions of God": Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces . . . their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. (Ezekiel 1:15-16)

This is Lewis's theologised rendering of Jung's theory of the collective unconscious. In "Psycho-Analysis and Literary Criticism," Lewis has admitted that his own temperament suits him to membership in that group which is "enchanted" by Jung's theories, but that his training has made him sympathetic to those who are repelled, who "have a sense of being lured by sirens or got at by mystagogues."⁷ What attracted Lewis to the theory of the collective unconscious was of course its mythic quality, that "even if it turns out to be bad science it is excellent poetry. . . . Jung's discussion of 'primordial images' itself awakes a primordial image of the first water."⁸ By positing, as part of the "silent planet" myth, that the old stories of the gods which seem the common property of all peoples are ultimately derived from memories of real "gods" -- the eldila of the heavens, in their former intercourse with the earth before earth's rebellion and siege -- Lewis redeems for his own fiction what he feels to be good and true in the old myths. From this perspective, those bits of mythology which show something of the glory and grandeur of the eldila in their service of Maleldil are the "gleams of celestial strength and beauty"; the anthropomorphic immorality and futility attributed to these dimly-remembered beings in the stories told about them by men in later years constitute the "jungle of filth and imbecility" upon which those gleams of truth fall.

⁷Selected Literary Essays, p. 297.

⁸Ibid., pp. 197, 199.

In Perelandra's concluding pages, which describe the festival celebrating Tor and Tinidril's crowning, the novel's two major themes -- the interpenetration of truth, myth and fact, and the dismantling of the Empirical Bogey of space and time -- are caught up in a kind of oratorio on the Great Dance of the universe, in which Ransom, the new King and Queen, and the great eldila each have a part. Ransom confesses himself to be "full of doubts and ignorance" concerning the pattern of created reality, because of the human need to regard some single point of time or space or action as central to any pattern. (p. 245) The "oratorio" is in substance and in form the answer to Ransom's doubts and ignorances. The tenor of this extended hymn of praise is that all of the created cosmos is a reflection of the character and presence of the Creator; that each particle of existence has by that reason its own real claim to centrality. Ransom sees that Tor (by virtue of his unfallen will and majestic kingship), Perelandra (by virtue of her puissant rule over her planet) and Ransom himself (by virtue of his sacrifice for Tinidril) are all "echoes" of Maleldil himself, each a true representative of a different facet of Maledil's infinite reality. The form of the hymn is a "conversation" which is not bound by the necessity of pause, and which rolls on without the least possibility of misunderstanding or confusion among the participants. It is Lewis's rendering of the scene which Milton describes, where before the throne of God the sons of God have their joyful occupation

In song and dance about the sacred hill --
 Mystical dance, which yonder starry sphere
 Resembles nearest; mazes intricate
 Eccentric, interwolved, yet regular

Then most when most irregular they seem;
 And in their motions harmony divine
 So smooths her charming tones that God's own ear
 Listens delighted.⁹

Lewis's description of the heavens' same "revelry of insatiable love" (from The Discarded Image) rivals Milton's own:

In them the highest of faculties is always exercised without impediment on the noblest object; without satiety, since they can never completely make His perfection their own, yet never frustrated, since at every moment they approximate to Him in the fullest measure of which their nature is capable.¹⁰

It is this grave revelry which Lewis seeks to represent in the hymn of the eldila, Ransom, Tor and Tinidril; their participation in what he has elsewhere called the "fugue" of reality, the interwoven pattern of several truths of God's nature and action which echo and rhyme and harmonize with each other infinitely:

Divine reality is like a fugue. All His acts are different, but they all rhyme or echo to one another. It is this that makes Christianity so difficult to talk about. Fix your mind on any one story or any one doctrine and it becomes at once a magnet to which truth and glory come rushing from all levels of being.¹¹

When at its conclusion Ransom discovers that their dance of words has occupied a Perelandrian year (although he had not been aware of the passage of time) it becomes apparent that the Empirical Bogey has been at last dismantled: time can no longer impose its limitations, the chaos of the cosmic particles has been shown to

⁹Paradise Lost, V, 618-627.

¹⁰The Discarded Image, p. 119.

¹¹"Miracles," in Undeceptions, p. 15.

be a dance, the vast distances and voids of "space" are in fact full with the fulness of Maleldil.

Ransom is sent on his way back to the earth by Tor and Tinidril, but they discover that he will carry Weston's mark upon him even there. The wounded heel will not be staunched. Tinidril wonders if the wound will cause Ransom to die, but Tor's opinion is that Ransom "will not find it easy to die" after having been on Perelandra. (p. 254) By this comment, Lewis prepares for the introduction of a "new" Ransom in That Hideous Strength: having proved his spiritual maturity through his ordeals on the planet, and having subsequently been reborn from Venus herself, Dr. Elwin Ransom has become by now very nearly an immortal, and his participation in the Great Dance of the heavens is to continue even during the remainder of his "exile" on Earth.

III

THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH

In the preface to That Hideous Strength, Lewis reveals that the "serious point" behind this "'tall story' about devilry" has been set forth in his small work, The Abolition of Man. A brief glance at the non-fictional presentation of Lewis's concerns is a valuable introduction to the world of That Hideous Strength.

The occasion of The Abolition of Man is a critique of the philosophy latent in an English literature text written for use in preparatory schools. Lewis's critique is subtitled, "Reflections on education with special reference to the teaching of English in the upper forms of schools"; (p. 3) the identity of the text to which he takes exception is disguised by referring to it as "The Green Book"; its authors as "Gaius and Titius." (p. 7) Lewis attacks the assumption by the authors of The Green Book that all human values derive ultimately from subjective expression of sentiment; and that, for this reason, such values are irrational and meaningless. Lewis demonstrates in his first chapter, "Men Without Chests," that this philosophy is implicit in virtually all of The Green Book's comments upon literature, and that the effect of this upon its intended readers must be to instil in them an unexamined prejudice against the importance and value of human sensibility:

[Gaius' and Titius'] words are that we "appear to be saying something important" when in reality we are "only saying something about our own feelings." No schoolboy will be able to resist the suggestion brought to bear upon him by that word only. I do not mean of course, that he will make any conscious inference from what he reads to a general philosophical theory that all values are subjective and trivial. . . . It is not a theory they put into his mind, but an assumption, which ten years hence, its origin forgotten and its presence unconscious, will condition him to take one side in a controversy which he has never recognized as a controversy at all.

(p. 9)

In place of this philosophy which implies the absence of both objective value and essential order in the universe, Lewis advocates a return to a philosophy of education founded upon "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 thing we are." (p. 16) For this doctrine Lewis adopts the title of "the Tao," from the Chinese word for "the way, the path, the right way (of life), reason."

(O.E.D.)

The Tao presupposes a universe of order and coherence, in which human action and thought are reasonable and valid insofar as they are congruent to the universal order, and unreasonable and invalid insofar as they are not congruent to it. Thus, actions are good or bad as they are judged from the precepts of the Tao, and thought is true or false on the same basis:

In early Hinduism that conduct in men which can be called good consists in conformity to, or almost participation in the Rta -- that great ritual or pattern of nature and supernature which is revealed alike in the cosmic order, the moral virtues, and the ceremonial of the temple. Righteousness, correctness, order, the Rta is constantly identified with satya or truth, correspondence to reality. . . .

our approvals and disapprovals are thus recognitions of objective value or responses to an objective order.
(pp. 15,16)

Lewis closes his first chapter by insisting on the vital contribution of just those sentiments derided by the authors of The Green Book in providing that rational order in man which is to mirror the essential order of the universe:

Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal organism. . . . The Chest -- Magnanimity -- Sentiment -- these are the indispensable liaison officers between cerebral man and visceral man. It may even be said that it is by this middle element that man is man; for by his intellect he is mere spirit and by his appetite mere animal.
(p. 19)

The title of the second chapter of The Abolition of Man is simply a translation into English of the word Tao itself: "The Way." Lewis begins by demonstrating that the precepts of the Tao ("which others may call Natural Law or Traditional Morality or the First Principles of Practical Reason or the First Platitudes," p. 29) cannot come as the conclusion of logical argument; but that such argument, even the operation of rationality itself and the motive of any rational action, demands the precepts of the Tao as premisses:

From propositions about fact alone no practical conclusion can ever be drawn. This will preserve society cannot lead to do this except by the mediation of society ought to be preserved. . . . The Innovator is trying to get a conclusion in the imperative mood out of premisses in the indicative mood: and though he continues trying to all eternity he cannot succeed, for the things is impossible.
(p. 23)

All the practical principles . . . are there from time immemorial in the Tao. . . . You cannot reach them as conclusion: they are premisses . . . things so obviously

reasonable that they neither demand nor admit proof. But then you must allow that Reason can be practical, that an ought must not be dismissed because it cannot produce some is as its credential. If nothing is self-evident, nothing can be proved.

(pp. 27-28)

The "Innovator" against whom Lewis is tilting is that educator who attempts to "improve upon" established precepts of morality and value, with precepts of his own design. Lewis cautions that if such a man really means to discard the Tao (with the idea of "wiping the slate clean"), the new philosophy which he will embrace is bound to be an inhuman philosophy, because the precepts of the Tao are fundamental to man's very humanity. This is not to say that there is no philosophical development within the Tao, but change of any part must be accomplished in the spirit of the whole if it is not to do serious violence to it:

From within the Tao itself comes the only authority to modify the Tao. . . . the man who stands outside . . . may be hostile, but he cannot be critical. . . . The legitimate reformer endeavours to show that the precept in question conflicts with some precept which its defenders allow to be more fundamental, or that it does not really embody the judgement of value it professes to embody.

(p. 31)

Having devoted two chapters of his little book to a consideration of misguided attempts to change fundamental human values, Lewis considers in his third and final chapter those who would have not other values for man, but no values at all. The imagined result of a successful campaign for the eradication of human values is given in the chapter title from which the book takes its general title: "The Abolition of Man." Lewis imagines a man who truly believes that all values are irrational, and who

seeks to instil in all men his new and value-disdaining "rationality." Lewis sees this philosophy, latent in those who celebrate the myth of an inexorable and ever more perfect advance in the applied sciences, as hastening the process of "man's conquest of Nature." In an analysis of those real powers over Nature which Man truly possesses in our modern world, Lewis shows that "any or all . . . can be withheld from some men by other men," and that ultimately, "Man's power [over Nature] is, in reality, a power possessed by some men which they may, or may not, allow other men to profit by"; (p. 34) thus "what we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument." (p. 35)

The ultimate "victory" of Man over Nature, Lewis argues, will come when Man has taken his own species in hand, "when Man by eugenics, by pre-natal conditioning, and by an education and propaganda based on a perfect applied psychology, had obtained full control over himself"; (p. 37) but, as in every other of the avenues of conquest, this leads ultimately to "the power of some men to make other men what they please." (p. 37) Since, in the scenario which Lewis has laid before us, the "last conquest of Nature" has been carried out by those who admit of no values whatever, it is worth considering what the motive of their work in the conquest of Man's nature will be:

All motives that claim any validity other than that of their felt emotional weight at a given moment have failed them. Everything except the sic volo, sic jubeo has been explained away. But what never claimed objectivity cannot be destroyed by subjectivism. The impulse to scratch when I itch or to pull to pieces when I am inquisitive is immune from the

solvent which is fatal to my justice, or honour, or care for posterity. When all that says "it is good" has been debunked what says "I want" remains. . . . Those who stand outside all judgements of value cannot have any ground for preferring one of their own impulses to another except the emotional strength of that impulse.

(p. 40)

This visceral or "instinctive" impulse will thus be the real conqueror, for it will rule the rulers. At last, says Lewis, Man's conquest of Nature is conquest by her over our humanity.

Before he brings this little book to a close, Lewis does ask whether the forces which he has observed working toward Man's abolition might not yet be re-directed, whether it might not still be "possible to imagine a new Natural Philosophy, continually conscious that the 'natural object' produced by analysis and abstraction is not reality but only a view, and always correcting the abstraction?" (p. 47) The work ends with a delightfully imagined criticism of the limitations of analytical criticism itself:

You cannot go on "seeing through" things for ever. The whole point of seeing through something is to see something through it. It is good that the window should be transparent, because the street or garden beyond it is opaque. How if you saw through the garden too? It is no use trying to "see through" first principles. If you see through everything, then everything is transparent. But a wholly transparent world is an invisible world. To "see through" all things is the same as not to see.

(p. 48)

What The Abolition of Man expresses as philosophy, That Hideous Strength clothes in fiction. In the first two books of the Ransom trilogy, Lewis has caused his reader already to consider a universe of order and coherence whose reality owns one great personal Centre, a universe to which (to quote The Abolition once

more) "certain emotional reactions on our part [are] either congruous or incongruous." (p. 14) To this orderly and coherent universe, and specifically to a small English university town, Lewis brings an organisation which calls itself the National Institute for Co-ordinated Experiments (N.I.C.E.), whose human leaders are of that innovative school which denies the existence of truth and of goodness and indeed of all of the values maintained in the Tao. In accordance too with the view of a peopled universe, full of created hnau, or rational beings, which he has presented in Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra, Lewis suggests in this third book that the human actions of the N.I.C.E. are to some degree orchestrated by the fallen eldila of the "silent planet," the servants of the Dark Archon of Earth who are called macrobes by the initiates of the N.I.C.E. The forces of darkness are opposed by the Company of St. Anne's, a group loyal to Maleldil, whose Director is Dr. Elwin Ransom.

The informing literary model of That Hideous Strength is the biblical story of the days of the building of Babel, when the men of Shinar said, "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Gen. 11:4) The ambitious project on the plain of Shinar ended with God's judgement on man's attempt to be master of his own kind -- a judgement of direct intervention, and of confusion of the builders' language: "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language." (Gen. 11:7) The upward movement of man's ambition

("let us build . . . unto heaven") is answered from the heavens: "let us go down." And so, too, in Lewis's account of a modern Babel: the ambitions of some few men at Edgestow to take humanity's future into their own hands (and, behind and beneath them, the ambitions of the dark eldila who are their subtle masters), are thwarted by a visitation of the great eldila in Maleldil's service, the "intelligences" of the planets, into whose heavens Dr. Elwin Ransom has twice journeyed.

That Hideous Strength is the most difficult of the Ransom tales to discuss adequately, because of Lewis's departure from the pattern of fantastic voyage or picaresque adventure established in the first two works of the trilogy. In this third tale, Ransom never moves from the Manor of St. Anne's, which has become his home and the headquarters of a Company assembled around him to aid in the struggle against those dark forces which had possessed Weston on Perelandra. Since Ransom is static, the trilogy's familiar preoccupation with the subjects of reality, truth and perspective, (which remains central in spite of Lewis's new approach to it in this work) is brought forward much less in action than in conversation: no longer does Ransom enact the myth which will convey reality whole into the mind of the reader; instead, several myths already familiar to the reader are enacted around Ransom. Lewis invokes the legends of Arthur and Merlin, the Fisher King and the biblical story of Babel, alludes briefly to Tolkien's Numenor and the myth of Atlantis, and recalls the conclusion of the Odyssey (in that Ransom returns from exotic battles and

adventures only to find confusion reigning within his own "home," the earth). Thus the narrative never assumes that satisfactory mythic shape which we have come to expect from the first two "Ransom" books.

In a letter to William L. Kinter (July 30, 1954), Lewis wrote that he felt That Hideous Strength to be about "a triple conflict: Grace against Nature and Nature against Anti-Nature (modern industrialism, scientism + totalitarian policies)."¹ The "Anti-Nature" contingent (the N.I.C.E. at Belbury) are those who have rejected utterly that code of thought and conduct ordinate to reality which is preserved within the Tao. Driven by demonic forces, the N.I.C.E. strives against the God-ordained realities of "Nature" (which is here both "the natural world" and "the nature of man") and "Grace" (represented by the eldila, Ransom, and the Company of St. Anne's). This contest between reality and unreality is focussed in the lives of Mark and Jane Studdock, a young sociologist and his wife. Although the novel's scene of action dodges regularly between Belbury and St. Anne's (in order to reinforce the contrast between the forces of darkness and light resident in those places), three general developments within the overall plot provide a useful framework for analysis: Mark's gradual absorption by Belbury and Jane's enlistment with the Company of St. Anne's, the search for Merlin and the descent of the gods, and the resolution of conflict

¹A letter in the Marion E. Wade Collection, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois; it has been quoted in part in the Biography, p. 179.

between Mark and Jane which follows upon the cataclysmic meeting of the real and the unreal at Belbury.

Mark Studdock is introduced to the reader as a young man desperately afraid of being left outside of any group which he considers to have power or prestige. He is prepared to pretend a liking for any thing or person which will serve to secure his position within the "progressive element" of Bracton, the little coterie of influence within his own college. This clique is observed in action at a college business meeting at which they engineer acceptance of the N.I.C.E.'s proposal to buy from them the wood which shelters Merlin's well (and, under the well, the body of Merlin himself, whom they hope to enlist on their side upon his waking from a fifteen-hundred-years' sleep).

The outcome of the ostensibly democratic meeting is not left to chance by the "progressive element." First, it is impressed upon the fellows of the college that the wall protecting Bragdon Wood is in urgent need of repair, and that, failing such repair, interference by outside agencies into college affairs is likely to increase. Second on the agenda of the meeting is a discussion of a proposal to raise the meagre stipends of the junior fellows of the college, which proposal is very carefully brought forward in the wake of the previous discussion concerning the need for protection of Bragdon; thus "every junior had it fixed in his mind that a new wall for the Wood and a rise in his own stipend were strictly exclusive alternatives." (p. 26) It remains only for the Bursar to bring before the meeting a somewhat sombre picture of the college's

financial situation before the "progressive element" is ready to table their most significant proposal:

It was not called "the sale of Bragdon Wood." The Bursar called it the "sale of the area coloured pink on the plan which, with the Warden's permission, I will now pass round the table." He pointed out quite frankly that this involved the loss of part of Bragdon Wood. In fact, the proposed N.I.C.E. site still left to the College a strip about sixteen feet broad along the far half of the south side, but there was no deception for the Fellows had the plan to look at with their own eyes. It was a small-scale plan and not perhaps perfectly accurate -- only meant to give one a general idea. In answer to questions he admitted that unfortunately -- or perhaps fortunately -- the Well itself was in the area which the N.I.C.E. wanted. . . . The advantages of the sale discovered themselves one by one like ripe fruit dropping into the hand. It solved the problem of the wall: it solved the problem of protecting ancient monuments: it solved the financial problem: it looked like solving the problem of the junior Fellows' stipends.
(pp. 27-28)

As Lewis's narrator has ironically reported them, the tactics of the "progressive element" have been, to this point in the meeting, fairly mild. They have merely made a careful use of euphemism and generally obscure language, suppressed some potentially embarrassing information, provided a deliberately inaccurate map, subtly manipulated the agenda papers, carefully orchestrated proposal and response before the fact, and exercised some nimble circumlocution in order to avoid stirring "inappropriate" sentiments among the dons. But when one of the "obscurantists" of the college threatens to challenge the glib presentation on just those grounds which have been so carefully avoided -- "the claims of sentiment against progress and beauty against utility" (p. 22) -- the clique responds with a calculated brutality:

When at last old Jewel, blind and shaky and almost weeping, rose to his feet, his voice was hardly audible. . . . At this moment Lord Feverstone sprang to his feet, folded his arms, and looking straight at the old man said in a very loud, clear voice:

"If Canon Jewel wishes us not to hear his views, I suggest that his end could be better attained by silence."

Jewel had been already an old man in the days before the first war when old men were treated with kindness, and he had never succeeded in getting used to the modern world. He stared with puzzled eyes in the direction of Feverstone.

. . .

The motion was carried.

(pp. 28-29)

The earlier mild evasions and this treatment of Canon Jewel are of a piece: the clique's willingness to twist the truth and eventually to lie outright in order to ensure the sale of wood and well to the N.I.C.E. are tokens of their disdain of the same moral code which demands respect for the charitable treatment of old and wise men. Lewis's suggestion is clear: the rejection of any of the Tao's values outright puts the innovator on a slippery slope which ends in brutality.

The "Lord Feverstone" who silenced Canon Jewel is the same Devine who was Weston's collaborator in Out of the Silent Planet. He is now a member of the N.I.C.E. (as well as of Bracton College), and meets with Mark Studdock after the business meeting in order to recruit him to the Institute. What Feverstone does not reveal to Mark is that the N.I.C.E. wants him (at first) only so as to have access to his wife, whose "dreams" they hope will lead them to the resurrected Merlin when the time comes. Feverstone tells Mark about the three major areas in which the N.I.C.E., the proponents of "order," envision themselves working. The first of these projects (deferred since the death of Weston on Perelandra) was to have

been the solution of the "interplanetary problem," by which mankind would have jumped perpetually from planet to planet and galaxy to galaxy, in the attempt to achieve perpetuity for the species. The second of the N.I.C.E.'s objectives is for man to clear the earth of all competing species. The third project is "to take charge of man," by "sterilisation of the unfit, liquidation of backward races (we don't want any dead weights), selective breeding. Then real education, including pre-natal education [which] . . . makes the patient what it wants infallibly: whatever he or his parents try to do about it." (p. 46)² Mark is beguiled by this prospect of becoming one of an arch and powerful elite of man-moulders, operating in secrecy and dealing with heavy condescension to those outside the clique. Feverstone tells Mark that the N.I.C.E. wants him for his sociological training in a "radically realistic outlook" (p. 47) -- that is, an outlook which claims no fundamental values, order or sentiment as lending it validity -- and also to be an in-house propagandist, working the same circumlocutions and studied imprecisions which had cloaked the real business of the "progressive element" at Bracton College.

Once at Belbury, the headquarters of the N.I.C.E., Mark discovers that two of its members in particular epitomize the

²There is an incongruity here which Lewis makes no attempt to explain. When Devine was introduced in Out of the Silent Planet, it was very clear that he cared nothing for the philosophy of Westonism and its apparent offer of perpetual life for the descendants of Man: what interested Devine was the scheme's potential for his own immediate material profit. We can only surmise that Devine has become a convert to the more esoteric and philosophical aspects of Westonism since the time of those events recorded in Out of the Silent Planet.

same deliberate vagueness and imprecision, and the brutality, seen in Bracton's "progressive element." The first is Wither, Deputy Director, who fulfills by his conversational style that impression of "something rather vague and chaotic" first made upon Mark by the man's physiognomy. After Mark's question as to the exact nature of the task he is expected to perform by the N.I.C.E. has been ignored and evaded so often by Wither as to strain their conversation severely, we receive the following analysis of the state of mind produced in Mark by this man of "elasticity," of fog and shadow:

Mark did not ask again in so many words what the N.I.C.E. wanted him to do; partly because he began to be afraid that he was supposed to know this already, and partly because a perfectly direct question would have sounded a crudity in that room -- a crudity which might suddenly exclude him from the warm and almost drugged atmosphere of vague, yet heavily important, confidence in which he was gradually being enfolded. . . . whenever the slow, gentle voice ceased he found himself answering it in its own style, and apparently helpless to do otherwise despite the torturing recurrence of the question, "What are we both talking about?"

(pp. 61-62)

Lewis focusses the brutality latent in the N.I.C.E.'s philosophy in the person of the chief of the Institutional Police, Fairy Hardcastle, a grotesque characature of what a human creature who truly is outside of traditional morality might become:

Her face was square, stern, and pale, and her voice deep. A smudge of lip-stick laid on with violent inattention to the real shape of her mouth was her only concession to fashion, and she rolled or chewed a long black cheroot, unlit, between her teeth.

(p. 70)

Fairy Hardcastle's name is of course heavily ironic, juxtaposing as it does the suggestions of fairy-tales (in which enchanted

castles play so large a part) and that other sort of "hard castle," the bastille of which she is mistress. We learn later in the story that "the Fairy" is a sadistic homosexual, who enjoys torturing certain of her female prisoners, Jane Studdock among them. But perhaps the most important detail in Lewis's portrait of Fairy Hardcastle is that her lipstick has been applied "with violent inattention to the real shape of her mouth." (emphasis added) This woman is by nature utterly and violently opposed to reality: the evidence is on her very lips.

Belbury's perversions stem from rejection of the fundamental precepts of morality -- of those attitudes and actions proper to the real nature of the universe and of man as created by God -- and by their allegiance to the dark eldila, or macrobes, of the "silent planet," whose aim it is to pervert and negate all that has been created good. Lewis uses Ransom to describe the progression from the initial rejection of truth concerning the created reality, to the ultimate destination of the N.I.C.E., where they would control man himself, and man's world, in the place of God. Ransom sees in the history of the philosophy of science a preparation on the human side for such an alliance with demonic power, a preparation to accept the lie of "Man Omnipotent" which began to be promulgated when men began to despair of knowing objective truth:

The physical sciences, good and innocent in themselves, had already, even in Ransom's own time, begun to be warped, had been subtly manoeuvred in a certain direction. 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 elan vital and flirtations with pan-psychism were bidding fair

to restore the Anima Mundi of the magicians. Dreams of the far future destiny of man were dragging up from its shallow and unquiet grave the old dream of Man as God. . . . What should they find incredible, since they believed no longer in a rational universe? What should they regard as too obscene, since they held that all morality was a mere subjective by-product of the physical and economic situations of men?

(pp. 248-249)

The course charted in this analysis (and in The Abolition of Man) is from the rejection of God (the centre of reality and creator of a rational universe) to despair of reaching objective certitude concerning the nature of the cosmos, to despair of those other absolute values preserved within the Tao, to relativism and pragmatism, and ultimately to the erosion of all objective value, at which point power alone must decide whose subjective impulses are to be obeyed. The choice which faces the earth in That Hideous Strength is explicit: that there be recognition of the hierarchy of reality and authority depending from the Person of Maleldil, and that the existence of objective truth and the other values of the Tao in a rational universe be accepted as premisses and acted upon, that man should assume again his rightful place in the universal Order; or else that these principles be forgotten, strength should rule, and the place in the Order be forfeit. Mark himself is unable to resist being sucked into the vortex of the N.I.C.E. because his own training has left him with but a tenuous grasp of the distinction between the real and the unreal:

his education had had the curious effect of making things that he read and wrote more real to him than things he saw. Statistics about agricultural labourers were the substance: any real ditcher, ploughman, or farmer's boy, was the shadow. Though he had never noticed it himself, he

had a great reluctance, in his work, ever to use such words as "man" or "woman." He preferred to write about "vocational group," "elements," "classes," and "populations," for, in his own way, he believed as firmly as any mystic in the superior reality of the things that are not seen.

(p. 104)

It is clear that Lewis enjoys his own little slap at the type of latter day "mystic" Studdock represents, but the point is still a serious one: the language of pseudo-science deliberately substitutes shadows for substance. For Mark himself, this perverted mysticism does not conceal the fact that the details of his own appointment to the N.I.C.E. remain nebulous. But his attempts to clear away some of the fog concerning just what is expected of him there do not endear him to the authorities. As Miss Hardcastle puts it, "'Making things clear is the one thing the [Deputy Director] can't stand.'" (p. 116) When Mark is first blackmailed by the threat of dismissal from both the Institute and Bracton College into abject service within the N.I.C.E., his great anxiety "at all costs not to be placed among the outsiders," (p. 64) and his fear of poverty, are sufficient for the time to secure his co-operation. Later, when the authorities at Belbury have him so firmly in their grasp that they can afford to drop the euphemisms and evasions, Mark is told bluntly that he must bring Jane to the N.I.C.E. or die, and he succumbs to their coercion once more. The narrator ironically "excuses" this cowardly decision by pointing out that the strengths of character within Mark which would have persuaded him against such a decision simply did not exist, that they had not been planted and nurtured in him by those who had taught him:

It must be remembered that 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, a glib examinee in subjects that require no exact knowledge (he had always done well on Essays and General Papers) and the first hint of a real threat to his bodily life knocked him sprawling.

(p. 226)

Mark Studdock fails for the lack of that which Lewis has set out in The Abolition of Man as the very foundation of true humanity: "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 thing we are."³ Studdock's "education" has not led him even to consider the possibility that objective reality may exist; still less has it led him to believe that one or another of his own thoughts or actions might be congruent or incongruent to such reality. Thus Mark is at the mercy of his own subjective impulses, and among these it is the impulse for self-preservation which clamors most loudly for pre-eminence.

After Jane has been taken and then lost again by the N.I.C.E., it is decided that Mark may be of use to the Institute as an initiate into the very highest of their mysteries, one of those who (like Wither and his colleague Frost) open themselves to immediate contact with the demons who are the real directors of the Institute. Mark is imprisoned on a trumped-up charge of murder so as to render him malleable, but his thoughts while in prison

³Abolition, p. 16.

revert to Jane and to some members of the Company of St. Anne's with whom he is acquainted, who now seem to him fortunate in that they are able to perceive and to find pleasure in real things. He reviews his own career of evasion, deceit and pretense, undertaken for the sake of pleasing worse liars than himself, and is disgusted at his own sham and hypocrisy. Mark begins to hunger after some of the good and blameless things outside of himself which, he recognises, Jane has always valued and enjoyed. He thinks that if, as seems likely, he is soon to die, his death will at least liberate Jane to the enjoyment of "things for their own sake," (p. 304) and the thought is some consolation to him, even with the knowledge that he will not share these things with Jane. The desire for innocent life newly awakened in Mark, a desire that goodness and innocent pleasure should be real things even if he himself should be denied them, brings about a radical shift in his perception of the world. The token of this shift comes with the entrance into Mark's cell of Professor Frost:

In one sense everything about Professor Frost was as it had always been -- the pointed beard, the extreme whiteness of forehead, and the bright Arctic smile. But Mark could not understand how he had ever managed to overlook something about the man so obvious that any child would have shrunk away from him and any dog would have backed into the corner with raised hackles and bared teeth. Death itself did not seem more frightening than the fact that only six hours ago he would in some measure have trusted this man, and made believe that his society was not disagreeable.

(pp. 304-305)

The awakening of a simple desire of things good for their own sake has re-ordered Mark's perspective upon reality itself. To see himself clearly, to recognize the "concentrated insipidity" (p. 303)

of his life as it has been, kindles within him a desire for truth and substance, and it is this which is ultimately to save him from Belbury's plans for him. Now, when Frost proffers membership in the "true inner circle of all . . . the ultimate secret, the supreme power, the last initiation," (p. 319) Mark's mind has some defence in its newfound desire for truth and for all other blameless things, and in its new perception of what the true motives of the N.I.C.E. are, under the fog: "his new insight into Belbury kept him resolved not to believe one word." (p. 313)

When Studdock feigns acceptance of the offer of initiation into the highest echelon of the Institute, upon which the influence of the macrobes is felt directly, Frost leads him through a series of lessons in "objectivity," "the process whereby all specifically human reactions were killed in a man . . . the ascetism of anti-nature," (p. 369) an explicit and final revolt against the Tao. But the exercises serve instead to fan that recently-kindled spark of desire in Mark for that which is right, good, and true:

As the desert first teaches men to love water, or as absence first reveals affection, there rose up against this background of the sour and the crooked some kind of vision of the sweet and the straight. Something else -- something he vaguely called the "Normal" -- apparently existed. He had never thought about it before. But there it was -- solid, massive, with a shape of its own, almost like something you could touch, or eat, or fall in love with.
(pp. 369-370)

Mark has of course intuited the existence of objective reality, that of which a given proposition can be judged to be true or false, that of which the precepts of morality give true knowledge.

Mark has begun already to rebel against Belbury's

perversions of reality within his own mind -- his perspective has been corrected to that extent -- but those specific rites which Frost now urges him to perform channel his rebellion in a direction hitherto unsuspected by Mark himself:

On the floor lay a large crucifix, almost life-size, a work of art in the Spanish tradition, ghastly and realistic. "We have half an hour to pursue our exercises," said Frost, looking at his watch. Then he instructed Mark to trample on it and insult it in other ways.

Now, whereas Jane had abandoned Christianity in early childhood, along with her belief in fairies and Santa Claus, Mark had never believed in it at all. At this moment, therefore, it crossed his mind for the very first time that there might conceivably be something in it.

(pp. 414-415)

The enforced blasphemy pricks Mark in the direction of belief. He recognises that his newly-embraced concepts of traditional morality hold no place for the significance of the crucifix which is emphatically implicit in Frost's urging to blaspheme it. Mark is still possessed by terrible fears of torture and death, for he knows that, should he fail in or refuse the rites of initiation, he can expect no humane consideration at Belbury. But Mark has no real faith with which to oppose those fears. As he struggles with his own responses to Frost's demands, Mark's intuition of the significance of the crucifixion as a fact of history provides for him the resolution that might, in another man, have been supplied by religious faith:

he found himself looking at the crucifix in a new way -- neither as a piece of wood nor a monument of superstition but as a bit of history. . . . It was a picture of what happened when the Straight met the Crooked, a picture of what the Crooked did to the Straight.

(p. 417)

The fact that Frost's "objectification" lessons include blasphemy against the crucifix is certainly intended to imply that the Christian faith holds out truth to those who can accept it. Mark is as yet unable to believe in the truth of Christianity, but the obvious opposition of the figure of Christ to the kind of thing that the N.I.C.E. is, is enough to enlist Mark's loyalty, and he accordingly refuses (at the risk of his own life) to insult the crucifix. Studdock has grasped intuitively that there are some values which have more claim to be honoured than the primitive impulse to preserve one's own life: he has begun the ascent to truth through the sentiment of loyalty to the Christ whose claim to divinity (which includes the claim to embody truth itself) his reason has not yet grappled with. And there, for the present, we may leave Mark Studdock, to attend to his wife Jane, and the history of her coming to the Company of St. Anne's.

Jane Studdock's story begins with the dreams which first began to come to her when her unsatisfactory marriage to Mark was but six months old, nightmares whose more than normal correlation with the events of the waking world terrify Jane. She is afraid that her dreams (which, she is to learn much later, centre on real events at Belbury, and upon the resurrection of Merlin from his tomb under Bragdon wood) are the beginning of insanity, and so she takes the advice of friends -- who happen to be members of the Company of St. Anne's -- to consult the Company's Director about them.

Lewis's account of the "winning" of Jane Studdock is not

at all satisfactory. The group at St. Anne's is made a "company" by virtue of their common commitment to action in the service of Maleldil on the earth, and the power which binds them and moves them as a company is the power of charity. Lewis decided that Jane should be introduced to this highest of loves by its cousin eros, instead of apprehending immediately that subtler love, charity itself. And, having obliged himself to show Jane smitten by an affection of this order, something which he successfully avoids in other works of fiction, Lewis becomes clumsy. The quotation which follows is part of Lewis's description of Jane's introduction to Ransom:

Jane looked; and instantly her world was unmade.
 On a sofa before her, with one foot bandaged as if he had a wound, lay what appeared to be a boy, twenty years old. . . . Of course he was not a boy -- how could she have thought so? The fresh skin on his forehead and cheeks and, above all, on his hands, had suggested the idea. But no boy could have so full a beard. And no boy could be so strong. She had expected to see an invalid. Now, it was manifest that the grip of those hands would be inescapable, and imagination suggested that those arms and shoulders could support the whole house. . . . Solomon . . . for the first time in many years the bright solar blend of king and lover and magician which hangs about that name stole back upon her mind. For the first time in all those years she tasted the word King itself with all its linked associations of battle, marriage, priesthood, mercy, and power. Next moment she was once more the ordinary social Jane, flushed and confused to find that she had been staring rudely (at least she hoped that rudeness would be the main impression produced) at a total stranger. But her world was unmade; she knew that. Anything might happen now. . . . She was shaken: she was even shaking. She hoped intensely that she was not going to cry, or be unable to speak, or do anything silly. For her world was unmade: anything might happen now.
 (pp. 171-173)

The account of Jane's meeting with Ransom is emotionally charged beyond its capacity by the erotic catalogue of skin, cheeks, hands,

arms, shoulders, gold hair and gold beard; by the coy parenthesis that "at least she hoped that rudeness would be the main impression"; and by the bathetic repetition of "her world was unmade." Lewis's idea of leading Jane to Love by means of this familiar avenue is fair enough, but the literary execution of the idea is ham-handed. The spectacle of a lady who is highly educated in the discipline of literary criticism, acutely aware of her own inner life and proud of her self-possession, saying within herself, not once but three times, "my world is unmade," is simply not plausible.

Ransom, returned from Perelandra, now goes by the name "Fisher-King," which name was adopted from a married sister upon her death. The name change itself is an unnecessarily broad stroke of allusion by Lewis: the reader surely does not require an explicit identification of Ransom with the great figure of the fertility rituals in order to understand that in what virtually amounts to his new incarnation (after his re-birth on Perelandra) Ransom is associated with those powers of love and of fertility and bounty with which Venus herself is associated. The insistence with which Lewis describes the new Ransom as astoundingly young, powerful, manly, kingly, virile and capable of "unmaking" a young woman's world instantly, overburdens the literary figure; changing his name to Fisher-King, and then tacking on the Arthurian title of "Pendragon," (p. 139) merely compounds the problem. Lewis had been wiser merely to remind his reader of what Ransom has learned already in his voyages to Malacandra and Perelandra: that the distinction between myth and truth is often merely a terrestrial

prejudice. The myths of the Pendragon and the Fisher King are so well established that there is no need to observe the operation of their power upon Jane Studdock here, and particularly not in the manner of the adolescent crush depicted. Small wonder that Dorothy Sayers wrote to Lewis (on December 3, 1945, soon after the book's publication): "I'm afraid I don't like Ransom quite so well since he took to being golden-haired and interesting on a sofa like the Heir of Redclyffe."⁴ Far better for us to have seen that unsuspected truth concerning myth's corridor between physical and metaphysical reality begin to act upon Jane's imagination, and thence to see the gradual acceptance of these truths by her reason.

The excesses of the passage just considered are atoned for by Lewis in the ensuing account of the first interview between Jane and the Director. As Jane speaks to Ransom of having lost her love for Mark, she is very graciously instructed in the principles of hierarchy and of obedience which inform the reality of the universe as it depends from the centre of reality, Maleldil, and which together will lead her to the proper objects and degrees of that love. The wandering of Jane's mind into the byways of eroticism is, in this passage, presented far more convincingly than it had been in the earlier account; and Ransom's stern rebuke and the rational discussion between them which follows it are the correctives just appropriate to the case. Jane is perplexed to discover that she will need Mark's approval in order to join the

⁴C.S. Lewis: A Biography, p. 178.

Company of St. Anne's (this in spite of Ransom's assurances that it is extremely important that Jane should become a member of the Company), and she declares that this sort of authority of the husband over the wife is not a part of her own concept of the marriage relationship, or even of Mark's:

"Child," said the Director, "it is not a question of how you or I look at marriage but how my Masters look on it. . . . They would say . . . that you do not fail in obedience through lack of love, but have lost love because you never attempted obedience."

Something in Jane that would normally have reacted to such a remark with anger or laughter was banished to a remote distance (where she could still, but only just, hear its voice) by the fact that the word obedience -- but certainly not obedience to Mark -- came over her, in that room and in that presence, like a strange oriental perfume, perilous, seductive, and ambiguous. . . .

"Stop it!" said the Director sharply.

Jane stared at him, open-mouthed. There were a few moments of silence during which the exotic fragrance faded away.

"You were saying, my dear?" resumed the Director.⁵

(pp. 177-179; last ellipsis in the original)

Because Jane is self-consciously "modern" in her militant independence, it is at first very difficult for her to grasp the principle of authority by right of creation, by which "every being is a conductor of superior love or agape to the being below it, and of inferior love or eros to the being above."⁶ But the stirrings of

⁵There is a suggestion in the Letters of C.S. Lewis that Ransom's technique with Jane in this interview may owe something to Lewis's friend Charles Williams. In a letter to "a friend" (undated, Letters, p. 208) Lewis explains that Williams' solution to what may have been a similar problem "was, in a peculiar way, to teach [women] the ars honesti amandi and then bestow them on other (younger) men. Sic vos non vobis. He was not only a lover himself but the cause that love was in other men."

⁶A Preface to Paradise Lost, p. 75.

eros -- inappropriate thought they are to the one whose presence here excites them in Jane -- at least bring Jane to the place where the truth of the concept of a universal hierarchy of authority and love (which provides, among many other sorts of "rule," that "a man should rule . . . his wife politically"⁷) can begin its work of re-ordering her perspective upon reality. There is a token of Jane's new understanding of and respect for the principle of order in her increasingly scrupulous attention to the veracity of her own remarks to Ransom. For instance, she finds herself stifling a conventional expression of fear for her husband's safety when she recognizes "that anxiety about Mark did not, in fact, make any part of the complex emotions she was feeling, and that to reply thus would be hypocrisy." (pp. 175-176) The considerable skill which Lewis here employs in depicting this complex state of mind from Jane's own shifting point of view makes for a very marked contrast between this section of the novel and the earlier description of Jane's interview with Ransom. In Lewis's hands, Jane's analysis of her own speech and her motives for speaking here becomes increasingly subtle and vigorous: "As [she spoke] she wondered, 'Did that sound cunning?' then, more disconcertingly, 'Was it cunning?'" (p. 176)

But Jane has time, on her return from St. Anne's, for more than the self-analysis and criticism to which the rigorous interview had inspired her. Some confusion remains within her mind, but as she reflects upon the visit to St. Anne's with that clearer sight

⁷A Preface to *Paradise Lost*, p. 75.

lent by time and distance, she is lifted up in joy, "in the sphere of Jove, amid health, jocund and clothed in shining garments."

(p. 184) In this state of being she intuitively embraces that same principle of hierarchy which her reason had formerly forbidden:

"Her beauty belonged to the Director . . . so completely that he could order it to be given to another." (pp. 184-185) And it is just as Jane has ascended to this plane of understanding that she is caught in the first direct clash between the forces of Belbury and St. Anne's: Jane is arrested and tortured by Fairy Hardcastle, but makes her escape back to the Manor.

Because of the new evidence that Jane's life is in grave danger, Ransom grants her asylum at St. Anne's upon her return, in spite of the fact that Mark is, at least to their knowledge, still sympathetic to the N.I.C.E. Jane accepts an invitation from MacPhee, the "resident sceptic" of the Company, to take a brief lesson in the history of Ransom's translunary voyages, and of his continuing relationship with and service to Maleldil with the eldila of Deep Heaven. Because MacPhee would quite obviously prefer not to take for literal truth the elements of the "silent planet" story, he is in Lewis's hands an excellent instructor in these things for Jane, someone against whom she can flex her new concept of reality. She finds that MacPhee's severely logical manner, in his account of Ransom's adventures (as they have been told MacPhee by Ransom himself), of the celestial siege of the "silent planet," of the Black Archon of the earth, and the evil eldila loyal to him, "almost neutralised the strangeness of what he was telling her." (p. 234) MacPhee is

a materialist, radically sceptical of the real existence of spiritual entities in general and of the eldila in particular. Jane has been but lately introduced to that conception of the universe which carries with it an image of rank upon rank of created beings both above and below man in the hierarchy, some of whom can be perceived by man's senses and others of whom man can have no sensory impression whatever. And so their conversation centres on the question of the nature of truth, and of the possibility of knowing reality. The specific occasion of their debate is MacPhee's somewhat evasive account of the eldila who visit the Director, and from whom the Company of St. Anne's receives its general direction and its specific orders. Jane wants to know more of these beneficent eldila. To her simple question, "Have you seen them?" MacPhee replies:

"That's not a question to be answered Aye or No. I've seen a good many things in my time that weren't there or weren't what they pretended to be; rainbows and reflections and sunsets, not to mention dreams" (p. 235) MacPhee has of course taken a wrong tack here. Jane Studdock is the last person to accept the notion that dreams are something "not there," or "not what they pretend to be": she has fought too long against the certain knowledge that dreams both can and do on occasion communicate truth; her defeat in that battle with reality is too fresh to allow her now to entertain any doubts on the matter, and so she continues to press MacPhee concerning that which he knows from his own senses about the eldila:

"You have seen something, then?"

"Aye. But we must keep an open mind. It might be a hallucination. It might be a conjuring trick . . . "

"By the Director?" asked Jane angrily. Mr. MacPhee once more had recourse to his snuff-box. "Do you really expect me," said Jane, "to believe that the Director is that sort of man? A charlatan?"

"I wish, ma'am," said MacPhee, "you could see your way to consider the matter without constantly using such terms as believe. Obviously, conjuring is one of the hypotheses that any impartial investigator must take into account. The fact that it is a hypothesis specially uncongenial to the emotions of this investigator or that, is neither here nor there. Unless, maybe, it is an extra ground for emphasising the hypothesis in question, just because there is a strong psychological danger of neglecting it."

"There's such a thing as loyalty," said Jane.

MacPhee, who had been carefully shutting up the snuff-box, suddenly looked up with a hundred Covenanters in his eyes.

"There is, ma'am," he said. "As you get older you will learn that it is a virtue too important to be lavished on individual personalities."

(p. 236)

An interruption prevents Jane's rejoinder to MacPhee, but we have sufficient information to guess what form it would take, for Jane has intuited already the principle of hierarchy: that because of the hierarchical structure of the universe, her loyalty to Ransom is not in fact merely "lavished on an individual," but that, rather, Ransom is the medium through which Jane's loyalty flows to those who enjoy Ransom's own loyalty. She has discovered this principle's application to her own beauty, and she now ~~discovers~~ its application to her loyalty, and thence to acceptance of that information concerning Maleldil's reality which Ransom has, in his place of authority, delivered to her for truth. Thus Ransom denies MacPhee's offer to join in the dangerous attempt to find Merlin upon his resurrection, while he accepts Jane's: although she confesses

that, as yet, she knows "nothing of Maleldil" Himself, (p. 282) she places herself under obedience to Ransom, and so comes under the protection of Maleldil, while MacPhee remains outside of the hierarchy and its protection.

When at length Jane goes out with others of the Company into the hollow of Bragdon Wood where they expect to find Merlin, her senses and intuition are quickened by her fears, and reveal to her in that place what the imminence of the Director at St. Anne's had left clouded in her mind: that she is enlisted and acting in a cause infinitely larger and more important than Ransom himself, and that her duty in this cause might very well entail the laying-down of her own life. In his account of Jane's musings on death, Lewis shows her mind "running up the sunbeam to the sun," as Jane's conviction concerning the reality of the local operation of the hierarchy of love and authority leads her to consider that essential Reality from which this lesser reality must depend:

Up till now whe had not thought of Maleldil. . . . She did not doubt that the eldils existed; nor did she doubt the existence of this stronger and more obscure being whom they obeyed . . . whom the Director obeyed, and through him the whole household, even MacPhee. If it had ever occurred to her to question whether all these things might be the reality behind what she had been taught at school as "religion," she had put the thought aside. . . . It now appeared that almost anything might be true. The world had already turned out to be so very unlike what she had expected. The old ring-fence had been smashed completely. One might be in for anything. Maleldil might be, quite simply and crudely, God.

(pp. 285-286)

This new intuition of the structure of reality to which Jane has come terrifies her with that notion that "almost anything might be true." Like Ransom before the Voice on Perelandra, Jane feels threatened, smothered, as her imagination dwells on the indescribable fulness of the universe. And this state of mind prevails in Jane until at last she discovers that One in whose own person reality has its centre, and from whom depend order, authority, and love itself:

A boundary had been crossed. She had come into a world, or into a Person, or into the presence of a Person. Something expectant, patient, inexorable, met her with no veil or protection between. . . . It was the origin of all right demands and contained them. In its light you could understand them: but from them you could know nothing of it. There was nothing, and never had been anything, like this. And now there was nothing except this. Yet also, everything had been like this: only by being like this had anything existed.

(p. 394)

That which Jane here intuitively embraces concerning the nature of reality is Lewis's adaptation of Plato's Idea of the Good. Jane understands in a moment of time that there exists "that which provides their truth to the things known, and gives the power of knowing to the knower . . . the cause of understanding and of truth . . . something different, something still more beautiful than these."⁸ But of course Lewis does not here posit the existence of a Platonic Idea, but celebrates the glory of a Person, in his account of Jane's entrance into the presence of God. Where Plato could not but be tentative, in suggesting an ineffable difference and beauty in the Good, Lewis is able to assert the explicit

⁸The Republic, VI, 508.

differences and beauties which orthodox Judaic and Christian theology ascribes to the character of God. At the same moment in which Jane recognizes the existence of ultimate reality in that Person at the pinnacle of the universal hierarchy, she recognizes that a personal response ordinate to reality itself is demanded from her:

In this height and depth and breadth the little idea of herself which she had hitherto called me dropped down and vanished, unfluttering, into bottomless distance, like a bird in space without air. The name me was the name of a being whose existence she had never suspected, a being that did not yet fully exist but which was demanded. It was a person (not the person she had thought) yet also a thing -- a made thing, made to please Another and in Him to please all others -- a thing being made at this very moment, without its choice, in a shape it had never dreamed of.

(pp. 394-395)

Jane's false conception of herself cannot exist in the rarified atmosphere of very truth, and she forsakes it immediately. It is to be replaced, little by little, with a valid image of that which Jane Studdock begins from this moment to become.

Lewis's account of the N.I.C.E. fulfills in fiction The Abolition of Man's contention that "what we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument."⁹ We have observed the sort of power over men pursued by the N.I.C.E., and also the opposition to their pursuit of power by the Company of St. Anne's, who are bound by their fealty to Maleldil to oppose the demonic devices of the Institute. Nature herself, the instrument by which the N.I.C.E.

⁹The Abolition of Man, p. 35.

hopes to achieve its ends, is represented in That Hideous Strength by the figure of Merlin, the magician who had been the right hand of the Pendragon in King Arthur's time. The great eldila of the heavens reveal to Ransom that Merlin's "life had been hidden . . . for fifteen centuries. But under certain conditions it would return to his body." (p. 248) It is the hope of the N.I.C.E., and the fear of the Company of St. Anne's, that Merlin will join his own formidable power over Nature to the black eldilic power of the Institute, so as to render Nature an infallible instrument for their conquest of Man. Jane Studdock is important to both sides of the conflict, because it is her "dreams," her second sight, which will give information concerning Merlin's whereabouts upon his resurrection from beneath the Well of Bragdon Wood. But, as it turns out, Merlin had been a Christian, and his mystical communion with nature had been a sort of baptised magic: comparatively innocent, though immensely powerful. It is therefore not to Belbury that Merlin comes at last, but to St. Anne's, where he offers himself in service to Maleldil through the Pendragon of Logres, Ransom. Lewis's account of Merlin's acceptance of his own destined rôle in the battle turns on a misunderstanding between the magician and Ransom:

"Did not I tell you when we first met that the Oyéresu were my masters?"

"Of course," said Merlin. "And that was how I knew you were of the college. Is it not our password all over the Earth?"

"A password?" exclaimed Ransom, with a look of surprise. "I did not know that."

"But . . . but," said Merlinus, "if you knew not the password, how did you come to say it?"

"I said it because it was true."

The magician licked his lips which had become very pale.

"True as the plainest things are true," repeated Ransom; "true as it is true that you sit here with my bear beside you."

(pp. 357-358; ellipsis in the original)

It is a delightful irony that, when Ransom had first claimed the eldila as his masters, and Merlin had accepted that claim, each had taken the exchange to mean a different thing: Ransom took it to mean that Merlin understood Ransom's relationship to the planetary intelligences; Merlin took it to be a mere symbol of a human fraternity. While each man misunderstood the other, each did apprehend something of the true meaning of the old "password." What had been in the dark ages of Britain's history merely a token of shared knowledge and allegiance, has passed by the operation of time in the perfect created Order out of its original, local significance and into the realm of very truth. Merlin has indeed met the man with whom the gods converse face to face.

Merlin's response to this revelation, predictably, is one of terror and dismay, for his own spirit has been stretched thin and in great measure wasted by his earlier assumption of much lesser powers than these of whom Ransom now speaks. Merlin contends that to invoke such powers is to break "the Seventh Law . . . that He will not send down the Powers to mend or mar in this earth until the end of all things." (p. 358) Ransom replies that the protection afforded the earth by this law was forfeited when Weston deliberately broke the seige of the Silent Planet from within, penetrating the lunar boundary in order to bring Ransom a prisoner to Mars. Merlin

himself is the man who has been prepared, and reserved for cneturies, to be the vessel of the celestial powers:

"they will work only through a man . . . whose mind is opened to be invaded," said Ransom; "one who by his own will once opened it. . . . One who has dabbled . . . in the days when dabbling had not begun to be evil, or was only just beginning . . . and also a Christian man and a penitent. A tool (I must speak plainly) good enough to be so used and not too good. In all these western parts of the world there was only one man who had lived in those days and could still be recalled. You . . . "

(pp. 359-360; third to fifth ellipses in the original)

It is determined at last through their council that Merlin will receive into himself the Oyéresu, the great eldila who guide the planets, and that by their power he will destroy the devices of Belbury.

In the account of the descent of the gods upon St. Anne's for Merlin's empowering, Lewis concentrates once more upon the subject of perspective, the manner in which one perceives reality. As the virtue of each of the great eldila grips the members of the household (the other members of St. Anne's wait together in the kitchen for their Director and Merlin in the Blue Room), a different perspective upon the kind of thing the universe is -- a new facet of the Whole -- is revealed to the company. The first great obstacle faced by any man is to assume the perspective of an ordinary eldil: Lewis describes what might be the experience of an uninvited visitor to the Blue Room:

He would have been horribly compelled to feel this earth not as the base of the universe but as a ball spinning and rolling onwards, both at delirious speed, and not through emptiness but through some densely inhabited and intricately

structured medium. He would have known sensuously, until his outraged senses forsook him, that the visitants in that room were in it not because they were at rest but because they glanced and wheeled through the packed reality of heaven (which men call empty space) to keep their beams upon this spot of the moving earth's hide.
(p. 396)

This intimation of eldilic perception is the introduction to a lengthy account of the descent upon St. Anne's of the tutelary spirits of Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter in turn. Each visitation is indicated by an account of its effect upon the members of the Company, of the new perspectives lent them by the imminence of the gods of meaning, love, war, death and joy. Thus, for instance, Perelandra's descent upon the house recalls Ransom immediately to that intensely joyful knowledge of Maleldil's goodness and grace which had been his on the paradisaal planet:

A soft tingling and shivering as of foam and breaking bubbles ran over their flesh. Tears ran down Ransom's cheeks. He alone knew from what seas and what islands that breeze blew. Merlin did not: but in him also the inconsolable wound with which man is born waked and ached at this touching. . . . It was fiery, sharp, bright, and ruthless, ready to kill, ready to die, outspeeding light: it was Charity, not as mortals imagine it, not even as it has been humanised for them since the Incarnation of the Word, but the translunary virtue, fallen upon them direct from the Third Heaven, unmitigated.

(p. 400)

Each of the tutelary eldila lends a different perspective upon the nature of created reality; together these modes of experience suggest that image of great richness and diversity, that immeasurable fulness of life within the universe, which Lewis repeatedly brings before the reader of his trilogy, as the specific corrective for the popular image of the cold wastelands of "space."

With the descent of the gods, the unreality of Belbury is challenged outright by the vice-regents of the uncreated Reality Himself, and the unreal is simply swept away in the flood of the real. At a banquet held in honour of the N.I.C.E.'s nominal Director, the planetary intelligences work through Merlin to invoke the curse of Babel upon the Institute, so that Belbury's choice of unreason over reason, and sham over reality, might be manifest. After he has confused the speech of the banqueting assembly so that they are completely unable to understand one another, Merlin turns the tormented animals of the N.I.C.E.'s vivesection menagerie free to take revenge upon their tormentors; the banquet hall becomes a murderous arena in which men and women kill and are killed by each other in their desperate efforts to escape the maddened animals.

Wither has been himself so withered by his long association with the destroying black eldila that even the thought of his own imminent physical destruction and the chaotic dissolution of Belbury cannot rouse him to human feeling, for "he had willed with his whole heart that there should be no reality and no truth," (p. 438) and had thereby cut himself off even from understanding that the cataclysm surrounding him is occasioned by the meeting of reality with unreality. Frost similarly prepares for his own suicide without any notion of the motive which impels him, because he has so long denied the reality of human will and intention that his own will has atrophied to the point where he is merely an instrument of the demons he serves. Frost's fundamental denial of reality

lasts until the very moment that his hand strikes the match to incinerate himself and all that remains of the Institute:

Not till then did his controllers allow him to suspect that death itself might not after all cure the illusion of being a soul -- nay, might prove the entry into a world where that illusion raged infinite and unchecked. Escape for the soul, if not for the body, was offered him. He became able to know (and simultaneously refused the knowledge) that he had been wrong from the beginning, that souls and personal responsibility existed. He half saw: he wholly hated. The physical torture of the burning was hardly fiercer than his hatred of that. With one supreme effort he flung himself back into his illusion. In that attitude eternity overtook him as sunrise in old tales overtakes trolls and turns them into unchangeable stone.

(p. 445)

It is interesting to note the shift in perspective here which is signalled by Lewis's use of the word "illusion." Frost's preparations for suicide are reported from his own habitual perspective: that consciousness, the soul and personal responsibility are illusions. But at the last, after Frost has had that brief glimpse through the gates of eternity, the narrative stance shifts, and the word "illusion" is used to describe Frost's perspective itself: implicit in the narrative voice is the assumption that consciousness, the soul and personal responsibility are real, part of that which really is. Because Frost has rejected this truth, he has lost all personal motive: he performs his last terrible actions at the urging of his eldilic "controllers," and of the only vestige of human sentiment left to him: a savage hatred of the true condition of humanity. Lewis alludes to the fate of trolls in fairy tales to point up the absurdity of Frost's flying in the face of reality: his hatred of the truth has made him very like

those slow-witted bullies of the old stories, and as such his end is fitting -- though it remains a horrible death for a creature who must once have been a man. But more than this, the image of the troll turning to stone implies that the metaphysical realities which can within the temporal world be dismissed by such as Frost as mere "illusions" must ultimately be recognized by all men for what they are: truths incontrovertible, changeless, as solid and unyielding as the stone trolls.

Upon the final destruction of the N.I.C.E., Ransom prepares for his return to Perelandra and takes leave of the Company of St. Anne's, whose work as a company has been accomplished. The conversation of the Company's members in the Manor House at Ransom's leave-taking centres on their witness of the working-out of the old myths of Merlin's resurrection and the triumph of Maleldil in this local skirmish with the "hideous strength." Ransom explains to them that he will soon return to Venus to be cured of his wounded heel; that, because he has been on Perelandra, there is for him "no natural death to look forward to" on earth. (p. 457) MacPhee's response, that Ransom's anticipation of being translated out of the earth and into Perelandra "has the disadvantage of being clean contrary to the observed laws of nature," (p. 457) is taken up by Grace Ironwood, who distinguished between those truths observed by men, and reality as it exists in its full universal dimensions:

"It is not contrary to the laws of Nature. . . . The laws of the universe are never broken. Your mistake is to think that the little regularities we have observed

on one planet for a few hundred years are the real unbreakable laws; whereas they are only the remote results which the true laws bring about more often than not; as a kind of accident."

(p. 457)

Reality exists, and can be known, but one must often suffer an uncomfortable adjustment of one's perspective before such truth can enter.

Mark and Jane Studdock are reconciled to each other by their independent reconciliations to reality. Mark's progress to real humanity and the beginning of understanding had begun with his first intuition of the existence of an objective standard of thought and behavior. Hunger for reality itself had been awakened in Mark after his long pretense of satisfaction with unreality. Jane's approach had been more direct: her meeting with the very Person of reality had occasioned an immediate revolution in her concept of the order inherent in the created universe, and of her own responsibilities within that order. By these two paths, Mark and Jane have learned humility before each other and before Maleldil, and so have come to the place where a real relationship between them is possible.

That Hideous Strength is the least successful of Lewis's three Ransom novels. It is by far the longest, and its length is symptomatic of its thematic overloading. In Out of the Silent Planet and Perelandra, Lewis had concentrated on Ransom himself: his experiences, his ever-more-sure grasp of truth, the re-ordering and refining of his perspective upon reality. In That Hideous Strength, the "reborn" Ransom is very nearly as bloodless as the

eldila with whom he consorts -- Jane Studdock's early infatuation with Ransom notwithstanding. Lewis seems deliberately to have made this shift in the characterization of Ransom, so as to be able to concentrate upon the perceptions of Mark and Jane, the two players in his drama who have not yet completed their spiritual journeys, as Ransom patently has done. Thus the novel begins with a split centre. This in itself explains something of the unwieldy progression of the plot, which dodges from Belbury to St. Anne's, and from Mark's thoughts to Jane's, in an extremely regular -- at last, predictable and monotonous -- series of parallels. But the novel is further overloaded by Lewis's inclusion of the myths of the descent of the gods, the Fisher King, Arthur, and Babel, to the "given" myth of the "silent planet" which gives unity to the trilogy. Moreover, Lewis succumbs to the temptation to attack not only spiritual or philosophical adversaries, but also bureaucrats, vivisectionists, social-scientists, surrealist painters, educators and advocates of birth-control. One novel simply does not give the space in which to justify all of these attacks (if indeed all could be justified); thus Lewis's themes too often descend to the level of mere prejudice, his tone to petulance. It was perhaps in recognition of this colossal thematic burden that Lewis had departed somewhat from the science-fiction conventions of the first two Ransom tales, and invented for That Hideous Strength a new genre: the "modern fairy-tale for grown-ups." Clearly, Lewis was seeking a new mode of expressing his concepts of reality, truth and perspective. His solution to the problems of thematic overloading and tortuous

plotting which had arisen in the last of the Ransom books was to complete his turn towards the fairy-tale, to examine more limited aspects of his theme in separate, small tales for children: the seven Chronicles of Narnia.

IV

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

Introduction

From Lewis's own published comments on the creation of the Chronicles of Narnia, it is evident that he did not feel the series to be a radical departure from the kind of fantasy which he had created around the figure of Dr. Elwyn Ransom. Indeed, the title of his essay, "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said," is in itself a small apologia for Narnia, which stresses that Lewis took up the form of the fairy-tale simply because it suited those ideas within him at a certain time which invited imaginative expression. There is a hint in "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" that this form imposed disciplines upon Lewis which his experience with the Ransom trilogy had suggested useful:

this form permits, or compels you to leave out things I wanted to leave out. It compels you to throw all the force of the book into what was done and said. It checks what a kind, but discerning critic called "the expository demon" in me. It also imposes certain very fruitful necessities about length.¹

In another place Lewis adds to this list of elements which he "wanted to leave out" of his next work of fiction after That Hideous Strength: "love interest," "close psychology," "analysis,

¹Of Other Worlds, p. 28.

digression, reflections and 'gas.'"² It would not perhaps be too fanciful to suggest that Lewis had seen some of these faults in the last book of the Ransom trilogy, and set himself to write fairy-tales as a remedy.

But Lewis says himself that he began not with the form, or even with the echoes of Christian themes which many critics assume to be central to the Chronicles; he began instead with images, as he had done with the Ransom books -- "a faun carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge, a magnificent lion"³ After the images came that form which the images themselves suggested, the fairy-tale. And with images and form settled upon, what Lewis calls (after Tasso) "the author as author" was equipped with his materials and ready to take up the work, but it remained to satisfy "the author as man, citizen or Christian."⁴ This second requirement was met when Lewis discovered a certain thematic potential in the form and images settled upon:

I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? . . . supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained-glass and Sunday school associations, one could make them for the first time appear in their real

²"Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said," Of Other Worlds, p. 37.

³Ibid., p. 36.

⁴Ibid., p. 35

potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could.⁵

Lewis has said that when "suddenly Aslan came bounding into it . . . He pulled the whole story together."⁶ It is obvious from the Chronicles themselves that their centre is the great Lion himself -- the centre of Narnian reality as Maleldil had been the centre of celestial reality in the Ransom trilogy -- and Lewis's answer to his own question, "What might Christ become like, if there really were a world like Narnia and He chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in that world as He actually has done in ours?"⁷ Thus in The Magician's Nephew, Aslan's position is established as the Narnian logos, the creating Word, and the human children who enter Narnia discover that they must establish a responsible relationship with this central Reality, in order to be able to act in a manner which accords with the created realities dependent upon the Lion. In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the drama of the Narnian passion is enacted, and the changes which magic can bring about in the appearance of things is held against Aslan's own immutable reality. In The Horse and His Boy, the link is established between true personal identity and one's relationship to that Person who orders reality. In Prince Caspian, faith in the unchanging Lion is held against the changes brought about by the passage of time and

⁵"Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said," Of Other Worlds, p. 37.

⁶"It All Began With a Picture . . . ," Of Other Worlds, p. 42.

⁷Letters, p. 283.

an apathetic drift into apostasy. The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" shows that one's ordinate response to reality is dictated by the place in the universal hierarchy granted by the author of Order. The Silver Chair sets faith in Aslan against faith's supernatural adversary. And in The Last Battle, Lewis depicts the ultimate triumph of reality over unreality, as the brief "dream" of mortal experience gives way to Aslan's eternal morning: the day breaks, and the shadows flee away.

Lewis's first impulse to try his hand at the classic fairy-tale may have been occasioned as early as 1939, by the visit of some schoolchildren evacuated to his home in Oxford from wartime London.⁸ But the early chapters of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe were not in manuscript until March of 1949, at which time they were read by Roger Lancelyn Green. Stirred by some of Green's comments and questions concerning the book, Lewis next attempted to write a story to be set in time before the events of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, which would explain something of the history and geography of Narnia as the Pevensie children had found it, but he was unsatisfied with the attempt, and in June of 1949 set aside the manuscript (of what would eventually become The Magician's Nephew) in order to concentrate on later events of Narnian history. Prince Caspian was complete in manuscript by December of that same year, The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" was finished in February 1950,

⁸For a full account of how the Chronicles of Narnia came to be written, see Chapter X of Green and Hooper's Biography, from which the present summary is derived.

followed by The Horse and His Boy (July 1950), The Silver Chair (1951), The Magician's Nephew (1953), and The Last Battle (March 1953).⁹ In the discussion of the Chronicles of Narnia which follows, I have adopted the reading order which Lewis advocated upon his completion of the series, which follows Narnian chronology rather than that of composition or publication. In this I have also taken a hint from the very fine essay by Charles Huttar, "C.S. Lewis's Narnia and the 'Grand Design,'"¹⁰ which, in its brief study of the series of tales as a part of the genre of "scripture," demonstrates that the mythic shape of the series is best appreciated when the Chronicles are understood to proceed from their own "Genesis" to the Narnian equivalent of the Apocalypse.

The Magician's Nephew

It is in The Magician's Nephew that Lewis sets out to show "how all the comings and goings between our own world and the land of Narnia first began." (p. 9) The theme of The Magician's Nephew is not merely the establishment of a right relationship between children from the Earth and the great Lion who is the Creator of Narnia, but also of the love and responsibility which are entailed in that relationship. When we first meet "the magician's nephew,"

⁹The seven books were published in this order: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (1950), Prince Caspian (1951), The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" (1952), The Silver Chair (1953), The Horse and His Boy (1954), The Magician's Nephew (1955), and The Last Battle (1956).

¹⁰The Longing for a Form, pp. 119-135.

Digory Kirke, he is full of misery because of the absence of his father and the grave illness of his mother. He also mourns the loss of an idyllic life "in the country . . . [with] a pony, and a river at the bottom of the garden." (p. 10) All of these blessings are ultimately to be made real by Aslan, to be translated from the shadows of Digory's longings into glorious substance by that One who alone is capable of rendering them real.

It is first his own uncle Andrew, and later the wicked Queen Jadis of Charn, who introduce Digory to Magic, opening his eyes to its promise of seemingly limitless pleasures and powers. But in Andrew and Jadis power is corrupt, for they have put themselves outside of the moral law. The adventures of Digory and his young friend Polly begin when Uncle Andrew tempts Polly by an appeal to her vanity to put on a magic ring, which spirits her out of this world into he knows not where; he then blackmails Digory into following Polly in order to effect her rescue. Andrew explains to Digory how he came by the rings of power by breaking his word to the person who had given them to him to be destroyed. When Digory objects to Andrew's untruthfulness and his lack of compassion for Polly, Andrew turns to special pleading, arguing that he is exempt by virtue of his own place among "profound students and great thinkers and sages" from obedience to the dictates of the moral law: "Ours," claims he, "is a high and lonely destiny." (p. 23) Lewis uses Digory's comment on Andrew's excuses to deflate them (much as he had used Ransom's "translation" of Weston's rhetoric to deflate it on Malacandra). "'All it means,' [Digory] said to himself, 'is

that he thinks he can do anything he likes to get anything he wants.'" (p. 24) This insight into the evil magician's real motives serves Digory well when he is later confronted by a much more powerful figure of evil: Jadis, Queen of Charn. Lewis ironically causes this evil Queen to quote (unconsciously) from Andrew's own argument for her right to exercise magical power without responsibility: "'what would be wrong for you or for any of the common people is not wrong in a great Queen such as I . . . Ours is a high and lonely destiny.'" (p. 61)

Against these two figures of evil Lewis places Aslan himself, the great Lion of Narnia. The children meet Aslan when the magic rings transport them to the Narnian world at the very moment at which Aslan begins the song which is to bring that world into existence, in Lewis's imaginative adaptation of the concept of creation by the Word of God:

One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out -- single stars, constellations, and planets, brighter and bigger than any in our world. There were no clouds. The new stars and the new voices began at exactly the same time. If you had seen and heard it, as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves which were singing, and that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing.

(pp. 93-94)

The creation of Narnia by Aslan's song is of course an instance of the exercise of "magical" power for a good purpose. Aslan obviously has that real authority and power which Andrew and Jadis have tried to counterfeit for selfish ends, for in Aslan the authority and power are bound up in goodness, and in love for the things which he

creates.

This almost palpable goodness and love in the Lion is acknowledged by the children even in the way they listen to his creation song, with "open mouths and shining eyes." (p. 94) But Andrew perceives in Aslan that immutable truth which shows up his own pretensions to wisdom and knowledge for the shams they are: "He was not liking the Voice. If he could have got away from it by creeping into a rat's hole, he would have done so." (p. 95) And in her response to Aslan's song, the witch Jadis reveals herself to be the very antitheses of that goodness which all perceive in the Lion:

in a way, she understood the music better than any of them. Her mouth was shut, her lips were pressed together, and her fists were clenched. Ever since the song began she had felt that this whole world was filled with a Magic different from hers and stronger. She hated it. She would have smashed that whole world, or all worlds, to pieces, if it would only stop the singing.¹¹

(p. 95)

What is demonstrated in this account of the three kinds of response to Aslan's song is that each person responds to the single objective

¹¹Chad Walsh has complained that the theme of the struggle of good against evil is "almost oversimplified into the contrast between the Witch and the naturally good and kind cabdriver." (Literary Legacy, p. 134) But the passage just quoted, in which Lewis exposes the Witch's consuming lust for destruction of all that good which Aslan's song has called into being, poises her against Aslan in the economy of the book. As Walsh himself has noted, "It is not that she is filled with evil. She is evil." (Ibid., p. 136) Thus it is Goodness incarnate in Narnia, Aslan, who opposes her. The Cabby (who is perhaps "filled with goodness") is the opposite number of the petty magician Andrew, who is certainly "filled with evil," in Walsh's sense.

reality of the song in a manner which accords with his or her own peculiar nature. The heart of the innocent child moves in sympathy with the loving song of the Lion. The heart of the magician who has dabbled in small truths in order to advance a falsehood of self glory is convicted by the song, and he would flee from it. But the heart of Jadis recognizes in the song that beauty of which hers is only a dim counterfeit, that power against which her pretensions to power are manifest mockery, and she hates it. Uncle Andrew is not yet as fully involved in evil as Jadis is, so that the same song which inspires naked hatred in her only makes Andrew wish that he could escape from its sound, at least at first. But Lewis includes in his account of Andrew's experience a very pointed warning concerning the danger of rejecting the Source of reality:

the longer and more beautifully the Lion sang, the harder Uncle Andrew tried to make himself believe that he could hear nothing but roaring. Now the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider than you really are is that you very often succeed. Uncle Andrew did. He soon did hear nothing but roaring in Aslan's song. . . . And when the Beasts spoke in answer, he heard only barkings, growlings, bayings, and howlings.

(pp. 116-117)

Andrew's perspective has dictated his experience of Aslan's song. The song is real, an objective fact in itself and even that which brings Narnian reality into being. The children hear the song and love the singer; and even the witch who hates it bears witness to its reality by the very hatred which it inspires in her. But Andrew has chosen a lie, and in the end he is unable to perceive the truth.

The differing responses to the song of Aslan, deriving as

they do from these differing perspectives, and ultimately dictating differing experiences of the same reality, recall Ransom's discovery of how his own perspective upon reality dictated his experience. In the trilogy, Ransom learned (for instance) that the concept of "the heavens" was a more accurate reflection of the created reality than his former concept of "space," and that from the perspective implicit in this new concept he could perceive much more of truth than the old concept with its perspective had allowed him. Here in Narnia, perhaps in recognition of his form's restrictions on length, Lewis has given these differing points of view to separate characters, instead of following the slow process of re-adjustment in one character, but his theme is the same.

Aslan's song is touchstone not merely of the hearts of those who hear it, but also of physical reality itself in the awakening Narnia. Polly discovers as she watches the process of the new creation that the distinction between objective reality and imagination breaks down when it is the imagination of the Lion that one considers:

When a line of dark firs sprang up on a ridge about a hundred yards away she felt that they were connected with a series of deep, prolonged notes which the Lion had sung a second before. And when he burst into a rapid series of lighter notes she was not surprised to see primroses suddenly appearing in every direction. Thus, with an unspeakable thrill, she felt quite certain that all the things were coming (as she said) "out of the Lion's head." When you listened to his song you heard the things he was making up: when you looked round you, you saw them.
(p. 99)

By this observation, Aslan's identity as the logos of Narnia is established beyond question: in his own person, Aslan is the source

and focus of Narnian reality; by his word (or song) that reality is created.

Thus, when Digory is tempted by Jadis to steal a magical apple which will restore his mother to health, the boy has a clear choice: to use magic for his own immediate purpose (as Jadis and Uncle Andrew have done) or to obey the command of Aslan to deliver the apple untasted to the Lion for His purposes. Jadis tempts Digory to disobey because it is her aim to spoil that newborn world just as she had spoiled her own through her greed for power. But she makes a false step when she tells Digory that he can abandon Polly in Narnia so as to have no witness to his act of treachery back on Earth: the witch's flagrant ignorance of charity helps Digory to see that her motives in advising him to steal the apple have been purely selfish, and instead he chooses obedience to Aslan. When Digory searches his own heart for reassurance that he has in fact made the right decision, it is the memory of the great compassion of the Lion which convinces him: "He was very sad and he wasn't even sure all the time that he had done the right thing: but whenever he remembered the shining tears in Aslan's eyes he became sure." (p. 152) This alludes to Digory's first meeting with the Lion, when, filled with his own grief for his mother's illness, Digory made the astonishing discovery that the grief and its cause were no secret to Aslan:

the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders) great shining tears stood in the Lion's eyes. They were such big, bright tears compared with Digory's own that for a moment he felt as if the Lion must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself.

"My son, my son," said Aslan. "I know. Grief is great. Only you and I in this land know that yet. Let us be good to one another."

(pp. 132-133)

The memory of Aslan's compassion gives Digory the assurance he needs that he has chosen rightly, because it is token of the Lion's goodness: His awesome power is exercised always in love, never for its own sake. Digory learns also (from Aslan himself) that if he had chosen a partial good (in plucking the apple for the healing of his mother) and given it the pre-eminence that the whole good of obedience to the right demands, that partial good would have been twisted and rendered evil: "And Digory . . . knew that the Lion knew what would have happened, and that there might be things more terrible even than losing someone you love by death." (p. 163)

Digory discovers that to obey Aslan instead of yielding to one's own will may bring something far greater than the selfish will could have imagined. When he has obediently brought the apple (untasted) to Aslan, it is planted to become the Tree of Protection (from Jadis and her evil); one of the silver apples from this tree is presented to Digory by Aslan for the healing of his mother. To have stolen that first apple, even with the laudable motive of restoring his own mother to health, would have been to turn good to evil; Aslan in his omniscience tells Digory that "The day would have come when both you and she would have looked back and said it would have been better to die in that illness." (p. 163) But by waiting on Aslan's will, Digory is granted the means by which his mother may be restored to health, and Digory himself restored to joy.

As he brings the first of the Chronicles of Narnia to a

close, Lewis reiterates the theme of trust in that which is substantial even when the senses confuse shadow and substance. As always, Aslan is the still point, the focus of memory, the substantial, the real. Polly and Digory are wont to return in their minds again and again to the moment of their farewell to Aslan:

And the memory of that moment stayed with them always, so that as long as they both lived, if ever they were sad or afraid or angry, the thought of all that golden goodness, and the feeling that it was still there, quite close, just around some corner or just behind some door, would come back and make them sure, deep down inside, that all was well.

(p. 165)

Eliane Tixier makes the point that Lewis's adherence to the tradition of the "happy ending" in his fairy stories encourages the reader to perceive his own innate sense of longing:

In all cases, whether it be the Garden of Eden, or Heaven reached after "the Last Battle," longing always opens on a land of happiness, the land of Aslan, the land of God. The hope, the assurance of such a final resolution actually prepares the way for Holiness. For the certitude that God does not hide Himself, that He holds out happiness to His creatures, gives to the tale a special direction and marks it with a seal of Holiness.¹²

In this, The Magician's Nephew accomplishes precisely what Lewis deemed the great business of the fairy-tale:

fairy land arouses a longing in [the reader] for he knows not what. It stirs and troubles him (to his life-long enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world, gives it a new dimension of depth. He does not despise real woods because he has read of enchanted woods: the

¹²"Imagination Baptized, or, 'Holiness' in the Chronicles of Narnia," in The Longing for a Form, p. 144.

reading makes all real woods a little enchanted. This is a special king of longing.¹³

The longing is "special" because it is real, a genuine aspect of human reality. Lewis's contention is that there is in each of us a hunger or a thirst which can be satisfied at last only by Reality itself, by God: that is what this hunger or thirst is for. And of course it is precisely the early and partial satisfaction of Digory Kirke's special longing -- the satisfaction of which "he hardly dared to hope" -- which makes The Magician's Nephew show in small the form of the entire series of Chronicles; this, the first of the Narnian stories of longing and expectation, ends with only the first tokens of their fulfillment.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

The adventures of the Pevensie children in Narnia, subject of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, begin with Lucy's discovery that a wardrobe is not always a wardrobe:

instead of feeling the hard, smooth wood of the floor of the wardrobe, she felt something soft and powdery and extremely cold. . . . Next moment she found that what was rubbing against her face and hands was no longer soft fur but something hard and rough and even prickly. . . . A moment later she found that she was standing in the middle of a wood at night-time with snow under her feet and snowflakes falling through the air.

(p. 13)

Lucy is welcomed into Narnia by the faun Tumnus, who had planned to betray her into the hands of the White Witch who holds Narnia in thralldom, reigning there in a perpetual winter of discontent.

¹³"On Three Ways of Writing for Children," in Of Other Worlds, pp. 29-30.

Having met and entertained Lucy at tea, Tumnus changes his plan and decides to defy the Witch, but he does so in spite of his great fear of what she may do to him in retribution:

"she'll wave her wand over my beautiful cloven hoofs and turn them into horrid solid hoofs like a wretched horse. And if she is extra and specially angry she'll turn me into stone and I shall be only a statue of a Faun in her horrible house."

(p. 24)

Metamorphoses are the rule in Narnia as Lucy enters it; both for good (in the wardrobe which is transformed into a portal for her entry into the land) and for evil (in the Witch's methods of discipline). Narnia's perpetual winter is itself a sort of perverse metamorphosis, since it is a product of the Witch's rebellion against the natural turn of the seasons, which she enforces by her magic. Throughout the tale, these metamorphoses are set out against that fundamental reality which does not suffer change: Lewis's theme in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is that those things to which we give the name reality are often mere shadows -- the true reality is not always seen with the outward eye, but is bound up in the Lion of Narnia, Aslan. A corollary to this theme is that a reliable perspective upon reality is dependent upon a right relationship to reality's Centre: there are personal transformations of greater significance than the mere change of wardrobe into woods, transformations which can bring one out of the deceptive world of appearances into the world of immutable reality.

On returning through the wardrobe to her own world, Lucy makes the discovery that, although many things around her seem suddenly capable of magical transformations, some things must not

change. Peter, Susan and Edmund, Lucy's older brothers and sister, do not credit her story about the wardrobe having been for her a door into another world. When Peter makes a test of the matter by rapping his knuckles on the solid back of the wardrobe, no metamorphosis occurs. But Lucy is determined not to compromise: she understands that her own experience, however implausible it may appear to others, is still true, and that the truth is something which must not be tampered with on any consideration:

she could have made it up with the others quite easily at any moment if she could have brought herself to say that the whole thing was only a story made up for fun. But Lucy was a very truthful girl and she knew that she was really in the right; and she could not bring herself to say this.

(pp. 28-29)

Eventually, in the face of unanimous disbelief on the part of her brothers and sister, Lucy begins to entertain some doubts about her experience, "to wonder herself whether Narnia and the Faun had not been a dream," (p. 29) but her original conviction is ratified when she makes her second entry into Narnia by way of the wardrobe. As Lucy returns to Narnia, her brother Edmund makes his first entrance there, entering also upon his own story of treachery and eventually of his personal transformation.

Edmund's temptation to evil really begins with his own pride, for once he discovers that Narnia is real in fact he does not look forward to having to apologize to Lucy for taunting her about her "make-believe" world. When he meets the White Witch, she quickly recruits him by offering him a magical drink and pounds of

Turkish Delight.¹⁴ While the candy intoxicates Edmund in one way (because it is enchanted), the Witch's disregard of truth intoxicates him in another, offering him an alternative to telling all and taking the cross-examination by his brother and sisters which his own actions and their motives clearly will not endure. The Witch, a skilful propagandist, calls the lie which she urges Edmund to take up "a secret," "a surprise," or "some excuse." (p. 40) Edmund weighs in his mind what he feels is the treatment due him (which the Witch performs by instantly gratifying his every whim) against the humbling which is surely before him if he should return to his brother and sisters with the truth; unfortunately for Edmund, he chooses the path of least resistance:

When Peter suddenly asked him the question he decided all at once to do the meanest and most spiteful thing he could think of. He decided to let Lucy down. . . . "Oh, yes, Lucy and I have been playing -- pretending that all her story about a country in the wardrobe is true. Just for fun, of course. There's nothing there really."
(p. 44)

Peter and Susan are now faced with a difficult decision. They can believe Lucy's story, or they can accept Edmund's explanation that Lucy's story is "make-believe." Lucy's story is contrary to their entire experience of physical reality as

¹⁴Kathryn Lindskoog has shown that Lewis may here have had in mind Hans Christian Andersen's "The Snow Queen," and particularly the scene in which Kay meets and comes under the enchantment of the evil Queen. See The Lion of Judah in Never-Never Land, pp. 96-97.

The White Witch in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is Jadis of The Magician's Nephew, but the two books differ in their accounts of her ancestry. Evan Gibson comments on these minor discrepancies in Spinner of Tales, p. 133.

unchanging and governed by inalterable laws; Edmund's version of the truth would oblige them to see deliberate falseness in Lucy, which they have never seen in her before. They approach Professor Kirke (Digory Kirke of The Magician's Nephew, now grown up) for his counsel, and he appeals to the power of logic over the weight of disbelief:

"There are only three possibilities. Either your sister is telling lies, or she is mad, or she is telling the truth. You know she doesn't tell lies and it is obvious that she is not mad. For the moment then and unless any further evidence turns up, we must assume that she is telling the truth." . . .

"Well, sir, if things are real, they're there all the time."

"Are they?" said the Professor; and Peter did not know quite what to say.

(pp. 47-48)

Logic demands that the children entertain the possibility that some things may in fact be "real" but may not be "there all the time." That is, they must accept the hypothesis that metamorphoses are real phenomena. Once Peter and Susan experience such a transformation first-hand -- when the wardrobe becomes for them too a door into Narnia -- they naturally accept Lucy's account of the truth and make their apologies to her.

Edmund's duplicity is discovered because he lacks the presence of mind to conceal the fact that he knows certain details of Narnian geography prior to what is ostensibly his "first" entrance there with his brother and sisters. Lewis brings Edmund's duplicity and Lucy's truthfulness together to contrast their effect on the children's perspective. When the four children are led by a beaver deeper into Narnia, it is Edmund (who is himself so worthy of

distrust) who distrusts the guide, and Lucy who trusts it: "'I think it's a nice beaver,' said Lucy. 'Yes, but how do we know?' said Edmund." (p. 62) Just as Edmund's volition has been twisted, so has his perspective upon reality. This distinction, between the right perspective of one who embraces the truth and the faulty perspective of the one who avoids his responsibilities by retreating into falsehood, is brought to a point when the beaver (who is of course completely trustworthy) mentions the name of Aslan to the children. Edmund proves by his response that he has cut himself off from the others: while Peter, Susan and Lucy respond to mention of the Name with that joy which is reserved for the sudden reminder of a precious memory, Edmund's guilt inspires in him "a sensation of mysterious horror." (p. 65)

Edmund decides to betray his brother and sisters, to "pay them out" for the isolation to which he is sure they have forced him. Their allegiance to Aslan he cannot share because of his complicity with the Queen. Having rejected the touchstone, the objective standard of truth, it is not surprising that Edmund is both deceived by external appearances and begins to deceive himself as to the true motive for his own course of action:

"all these people who say nasty things about [the White Witch] are her enemies and probably half of it isn't true. She was jolly nice to me, anyway, much nicer than they are. I expect she is the rightful Queen really. Anyway, she'll be better than that awful Aslan!" . . . that was the excuse he made in his own mind for what he was doing. It wasn't a very good excuse, however, for deep down inside him he really knew that the White Witch was bad and cruel.
(pp. 82-83)

Edmund suppresses his knowledge of the witch's badness and cruelty

until he is completely within her power, writhing under her newly harsh treatment of himself, terrified when he overhears her command to have his brother and sisters killed, and sickened by her cruelty to some of the talking animals which are the "people" of the kingdom of Narnia. He begins to repent of his allegiance to the Witch, and soon has proof of the existence of a power stronger than the witch's evil, able to transform her dead Long Winter into a beautiful, life-delighting Spring, "the whole wood passing in a few hours or so from January to May." (p. 113) The reiterated promise that "Aslan is on the move" takes new substance with this metamorphosis.

The stage has now been set for a direct confrontation between the great opposing forces. The Witch, with Edmund as her hostage, confronts Aslan on the matter of Edmund's treachery, appealing to that which is absolutely immutable, will admit of no power to alter it, neither of the Witch nor of Aslan himself. This is the "deep magic" of the Law of Narnia, a divine Law "engraved on the sceptre of the Emperor-over-Sea" which demands the death of any traitor. While Aslan cannot change this deep magic, he can and does fulfill its conditions in his own person on behalf of Edmund. The Witch and her retinue are triumphant for a time at the passion, humiliation and death of the Lion.

By substituting himself as sacrifice for the life of the traitor, Aslan pays the price of the boy's transgression of the moral law. The obdurateness of that law is reflected in the monolithic construction of the Stone Table upon which Aslan is

sacrificed; the satisfaction of the law (to provide a way of escape to the guilty) is demonstrated in that the table is cracked (and not destroyed utterly) upon his return to life. This detail of the cracking of the Stone Table recalls the rending of the temple veil: it is a token of access to divinity. Chad Walsh shows that the power of the episode derives in large part from Lewis's appropriation of some of the elements of the crucifixion story:

The death of Aslan at the hands of the Witch is one of the most compelling Passion stories. It achieves its power partly by a process of selection. Many events from the biblical story are repeated here, suitably modified for a Narnian setting. Jesus had a large and loyal following of women; likewise, on Aslan's last night it is the two girls who accompany Him to the Stone Table and try to comfort Him. The tone of this scene is like that on the Mount of Olives; Aslan, the very channel through whom God's creative energy has brought Narnia into being is weary, sad, desolate.¹⁵

Charles Huttar has said that Aslan dies only for Edmund's sake, and not for the whole of the Narnian world.¹⁶ But this statement gives a misleading impression of the significance placed on Aslan's death in the Chronicles. Edmund himself, in The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader," reveals to another reformed sinner (Eustace Scrubb) that it is Aslan himself who has become the means of reformation, "the great Lion, the son of the Emperor over Sea, who saved me and saved Narnia."¹⁷ And at the conclusion of The Silver Chair, Caspian's sea-change to a glorified body is effected by the shedding of a great drop of

¹⁵The Literary Legacy, p. 143.

¹⁶"C.S. Lewis's Narnia and the 'Grand Design,'" in The Longing for a Form, p. 131.

¹⁷The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader," pp. 97-98, emphasis added.

the Lion's blood.¹⁸ From these observations it seems clear that, although Lewis did not seek to make of Aslan's death an allegory of Christ's, he did seek to instill in the minds of his readers the concept of the overwhelming significance of the sacrifice, and echoed many details of the Christian mystery in order to effect this. Once again, Chad Walsh's comment puts the emphasis squarely where it should be put:

It is not enough, in the economy of the divine Magic, to slay the Witch and rescue Edmund. . . . The moral foundations of the Narnian universe have been undermined. Mere fleshly strength cannot rebuild them. But what Lewis dramatizes is not simply the price but the glory of the price, as new life is released into a redeemed world.¹⁹

The Witch's triumph is short-lived. While the "deep magic from the dawn of time" is immutable in Narnia, there is another "deeper magic," from eternity, which brings about the central metamorphosis of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: the resurrection of Aslan. As Lucy and Susan bestow what dignities they can upon the lifeless form of the great Lion, they watch the long night slowly yield to the dawn: "The sky in the east was whitish by now and the stars were getting fainter -- all except one very big one low down on the eastern horizon." (p. 145) Now the east is, in the Narnian world, Aslan's country. What Lucy and Susan see (although they do not recognize it) is Aslan himself, Aslan out of the body

¹⁸The Silver Chair, p. 202.

¹⁹The Literary Legacy, p. 143.

and preparing to enter it again. The girls' vigil continues, and they walk about to warm themselves. The moment of transfiguration is by now very near -- "The one big star [has] almost disappeared." (p. 146) At the moment of the sun's rising, when that star must disappear completely, they hear the sound of the cracking of the Stone Table of the law, and the resurrected Aslan greets them, explaining the provision of the eternal law, "that when a willing victim who had committed no treachery was killed in a traitor's stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backwards." (p. 148) This greatest of transformations is, as Aslan hints, only the beginning of great events. For death does indeed "start working backwards" almost immediately, as those creatures whom the Witch had turned into stone endure a happier metamorphosis as they are touched by the breath of Aslan. This passage is Lewis's most beautiful and moving account of miraculous transformation in the tale:

I expect you've seen someone put a lighted match to a bit of newspaper which is propped up in a grate against an unlit fire. And for a second nothing seems to have happened; and then you notice a tiny streak of flame creeping along the edge of the newspaper. It was like that now. For a second after Aslan had breathed upon him the stone lion looked just the same. Then a tiny streak of gold began to run along his white marble back -- then it spread -- then the colour seemed to lick all over him as the flame licks all over a bit of paper -- then, while his hindquarters were still obviously stone, the lion shook his mane and all the heavy stone folds rippled into living hair. Then he opened a great red mouth, warm and living, and gave a prodigious yawn. And now his hind legs had come to life. He lifted one of them and scratched himself. Then, having caught sight of Aslan, he went bounding after him and frisking round him, whimpering with delight and

jumping up to lick his face.²⁰
(pp. 152-153)

With this exultant re-affirmation of life, it is plain that the deathly reign of the Witch is at last over. Aslan and the newly emancipated statues come to the aid of Peter and his army, and the Witch and her side are quickly overcome. The Witch's spirit of negation and hatred has been overcome by reality itself, that which is focussed in the Lion.

By joining against the Witch, each of Aslan's warriors contributes to the overall defeat of that power which can turn good to evil, and in many of Aslan's warriors a personal metamorphosis -- from evil to good -- is effected. Edmund's change, which had begun when he felt compassion for some of those creatures whom the Witch had turned to stone, is proven in the battle when he attacks the Witch herself. A draught of magical elixir is required to save Edmund from the wounds sustained in the combat; but a greater restoration is evident in him even than the restoration to physical health:

When at last [Lucy] was free to come back to Edmund she found him standing on his feet and not only healed of his wounds but looking better than she had seen him look -- oh, for ages; in fact ever since his first term at that horrid school which was where he had begun to go wrong. He had become his real old self again and could look you in the face. And there on the field of battle Aslan made him a knight.

(p. 163)

²⁰Compare Mere Christianity, p. 140: "And that is precisely what Christianity is about. This world is a great sculptor's shop. We are the statues and there is a rumour going round the shop that some of us are some day going to come to life." This passage was quoted in relation to The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe by Peter Schakel, in Reading with the Heart, p. 30.

Having won victory over the White Witch in battle, the four children are made Kings and Queens of Narnia under Aslan, and discover that their new condition is not subject to change: Aslan promises, "'Once a king or queen in Narnia, always a king or queen.'" (p. 165) It is just as well that they have this assurance from the immutable Lion himself, for, after briefly passing over the long and joyful reigns of Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy, Lewis's story describes a last metamorphosis by which the four now-grown monarchs pass through the door of the wardrobe, to become again the four children who had entered it so many Narnian years past -- they return to England in the same hour in which they had left it. It seems very much as if all things have changed, but Professor Kirke reminds them again of Aslan's word: "'Once a King in Narnia, always a King in Narnia.'" (p. 170) Beneath every apparent change of condition, their true condition -- and its foundation, their relationship to the great Lion -- remains.

The Horse and His Boy

The Horse and His Boy is a tale of adventure in the Narnian world "in the Golden Age when Peter was High King of Narnia and his brother and his two sisters were King and Queens under him." (p. 11) Thus, the story is set within the time frame of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. The whole of The Horse and His Boy is concerned with the theme of personal identity, and particularly of true identity's foundation in the essential, uncreated Reality of the Narnian world: the person of Aslan.

In the first few pages of the tale it is hinted that this is to be a story of the discovery of his own identity by Shasta, the Boy of the title: "In those days, far south in Calormen on a little creek of the sea, there lived a poor fisherman called Arsheesh, and with him there lived a boy who called him Father." (p. 11) Lewis carefully plants doubt as to Shasta's true parentage by playing upon the ambiguity of the word "called" here. While the name of the fisherman is not in question, the title of Father is not quite so clearly his by right, since the reader is told merely that he is "called" Father by "a boy" who lives with him. When Shasta overhears a conversation between the fisherman and a lord of that country, the Tarkaan Anradin, he is delighted to discover that he had been a foundling, and not the son of Arsheesh. The information releases Shasta from a burden of guilt which he had felt at his own lack of filial affection: "He had often been uneasy because, try as he might, he had never been able to love the fisherman, and he knew that a boy ought to love his father." (p. 16) Already Shasta has an intuitive grasp of the truth of filial responsibility (from the Tao): this is to serve him well on his quest to discover his true identity.

By musing aloud on what life as the property of Anradin might be like, Shasta makes the discovery that Anradin's horse is a Talking Horse of Narnia (when the beast answers Shasta's soliloquy). The Horse, Bree, who is also a slave, counsels that the two of them should escape together to Narnia. Shasta confesses that for him the North has always held an irresistible fascination, and learns from

Bree that a longing of that sort supports Anradin's guess that Shasta had been Northern born. Eliane Tixier has related this hidden longing within the heart of Shasta to Lewis's Sehnsucht, that all-consuming longing for the things of God which he desired to stir in the heart of his reader:

if longing can remain unconscious, though real, in Shasta's . . . heart, this is because it is more deeply rooted than could be suspected; it is inscribed in our flesh, it runs in our blood; longing is nothing less than a call for a home we cannot remember, the desire to return to a country we belong to by right of birth, where we are to be the King's sons and where, like Shasta . . . we are to be called by our true names.²¹

Thus Shasta's longing to find his true home and to establish his own true identity is explicitly related to the response which Lewis seeks to incite in his reader: a response ordinate to that reality which is behind and beyond temporal appearances, and which finds its centre in the person of God. Professor Kilby's comment that The Horse and His Boy has "perhaps . . . the fewest Christian references of any book in the Narnian series"²² is accurate in the sense that in this work Lewis does not invoke details of symbol and narrative from the gospels and the epistles explicitly as he had done (for instance) in Aslan's crucifixion and resurrection in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. And yet the myth of The Horse and His Boy, the narrative shape of Shasta's struggle to arrive at his real home and assume at last his own true identity, and the picaresque account of his adventures along the way, echo the classic story of the Christian's journey "from this world to the next" as it has been

²¹"Imagination Baptized," in The Longing for a Form, p. 146.

²²The Christian World of C.S. Lewis, p. 139.

set down again and again over the past two millenia, by writers from St. Paul to Bunyan to Lewis himself.

Shasta's discovery that Bree is not merely the dumb horse he had seemed suggests that the journey which they undertake together is to be a journey of discovery of identity for Bree as well as for Shasta. The boy's quest is largely a trial of his courage, integrity and perseverance: he must discover these strengths in his own character and exercise them in preparation for the assumption of his true identity as a prince of the northern kingdom of Archenland. But Bree's journey prepares him for life in the free societies of Archenland and Narnia by stripping him of his prideful illusions concerning his own worth. Bree is inordinately proud of being (secretly) a true Talking Horse in a land which knows only dumb horses, of being a war horse (and thus a prized asset in the militaristic Calormene society); he is proud too of what he considers to be his superior knowledge, valour and self-possession. His treatment of Shasta is, while kind, always tinged with archness and condescension. When the two travellers are joined in their journey north by Aravis, a fugitive Calormene girl from the highest caste of that oppressive society (with her own Talking Horse, Whin), Aravis's pride of place and birth, and Bree's own proud ways, combine to make Shasta rather miserable for a time. Aravis must learn with Bree to forget about arbitrary distinctions of class and to accept all men and Talking Beasts as equal subjects under Aslan. While there is certainly rank in Narnia, it depends not on wealth or power, but is bestowed by the law of the great "King above all High Kings in

Narnia." (p. 140) Aravis is not troubled by the thought that the slave girl whom she had drugged in order to facilitate her own escape had probably been beaten for sleeping late. When Shasta taxes Aravis with her unfairness toward the slave girl, Aravis retorts, "I did not do any of these things for the sake of pleasing you." (p. 42) Aravis' pride of birth does not encourage her to take the feelings of slaves and fisherman's boys into account.

Shasta learns what manner of boy he is, and what his character, not by thinking about it or waiting on the opinions of others, but by observing his own actions. He finds, in crossing the desert, that he is capable of enduring more hardship than he had anticipated, and at the borders of Archenland discovers in himself courage enough to face a lion in defense of Aravis:

Shasta, half mad with horror, managed to lurch towards the brute. He had no weapon, not even a stick or a stone. He shouted out, idiotically, at the lion as one would at a dog. "Go home! Go home!" For a fraction of a second he was staring right into its wide-opened, raging mouth. Then, to his utter astonishment, the lion, still on its hind legs, checked itself suddenly, turned head over heels, picked itself up, and rushed away.

(p. 123)

The lion is, of course, Aslan himself. By coming upon the travellers at this moment near the end of their journey, Aslan simultaneously tests Shasta's courage and sacrificial love, punishes Aravis for her callous treatment of the slave girl back in Calormen, frightens the horses into greater speed so that they will be in time to warn Archenland's king of an impending raid by the Calormenes, and helps Bree to a clearer understanding of himself by showing him that he does not in fact possess the prodigious

courage and sagacity which his life among the Calormene brutes had taught him to "see" in himself. After having faced Aslan in ignorance of who the lion was, and then risen to the greater task of running on (in spite of his terror and exhaustion) to deliver his message of warning to Archenland, Shasta is at last met by Aslan face to face. By this meeting Shasta learns that his own identity has been established by Aslan himself, and is inextricably bound up in a relationship with the great Lion whose existence the boy had not even suspected until this moment. Aslan reveals how he has been preparing Shasta, through the seemingly unordered events of a lifetime, to assume the place prepared for him in Archenland by this "King above all High Kings":

"I was the lion who forced you to join with Aravis. I was the cat who comforted you among the houses of the dead. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you while you slept. I was the lion who gave the Horses the new strength of fear for the last mile so that you should reach King Lune in time. And I was the lion you do not remember who pushed the boat in which you lay, a child near death, so that it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at midnight, to receive you." . . .

"Who are you?" asked Shasta.

"Myself," said the Voice, very deep and low so that the earth shook: and again "Myself," whispered so softly you could hardly hear it, and yet it seemed to come from all round you as if the leaves rustled with it.

(pp. 139-140)

Shasta learns here the single most important fact of his own identity: that he, Shasta, is the boy whom Aslan has somehow chosen. What gives Shasta certain knowledge of himself is the discovery of his personal and particular relationship to the great King. Once that relationship has been recognized, Shasta loses pride and self-consciousness together, and assumes his rightful place before his lord:

of course he knew none of the true stories about Aslan, the great Lion, the son of the Emperor-over-sea, the King above all High Kings in Narnia. But after one glance at the Lion's face he slipped out of the saddle and fell at its feet.

(p. 140)

Of all the dream-like events through which Shasta has passed, this epiphany seems likely to be the most aetherial. But Aslan has provided for Shasta's doubt, and provided also for the physical and spiritual refreshment which he so greatly needs, with a beautifully symbolic, objective reassurance of the truth of Shasta's experience:

"Was it all a dream?" wondered Shasta. But it couldn't have been a dream for there in the grass before him he saw the deep, large print of the Lion's front right paw. . . . As he looked at it, water had already filled the bottom of it. Soon it was full to the brim, and then overflowing, and a little stream was running downhill, past him, over the grass.

(p. 142)

In meeting Aslan, Shasta has met himself, and it remains to him only to establish the human relationships which will give him an identity recognized by men. His story ends with the discovery that he is the lost son of King Lune of Archenland: Cor, lost brother of Corrin. When telling the story of his birth and abduction to Aravis, Cor (Shasta) rightly divines the source of true identity when he says that it is Aslan who "'seems to be at the back of all the stories.'"

(p. 174)

The theme of contrast between the Calormene infidels and the Narnian and Archenland peoples under Aslan is concluded militarily in the Battle of Anvard -- in which the reunited twins Cor and Corrin have opportunity to prove their royal mettle -- and spiritually in Aslan's judgement upon the Calormene general Rabadash. The impetuous son of the Tisroc had put his trust in his own descent

from Tash, the god of the Calormenes, but his ranting and posturing is shown in the presence of the great Lion to be both impotent and ridiculous. Lewis's comments on the figure of Satan in Paradise Lost are very much to the point when one considers Rabadash:

it is a mistake to demand that Satan . . . should be able to rant and posture through the whole universe without, sooner or later, awaking the comic spirit. The whole nature of reality would have to be altered in order to give him such immunity, and it is not alterable. At that precise point where Satan . . . meets something real, laughter must arise, just as steam must when water meets fire.²³

Rabadash, the posturer who trusts in the false god, meets the true lord of Narnia, the source of truth and the essence of reality in that world; and by that confrontation the son of the mighty Tisroc becomes manifest as merely Rabadash the Ridiculous. The judgement of Aslan is that the foolish Rabadash must assume the shape of a donkey until the time of the Autumn festival in Tashbaan, when he will again be restored to his own form. The restoration is on the provision that the young prince of Calormen must never venture farther than ten miles from Tashbaan; the ass's shape will return to him without remedy if he should disobey. After the doom is given, Aslan disappears from the assembly as suddenly as he had come:

There was a short silence and then they all stirred and looked at one another as if they were waking from sleep. Aslan was gone. But there was a brightness in the air and on the grass, and a joy in their hearts, which assured them that he had been no dream: and anyway, there was the donkey in front of them.

(p. 184)

The details of Aslan's remarkable mode of coming and going in this

²³A Preface to "Paradise Lost", p. 95.

episode recall the appearance of Christ to the disciples in the upper room following the resurrection:

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them Peace be unto you. . . . But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. . . . And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.
(John 20:19, 24, 26-28)

This is significant to the book's theme of the discovery of identity: Rabadash loses the false sense of his own importance (and thereby understands, for the first time, who he is in fact) in the same moment in which he comes to understand the true identity of Aslan. Lewis has drawn the parallel to the biblical account of Thomas's belated acceptance of the identity of the risen Christ in order to underline the fact that identity in the Narnian world too depends from that world's lord. To understand Aslan's identity as the central reality of the Narnian world, from whom depends all lesser realities (including true identity) is to discover who one truly is, just as Thomas needed proof of Christ's identity before he was to come to a just view of himself in his own relationship to his lord.

Prince Caspian

Three of the Chronicles of Narnia are united by the figure of Caspian X of Narnia. The first, Prince Caspian, is the story of the young Caspian's struggle against his usurping uncle Miraz, who

illegally holds the throne of Narnia; it is the story too of the struggle of the Narnians against their Telmarine overlords, and of the battle of all loyal subjects of the great Lion against the spirit of apostasy and unbelief which has grown up among them in the course of their years under the infidel rulers. The theme of the tale is faith, "the power of continuing to believe what we once honestly thought to be true until cogent reasons for honestly changing our minds are brought before us,"²⁴ set against appearances, time and change.

The Pevensie children return to Narnia in Prince Caspian just one year after they leave it at the conclusion of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, but find that the landscape is unaccountably changed from what they remember, and that their castle, Cair Paravel, is now what seems to be an ancient ruin. This situation has been devised by Lewis in order that the children can experience at first hand the remorseless mutability of physical objects: the castle is in ruins and overgrown with ivy and nettles, the orchard has grown wild and spread into the courtyard, the peninsula on which the castle had been raised has become an island. Lewis's purpose in this graphic illustration of mutability is similar to his purpose in the metamorphoses which filled The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: these changes in appearance and surface reality are to be held up against that deeper reality which does not suffer decay or change, and which centres in Aslan. Edmund and Peter between them interpret

²⁴"Religion: Reality or Substitute?," Christian Reflections, p. 62.

the meaning of what they see: that time in England and time in Narnia have no relationship that can be expressed in a ratio, that the four children have returned to Narnia as if they were "Crusaders or Anglo-Saxons or Ancient Britons or someone coming back to modern England," as Peter says.²⁵ (p. 34)

Narnia is, as the Pevensies return to it, ruled by the Telmarines, who had wrested control of the country from its rightful rulers during Aslan's long and unexplained absence from Narnia. The Telmarine king is Miraz, Caspian's uncle and the murderer of the boy's father, Caspian IX. Miraz rules in spite of Caspian's legitimate claim to the throne; Caspian is suffered to live only because Miraz has no son of his own. The King has set himself to suppress any fact of Narnia's history which could serve as the basis for a challenge to the right of the Telmarines to rule there: he angrily tells Caspian, "'There never were those Kings and Queens. . . . And there's no such person as Aslan. And there are no such things as lions. And there never was a time when animals could talk.'" (p. 44) Under the firm hand of the propagandist, Narnia's true history is characterized as mere nonsense, "'only fit for babies.'" Miraz does his best to ensure that nephew Caspian hears no more of Old Narnia, by dismissing Caspian's nurse with her stories of the old times, and replacing her with a new tutor, Doctor Cornelius. Unfortunately for Miraz, and most fortunately for Narnia, Cornelius is himself a descendent of Old Narnians, being part dwarf,

²⁵Evan Gibson discusses Lewis's "religious" purpose in the invention of a separate chronology for Narnia, in Spinner of Tales, p. 159.

and he teaches Caspian about the older and happier Narnia where human kings and queens ruled the Talking Beasts and longaevi in love and justice under their great lord, Aslan.

When the Telmarine queen bears Miraz a son, Cornelius warns Caspian of his peril and helps him to escape, advising him to seek out the "Old Narnians" who may help him to reclaim the throne from his wicked uncle. When the fugitive Caspian falls in with Trufflehunter the Badger and the dwarfs Trumpkin and Nikabrik, he learns that the stories of a Narnia older than the Telmarine Narnia are true history, and not mere fables. However, he also learns that some at least of the descendents of the Old Narnians have begun to lapse into apostasy in Aslan's long absence. In the oddly assorted trio of the two dwarfs and the badger, Lewis has provided exemplars of true vital faith in Aslan as lord of Narnia (in Trufflehunter), sceptical ambivalence (in Trumpkin), and explicit unbelief (in Nikabrik). Trufflehunter longs for the return of Aslan and the restoration of order under human kings who will acknowledge the supremacy of the "King above all High Kings": he is proud of his great memory, and repeatedly invokes the past to prove the rightness of present faith. Trumpkin is an honest sceptic, unwilling to accept for truth that which his own sense experience has not yet revealed to him -- a Thomas figure. Later in the tale, when battle is joined between the Old Narnians and the Telmarines, it is Trumpkin who volunteers to make the hazardous journey to Cair Paravel for young Caspian (whom the dwarf has acknowledged as King), expecting to meet there whomever

Caspian's winding of a magic horn has called to the Narnians' aid. Trumpkin's sceptical outlook on magical horns and magical helpers is not swayed, but his loyalty and faith towards Caspian direct his will, and thus it is he who meets the Pevensie children. When the children at Cair Paravel save Trumpkin from Telmarine murderers, the dwarf admits that there might be some validity in the claims he has heard for the magic horn, after all. But Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy have to prove by their prowess with sword and bow that they have indeed been called into Narnia to help Caspian. And when at last this dwarf who "doesn't believe in lions" is confronted by Narnia's great Lion, Aslan worries him like "a very young kitten . . . in the mother cat's mouth," (p. 133) until Trumpkin is thoroughly convinced that Aslan is real. The dwarf Nikabrik is only superficially like his cousin Trumpkin; at heart the cynical and political Nikabrik's manifesto is uncomplicated utility: if it is to be a confrontation between Narnians and Telmarines he is with the Narnians, if between beasts and dwarfs he is with the dwarfs, if among the dwarfs he is for the black dwarfs, if among them he is for Nikabrik alone. When it seems to Nikabrik that Caspian's side cannot win against the Telmarines, it is he who is ready to forge an alliance with evil, to summon up by sorcery the White Witch who had killed Aslan with the stone knife in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

The greatest test of faith in Prince Caspian comes not to the prince himself, but to Lucy, who had been the first human child to enter Narnia, and the closest to Aslan. The Lion meets the

children on their journey with Trumpkin from Cair Paravel to Caspian's camp, but remains at first invisible to all but Lucy. Naturally the others are as sceptical of Lucy's sight of Aslan as they had been when she had told them so long before about a wardrobe which opened on another world; Lucy's trial is to follow Aslan in spite of their scepticism. The others must choose either to follow the path approved by their physical senses, or turn back to follow an Aslan whom only the youngest of them can see. To Edmund's great credit, he recalls that Lucy's stubborn adherence to the truth of her story when first she entered Narnia had proved, beyond all outward indication, to be right. He remembers too that he had betrayed her then by giving the lie to her account of Narnia. Accordingly, Edmund votes to follow Aslan by following Lucy. The two are out-voted, however, and Lucy is obliged to turn from what she knows to be the right path.²⁶ When Aslan appears again to Lucy she is told clearly that she must follow him no matter what the others do or do not see, and no matter what their words or actions are. Before they reach Caspian's camp, all of the company do come to see the Lion, and the nearer to him they begin in spirit, the sooner their eyes confirm their decision to follow him. Susan and Trumpkin are the last of the party to see Aslan: she because she had forced herself out of faith by her own will, he because the habits of a lifetime of rational scepticism are not soon altered.

²⁶Lewis might well have had in mind the minority report of Joshua and Caleb concerning what course the Israelites should take when first they came to the borders of Canaan: see Num. 14:6-10.

With the coming of Aslan, any real threat to the victory of Old Narnia over the Telmarines is effectively ended. Peter is proven in the lists against Miraz, and the hosts of Telmar give up the battle when they see the awakened Dryads moving against them, like Burnham Wood come to Dunsinane. Aslan leaves his knights and soldiers to win their honours and prove their faith to the Lion on the field under their general, Peter. Aslan himself celebrates the victory with an Ovidian romp through the woods and fields of Narnia, in which the shackled spirits of vegetation, beasts and men are released as the Lion and his party come across them. The battle at Aslan's How itself ends in peace, as the impenitent Telmarines are returned by Aslan's magic to the island on our earth from which they had come.

The restoration of the kingdom completes the theme of the immutability of fundamental reality in Prince Caspian. The Telmarine usurpers who had relied on fables and propaganda find themselves at last powerless against the reality of Aslan and his Narnia, the "Old Narnia," which is exultantly restored at the end of the battle. The faith of such as Trufflehunter at last proves to be more sure than the realpolitik of the sour Nikabrik. And, as always in the Chronicles, Aslan (and Lucy's true faith in him) is at last manifestly more real than all the evidences which had been heaped up to deny his reality.

The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"

The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" is the centre panel of the Caspian triptych, set three years (in Narnian time) after Caspian's

coronation, and is an account of his journey in search of the seven Lords of Narnia who had been sent to the Lone Islands in unofficial exile by his uncle Miraz. Peter Schakel has rightly noted that this voyage is for Caspian a journey into experience, and his passage from the excesses of youth into the mature wisdom of a Narnian monarch.²⁷ But the theme which is central to all of the adventures in The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" is that image of reality which (in A Preface to Paradise Lost) Lewis calls the "hierarchical conception," the idea that

degrees of value are objectively present in the universe. Everything except God has some natural superior; everything except unformed matter has some natural inferior. The goodness, happiness, and dignity of every being consists in obeying its natural superior and ruling its natural inferiors.²⁸

It is by acknowledging the truth of this concept of reality that Caspian attains true maturity as a Narnian king obedient to the laws of his lord Aslan. It is by acknowledging his error in having remained outside of the hierarchy of authority and order that Eustace is given a new start within that order by Aslan's new birth. It is by deliberately stepping out of her place in the hierarchy that Lucy incurs Aslan's displeasure and her own unhappiness until she confesses and is forgiven her error. And it is because of their rebellion against their rightful authority that the Dufflepuds are doomed to be ruled by "rough magic" rather than wisdom, and ridiculously to obey not their real superior but one of their own

²⁷Reading with the Heart, pp. 51 ff.

²⁸p. 73.

silly band.

The story begins with Eustace Scrubb, an odious little cousin of the Pevensie children, who "almost deserved" his unfortunate name. Lewis suggests that Eustace's nastiness (he is described as "a record stinker," who knew "dozens of ways to give people a bad time," pp. 9, 10) stems from his upbringing in a "modern" home in which he is expected to call his parents "Harold and Alberta," and a "progressive" school run by people who (as it is described in The Silver Chair) "had the idea that boys and girls should be allowed to do what they liked. And unfortunately what ten or fifteen of the biggest boys and girls liked best was bullying the others."²⁹ It is unfortunate that Lewis's censure of Eustace's training descends at times to the level of mere personal prejudice (as, for instance, when he characterizes Eustace's parents as "vegetarians, non-smokers and teetotallers" who "wore a special kind of underclothes," p. 9), for his main point is a serious one: Eustace has been educated to understand no natural authority, either parental or magistral: he can thus acknowledge no right to be obeyed except that conferred by sheer force; he knows nothing of the created order of hierarchy.

When a picture of a ship on the Scrubbs' guest-room wall changes by magic into the real Narnian ship "Dawn Treader," Eustace is whisked (with Edmund and Lucy Pevensie) into a world of kings and queens, knights and commoners, where order and degree

²⁹The Silver Chair, p. 11.

dictate every aspect of one's behaviour. Eustace's very tangible introduction to the reality of hierarchy in Narnia comes at the hand of the Knight Reepicheep, "the most valiant of all the Talking Beasts and the Chief Mouse," (p. 19) who canes Eustace with the flat of his sword for having insulted him. Reepicheep is depicted by Lewis in vivid heraldic colours, in part for the sake of the merry ironies inherent in a lion-hearted mouse, but in part also for the sake of bringing out Reepicheep's grave yet gay devotion to Aslan, as a Knight of the Order of the Lion. In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, Lewis had followed the suggestion of the old fable in having the mice gnaw through the cords which bound Aslan on the Stone Table; the mice were rewarded for their devotion to the Lion on that occasion when Aslan made them Talking Mice. The valiant Reepicheep, the Chief Mouse, is bound on his own quest to seek Aslan's country in "the utter East," to fulfill a prophetic rhyme spoken over him in his cradle: (p. 24) His honour, courage and chivalry are deeply rooted in his loving devotion to Aslan -- but these knightly qualities are, no less than their cause, simply unintelligible to Eustace.

The courses of the mouse and the boy cross at Dragon Island when Eustace becomes lost and it is Reepicheep who charitably and honourably insists on searching him out. It is ultimately discovered that Eustace has undergone a horrible metamorphosis by sympathetic magic: "Sleeping on a dragon's hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart, he had become a dragon himself." (p. 81) But after his

initial glorying in the sheer physical power which his physical change has lent him (again, Eustace understands as yet no authority but force), the boy's outward change begins to work an inward change, teaching him about his own insufferable self. And at this point, when Eustace begins to understand how his ignorance of authority has cut himself off from the fellowship of the others, it is Reepicheep who comes to comfort him in his appalling loneliness.

Reepicheep cannot work the fundamental change which is needed in Eustace: Aslan can. At a well of magical water, in the midst of a garden on top of a mountain,³⁰ Eustace recognizes at last that he is powerless to effect any real change in himself, and that he must submit to Aslan's terrible cleansing. It is thus the Lion who tears the dragon's skin and dragonish nature together from Eustace, baptising him in the well upon his new birth, and dressing him in new clothes. (p. 96)

Once Eustace has been cured of his lawlessness by Aslan, he begins to be a remarkably improved companion on the voyage. The reconciliation between himself and Reepicheep comes to fruition as together they pit their strength against a sea serpent which threatens to crush the "Dawn Treader" in its coils: at last the boy and the mouse can agree on a common goal and can work together to achieve it. Their unity derives at last from their shared allegiance

³⁰Evan Gibson correctly identifies this as the Garden of the Tree which is described in the Magician's Nephew, and also mentioned in The Last Battle, where it is explained that the garden is a part of Aslan's own country. See Spinner of Tales, pp. 169-170.

to one lord, from their willingness to take their place in the order of authority which depends from Aslan.

On the Island of the Voices, Lucy is tempted by pride to take up a higher place on one particular "scale of perfection" than is hers by right, to utter a spell which will give her beauty "beyond the lot of mortals." But the Narnian author of Order intervenes to prevent this disastrous breach: "there, in the middle of the writing, where she felt quite sure there had been no picture before, she found the great face of a lion, of The Lion, Aslan himself, staring into hers." (p. 133) Conscious of the fact that Aslan would be displeased with her selfish and unlawful snatching of beauty, Lucy does not yield to the temptation. But, having overcome a great temptation, Lucy feels it to be virtually her right to yield to a lesser temptation, and eavesdrops (by magic) on a friend who is too weak to defend Lucy in a conversation with an older schoolgirl. Lucy finds that her unwholesome curiosity, her lust for a power beyond her due, has brought her to anger and to unhappiness. Here again Aslan intervenes, with a spell "for the refreshment of the spirit" (p. 134) from the magician's book, which seems to be Aslan's own story (though not, perhaps, the story of his Narnian manifestation) -- the romance of redemption itself, concerning "a cup and a sword and a tree and a green hill." (p. 135) Although Lucy can not remember much of the story after she has read it, we are told that "ever since that day what Lucy means by a good story is a story which reminds her of the forgotten story in the Magician's Book." (p. 135) Aslan's gift to Lucy

through this "spell" of spiritual refreshment is Joy itself -- that pang of longing for a dimly-remembered beauty and an ineffable truth. When Lucy utters a spell for making hidden things visible, one of the "hidden things" so revealed is Aslan himself, who demonstrates the rightness of his own Law by condescending to obey the spell: he asks the surprised Lucy very seriously, "'Do you think I wouldn't obey my own rules?'" (p. 136) The order inherent within the created hierarchy is good and true, because it is an accurate reflection of the character of its divine author.

In the encounter of Caspian and the Dawn Treader's adventurers with the Dufflepuds and their magician, Lewis deals once more with this principle of hierarchy, implying in this episode the contention that the wise and good should govern the less wise and less good, to instruct them in goodness and wisdom.³¹ We first hear of the Magician of the island through the Voices of the as-yet-unseen Dufflepuds, who tell Lucy that they had been made ugly by the magician, had attempted to remove the spell but had been forced by their great fear of him quickly to utter a spell of invisibility, as a second-best remedy for their ugliness. (p. 120) All of this, the chief Voice tells Lucy, has transpired because the Dufflepuds had been servants of the magician but had refused to do his bidding on one occasion. Our picture of the magician is thus (before we meet him) of a powerful and malevolent ruler, whose

³¹By this definition, all are ultimately under the rule of Wisdom and Goodness personified, God (or, in Narnia, Aslan) himself. See A Preface to Paradise Lost, pp. 73-81.

wrath at being thwarted is to be greatly feared. But when Lucy utters the spell to restore invisible things to visibility, the magician Coriakin himself is incidentally restored to that condition, and Lucy finds him to be totally unlike the picture of him which had been conjured by the account of the Voice. It turns out that Coriakin rules the Dufflepuds at the express pleasure of Aslan, and would welcome the day in which, as he puts it, they might be "governed by wisdom instead of this rough magic." (p. 138)³² Coriakin explains to Lucy that he allows the chief Duffer his conceit and freedom because the rest of the creatures agree with and admire him, and "'It's better for them to admire him than to admire nobody.'" (p. 140) That is, if they will not acknowledge their intended natural superior in the created hierarchy, it is at least some good to them to acknowledge one of their own who enjoys some superior qualities.

Caspian is the last of the Dawn Treader's complement to receive personal instruction from Aslan concerning that ordinate response to reality which is dictated by one's place in the hierarchy. The young King, jealous of Reepicheep's quest as they near Aslan's own country in the utter East of the Narnian world, rebels against the Order by declaring that he will accompany the

³²Coriakin is thus a Narnian Prospero, and it is clear that the opinions of his motives held by the chief Voice are no more objective nor better informed than were Caliban's of Shakespeare's magician. In the Penguin "Puffin" edition, his name is spelled "Coriakin" in chapter eleven, and "Koriakin" in chapter fourteen. I have employed the former spelling throughout the present discussion.

mouse, relinquishing his throne in order to do so. Rynelf, Drinian and Edmund all remonstrate against this decision, but Lewis gives to Reepicheep this eloquent statement of the hierarchical conception of order which forbids Caspian his whim:

"You are King of Narnia. You break faith with all your subjects . . . if you do not return. You shall not please yourself with adventures as if you were a private person. And if your Majesty will not hear reason it will be the truest loyalty of every man on board to follow me in disarming and binding you till you come to your senses."
(p. 203)

When Aslan speaks to Caspian in a vision to endorse Reepicheep's perspective upon the rule of the hierarchy, Caspian repents of his rebellion against the divinely appointed Order. Through this experience Caspian learns the same lesson that King Lune had impressed on the young crown prince of Archenland at the conclusion of The Horse and His Boy, that "The King's under the law, for it's the law makes him a King": it is by obedience to Aslan's law and by dependence upon the Lion in time of difficulty that Caspian comes to the maturity requisite in a King of Narnia under the Lion, and joins Eustace, Lucy and the Dufflepuds in a renewed understanding of the significance of that hierarchy which orders created reality, ascending from unformed matter to Aslan himself.

The Silver Chair

The Silver Chair is set at the end of the reign of Caspian X of Narnia. In this tale, Aslan commissions Eustace Scrubb and Jill Pole (who shares with Eustace the misfortune of internment at the school called "Experiment House" alluded to in The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader") to find and rescue the Narnian crown prince Rilian.

The prince is in the power of a shape-shifting monster which can be at one moment a tall and beautiful green-robed lady, and at the next a horrible green serpent. This last book of the Caspian trilogy is similar to the first (Prince Caspian) in that Lewis deals once more with the matter of faith. But in The Silver Chair, faith in Aslan is set not against the familiar natural enemies -- accidie and apostasy -- but against a supernatural entity whose express purpose it is to subvert faith.

Lewis leads the reader into a consideration of the theme of faith gently, by first demonstrating the beginnings of a very basic faith -- trust in each other -- between the two children who are to enter Narnia. At Experiment House, where a vicious clique rules, mistrust of one's fellow students is practically a necessity for survival, and so it is that Jill Pole finds it very difficult at first to trust Eustace Scrubb and to credit his story of having been for a time in Narnia. The evidences which Eustace advances to win Jill over are their common hatred of the school and its bullies, and his own radical change of character since having met Aslan. The fact of their "common cause" in wanting so badly to be out of their school helps Jill to trust Eustace somewhat, but it is the miraculous change in Eustace's behaviour which really piques her interest in Narnia, and makes it possible for her to be with Eustace when he opens the schoolyard gate (at Aslan's own bidding -- though neither of the children are conscious of this) onto the cliffs of Aslan's own country at the utter East of the Narnian world. Through her foolish pride at having a good head for heights, Jill almost

topples over the cliffs' edge; when Eustace struggles to pull her back to safety, it is he who falls. Jill does not know that the lion which suddenly rushes to the cliffs' edge is Aslan, nor that the Lion's "blowing" is the means of Eustace's safe travel to Narnia itself.

When at last Jill breaks off the instinctive attempt to rationalise her own behaviour (so as to avoid responsibility for Eustace's fall) the truth of her guilt overwhelms her and she bursts into tears. But when the tears are ended a ravenous thirst brings her to the stream where she meets Aslan. Fear of the lion, misery for her own guilt and wracking thirst contend in Jill for a time, and she would gladly seek another place to drink, except for the Lion's stern warnings that she will die of thirst if she does not drink, and that there is "no other stream." (p. 27) The encounter is of course symbolic of the very nature of truth and reality: Aslan is the central reality of the Narnian world, and the truth of any proposition is established against that central reality or not at all. Thus, standing practically between his paws in order to give an account of what has happened to Eustace, Jill pleases the Lion by speaking the truth. Aslan brings the girl through this trial because he is determined that she shall learn the truth of that concept of the one source of reality, for it will be by the instructions from Aslan's own mouth, the four "signs" by which Rilian can be found, that Eustace and Jill will know their way in the task set for them in Narnia:

"First; as soon as the Boy Eustace sets foot in Narnia, he will meet an old and dear friend. He must greet that friend at once; if he does, you will both have good help. Second; you must journey out of Narnia to the north till you come to the ruined city of the ancient giants. Third; you shall find a writing on a stone in that ruined city, and you must do what the writing tells you. Fourth; you will know the lost prince (if you find him) by this, that he will be the first person you have met in your travels who will ask you to do something in my name, in the name of Aslan."

(p. 29)

Jill and Eustace are reunited in Narnia, and find a guide for their journey to the ruined city of the ancient giants in a lank and reedy Marsh-wiggle named Puddleglum, but it is the signs which are their most valuable guide. They fail to profit by the first sign when Caspian's own boat sails from Narnia before Jill remembers to warn Eustace that he must immediately greet "an old friend" in order to have good help on their quest. The second sign is ignored when the children meet a mysterious knight in a black visor and his green-kirtled lady, who advises them to seek Harfang, the city of the Gentle Giants, instead of the old, ruined city of the sign. Eustace and Jill are tempted by their greed for comfort (in the midst of their journey across the moors in a blizzard) to seek this shelter, and nearly come to grief as the main dish of the giants' Autumn Feast.

By now, Jill has ceased rehearsing the signs as Aslan had instructed her, and cannot remember their order. But in her room at Harfang she is met (in a dream) by the Lion, who shows her again the words of the third sign, "UNDER ME"; next morning she wakes to discover that the melting snow has revealed the words of the sign carved in the great blocks of the pavement beneath her window. The

three companions flee from Harfang when they find opportunity, and find in the ruins of the ancient city of the giants a small crevice between the stones which leads them (in obedience to the sign) ultimately to Underland itself, a world of sad-faced gnomes, ruled by a Queen who has ordered the children and Puddleglum to be taken prisoner and brought to her. The three of them are marched farther and farther beneath the ruined city, until they reach the shores of a subterranean sea, where they embark on a dimensionless voyage in a ship rowed by the gnomes. The effect of this voyage is to disorient the prisoners so that they can no longer determine distance, direction, the duration of their travel, or even whether they are sleeping or awake:

How often they woke and slept and ate and slept again, none of them could ever remember. And the worst thing about it was that you began to feel as if you had always lived on that ship, in that darkness, and to wonder whether sun and blue skies and wind and birds had not been only a dream.

(p. 130)

In a dream, ordinary distinctions between truth and fantasy dissolve. This perception of the three companions -- that they are beginning to doubt the boundaries of dream and waking -- is of fundamental importance, for the task which is before them (indeed, their specific task from the very outset) is to fix their eyes upon truth and to dismiss from their minds all which is not true. Here, where reality and unreality seem to merge, the signs are the only undoubted truths to which the children and Puddleglum may cling, because the signs are Aslan's own words, spoken from the very source of Narnian reality.

The consort of the Queen of Underland (the same black

knight whom they had met on the road to Harfang) laughs at their obedience to Aslan's third sign, explaining that the words on the pavement had nothing to do with them or their quest, but were merely the remnant of an ancient giant king's epitaph:

Though under Earth and throneless now I be,
Yet, while I lived, all Earth was under me.
(p. 134)

The effect of this information upon the children's confidence in their quest is almost disastrous, until Puddleglum very sensibly reminds them of the principle of the "one source" of truth which Jill had first learned on the mountains of Aslan's own country: "Our guide is Aslan; and he was there when the giant King caused the letters to be cut, and he knew already all things that would come of them; including this." (p. 135) The knight next tells the travellers that he is under an enchantment and would turn into a horrible serpent at the same hour each night, were it not that his lady binds him into a silver chair which prevents his change. Puddleglum's great faith in the truth of the signs and in the Lion as the centre of Narnian reality is exercised again when in the midst of what is ostensibly a fit of this "enchantment," the knight cries out to be released from the chair "by the great Lion, by Aslan himself." (p. 144) Although they had promised each other to do no such thing, Puddleglum reasons that obedience to Aslan demands that they obey the knight's charge in the Lion's name. When they act upon his decision, the loosed knight immediately leaps up and destroys the chair of enchantment, and reveals that he is in fact Rilian of Narnia, the object of the quest set them by Aslan.

The Queen of Underland (who is of course the shape-shifting witch in the guise of the beautiful lady) returns to find Rilian free and standing with his liberators, and must work quickly to effect a new enchantment, to undermine the conception of reality which is held in their minds; she is aided by the monotonous thrumming of a stringed instrument, and the stupefying sweet odours from a handful of magical incense which she has thrown on the fire. She insists (as the enchantment begins to overpower them) that her underground world is the only reality, that all those things available to the adventurers only through the testimony of memory (Narnia and the Overworld, the sun, Aslan himself) are fanciful images which have been derived from the firm physical realities of her subterranean empire. She argues that, since the children cannot actually produce Aslan for her inspection in the cavern, and since they can describe him only by comparing his appearance to that of a cat (which both the Queen and they do know), the lion Aslan must be merely an unreal wish-fulfilling projection of a "real" cat:

"You've seen cats, and now you want a bigger and better cat, and it's to be called a lion. . . . you can put nothing into your make-believe without copying it from the real world, this world of mine, which is the only world. . . . There is no Narnia, no Overworld, no sky, no sun, no Aslan."

(p. 155)

Lewis has expounded the difficulty which the Queen of Underland here exploits, in a published sermon entitled "Transpositions." In this address he tackles the problem of "the reappearance in what professes to be our supernatural life of all the same old elements

which make up our natural life."³³ He demonstrates that in any two systems of experience where the one is richer than the other, a translation (or "transposition") of the experience of the richer system into the terms of the poorer necessitates "giving each element in the poorer system more than one meaning."³⁴ Thus Aslan is indeed a cat (of a sort) -- but he is certainly not the sort of cat suggested by the Queen. And for the person (or witch) who insists on reducing these transpositions of meaning into the prosaic terms of the lower system of experience (here quite literally "lower"), no communication of truth is possible. And this is of course precisely what the witch intends: if the children and Puddleglum cannot articulate the truths they know (at least not in the only terms which she allows them) they may fall under her enchantment to the extent that they cease to believe in the very reality which those truths describe.

But the witch does not reckon on the great faith and strength of will which Puddleglum demonstrates in going to the brazier and grinding out with his naked foot most of the fire, clearing the stupefying incense from the room and giving it instead the aroma of burnt marsh-wiggle ("which is not at all an enchanting smell," p. 156). The action puts the witch off her guard and into a fury, and the pain clears Puddleglum's head to the extent that he can show just how far the sheer goodness of what she calls fantasy

³³"The Weight of Glory" and Other Addresses, p. 18.

³⁴Ibid.

outshines her glum and shoddy Underland: they know "a play-world which licks [her] real world hollow.'" (p. 156)³⁵ In her rage, the witch undergoes her transformation from beautiful woman to poison-green serpent, and is dispatched by Puddleglum and Rilian.

Rilian, Puddleglum and Eustace then follow Jill out of the dark tunnel into a moonlit Narnian wood, where fauns, dwarfs and talking animals of all kinds receive their Prince with reverent joy. But Rilian's triumphant arrival at Cair Paravel is marred by the fact that Caspian his father is borne from his ship on a litter to meet him, and dies in Rilian's arms. Rilian has returned to assume the throne of Narnia.

Eustace and Jill, sorrowful at the death of the old king, wish only to return to their own world, and Aslan comes to them to accomplish this. After their trials, in which their ability to distinguish between the real and the unreal has been so sorely tried, the wonderful substance of Aslan himself is precisely the refreshment for which their spirits thirst: "They turned and saw the Lion himself, so bright and real and strong that everything else began at once to look pale and shadowy compared with him." (p. 200)

³⁵Evan Gibson relates this comment by Puddleglum to Lewis's essay "On Obstinacy of Belief," (The World's Last Night, p. 29) in which Lewis writes that, if the tenets of the Christian faith are delusory, "then we should have to say that the universe had produced no real thing of comparable value and that all explanations of the delusion seemed somehow less important than the thing explained." See Spinner of Tales, pp. 191-192.

On the mountains of his own country, Aslan allows the children to witness an act of redemption complementary to that accomplished by his immolation on the Stone Table; the lion's shed blood redeems the perished Caspian from death itself:

the dead King began to be changed. His white beard turned to grey, and from grey to yellow, and got shorter and vanished altogether; and his sunken cheeks grew round and fresh, and the wrinkles were smoothed, and his eyes opened, and his eyes and lips both laughed, and suddenly he leaped up and stood before them -- a very young man, or a boy.
(p. 202)

When Caspian greets Eustace, the children are very troubled because they believe him to be a wraith, and not really the Caspian with whom Eustace had sailed on the Dawn Treader. But Aslan and Caspian put the children's fears to rest shortly, telling them that Caspian would be a ghost if he should appear again in Narnia, but cannot be a ghost while he is in Aslan's country, because that country is now his own. Caspian's calm statement that "one can't be a ghost in one's own country" (p. 203) casts its shadow back over Jill and Eustace's recent adventures: if recollections of home and Narnia and even Aslan seem dim and unsubstantial in the gloomy caves of Underland, it is because one is not "in one's own country," and the alien scenes close by have assumed an appearance of substance which is theirs in fact. It is only Aslan himself who is the same in all worlds, real (and the focus of all lesser realities) amid the shadows. It is only one's faith in him and obedience to his instructions which assure that one's actions will be ordinate to the essential reality which underlies all appearances.

Lewis ends the tale with a reminder of how perspective

dictates experience: although the reader knows Caspian X of Narnia to be very much alive in Aslan's country, we are told that "far off in Narnia, King Rilian buried his father, Caspian the Navigator, Tenth of that name, and mourned for him." (p. 206) Thus Lewis has put the reader into such a position that he may know by "sight" what can be known by Rilian and his subjects only by faith. The Silver Chair's main theme -- that it is possible to have true knowledge (by faith) of certain aspects of reality which cannot be ratified by the senses -- is thus examined at the conclusion of the story from a new point of view: knowledge looks back to faith with compassion for those who must for the present continue to see reality as "through a glass, darkly."

The Last Battle

The Last Battle, which is the story of the Narnian apocalypse, could well be called the Revelation of Aslan, for this last Chronicle of Narnia moves through wars and rumours of wars to a joyful celebration of the Lion's place at the centre of reality. Narnia's last days are characterized by deception and sham on every hand -- false religion, false prophets and false hopes -- until at last the author of reality calls to himself all that is real in the Narnian world, and the unreal is banished from his presence forever.

A wily ape name Shift dupes the woolly-headed donkey Puzzle into impersonating Aslan, so as to force the ape's own will on the citizens of Narnia as if with divine authority. Shift also enters into an alliance with the totalitarian Calormene state (described in The Horse and his Boy), so as to consolidate his power over

Narnia with the help of the Calormene army. When Shift's programme of domination by religious and military intimidation is well under way, he tells the Narnians that their Lion and the cruel Tash of the Calormenes are really one god, and that this "Tashlan" has ordered the repressive measures being carried out in Narnia by the Calormenes.

The last monarch of Narnia, King Tirian, hears rumors of Aslan's return to the country, but cannot accept that the good Lion of the old stories can be ordering the destruction and cruelty which is taking place. In this, Tirian is encouraged by the counsel of the seer Roonwit, who pledges his King with the words, "'to Aslan and truth, Sire, and secondly to your Majesty.'" (p. 19) Roonwit places Aslan at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of authority and order, and maintains that the great Lion's character -- his goodness, justice, love and mercy -- cannot have altered as the rumour bearers would have it. As a "seer," Roonwit also invokes the testimony of the Narnian stars, which by his sight "'say nothing of the coming of Aslan, nor of peace, nor of joy.'" (p. 19) Jewel, the unicorn who is another of Tirian's counsellors, wonders whether it might not be true that Aslan's so^evereignty might allow for his appearance in contradiction even of the testimony of the stars, since "'He is not the slave of stars but their Maker . . . He is not a Tame Lion.'" (p. 20) Although Roonwit's answer to Jewel and Tirian is interrupted by the sudden coming of a Dryad, there is ample evidence in others of the Chronicles to suggest that Roonwit was about to remind them of Aslan's unalterable will to obey the precepts of his own Law. In

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, the White Witch cites the Law engraved on the Stone Table in order to claim a sacrifice of blood for Edmund's treachery, and Aslan replies, "'It is very true . . . I do not deny it.'"³⁶ King Lune tells Cor that the Narnian monarch is also responsible to the Law.³⁷ Cornelius tells Prince Caspian that there can be no accidents among the stars: "'The great lords of the upper sky know the steps of their dance too well for that.'"³⁸ And when Lucy speaks of the words of the spell which will render the Dufflepuds visible on Coriakin's island, Aslan appears, and explains that she has incidentally made him visible as well as the Duffers, for the reason that he will not disobey his own rules.³⁹ Aslan is not merely real, but is in his own person the very essence of reality, and the author of all lesser realities. His character thus cannot suffer change, as Shift and his fellow conspirators have claimed. And it is at last this claim, that Aslan has turned cruel and unjust in his latest coming to Narnia, that convinces Tirian that Shift and the Calormenes have invented this lie in order to overthrow Narnia. Thus, when Tirian is taken by the Calormenes he begs Aslan himself to come to his aid, or to send to him the "children from another world" whom Tirian knows to have intervened by Aslan's order at crucial moments in Narnia's

³⁶The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, p. 129.

³⁷The Horse and His Boy, p. 187.

³⁸Prince Caspian, p. 49.

³⁹The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader," p. 136.

history. Tirian's prayer is answered when Eustace Scrubb and Jill Pole arrive in Narnia to release Tirian from his captors and then set out with him to expose Shift's hoax.

When the King and his party free a band of dwarfs from Calormene slavery, it is discovered that the dwarfs, having been duped by a false Lion, have turned both atheist and republican, and now deny both the authority of Tirian and the reality of Aslan. The result of this rejection of reality is dramatised when, after the conclusion of the last battle between the loyal Narnians and the Calormenes, when Tirian and his company have passed through the door of the stable into the "New Narnia" which is their eternal home, they discover these same dwarfs sitting together in a tight bunch on the fragrant grass of the heavenly Narnia, with wildflowers around them and clear blue sky above them. But the dwarfs themselves see only the filthy black stable which their pragmatic minds assure them must be on their side of the stable door. Lucy and some of the others are distressed by the dwarfs' misery, but Aslan comes to show to all of them that the dwarfs have by their own will put themselves out of reach of help. A sumptuous banquet which the Lion magically provides for them is perceived by the dwarfs to be only the rotten cabbage and filthy water one might expect to find in a stable, and they soon quarrel among themselves even over this. We are reminded of Uncle Andrew (of The Magician's Nephew), who was determined to believe Aslan's song to be mere roaring and growling, and could soon hear nothing else but what he expected to hear. The dwarfs' miserable confinement is self-imposed, but the delusion

renders them incapable of apprehending reality: Aslan says, "'They will not let us help them. They have chosen cunning instead of belief. Their prison is only in their own minds, yet they are in that prison; and so afraid of being taken in that they cannot be taken out.'"⁴⁰ (p. 135)

This familiar theme, that one's perspective upon reality can dictate one's experience, is reiterated when Tirian greets in the new land the seven high monarchs of the old Narnia: Digory and Polly, Peter, Edmund and Lucy, Eustace and Jill. Missing is Susan Pevensie: Peter explains to Tirian that his sister "'is no longer a friend of Narnia,'" because she is too caught up in the world of adolescent sensuality to bother about "childish things" -- including Narnia. (p. 123) Mary Kirkpatrick has shown that it is because Susan leads "a superficial life of dates and parties" that "she looks back on Narnia as something equally superficial -- 'games' that they used to play as children."⁴¹ For Susan, as for the unhappy dwarfs, the choice of unreality over the reality of Aslan has so clouded their perspective that they can no longer distinguish the real when it confronts them.

⁴⁰Compare The Great Divorce (pp. 113-114):

A damned soul is nearly nothing: it is shrunk, shut up in itself. Good beats upon the damned incessantly, as sound waves beat on the ears of the deaf, but they cannot receive it. Their fists are clenched, their teeth are clenched, their eyes fast shut. First they will not, in the end they cannot, open their hands for gifts, or their mouths for food, or their eyes to see.

⁴¹"Lewis and Macdonald," C.S. Lewis Bulletin, V, vii, 4.

Lewis depicts a meeting between the Narnian monarchs and a young Calormene soldier in the New Narnia, in order to dramatise the result of a choice very different from that made by the dwarfs and Susan. The soldier's name is Emeth,⁴² and he tells them how the stable door had been for him too the door to Aslan's country, and not the door to the place of Tash, which he had thought it would be. Emeth tells of his meeting with Aslan, and how the Lion has accepted the young man's services to Tash as if they had been done in his own honour: "'Beloved, said the Glorious One, unless thy desire had been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek.'"⁴³ (p. 149)

This is the guiding principle of judgement in The Last Battle: that there is no ultimate destiny for any creature which is not chosen by that creature. Aslan's last judgement is a stirring representation of this principle in action. The door of the stable becomes the entrance for all of the creatures of Narnia into the New Narnia. Aslan himself stands at the gate of his eternal country, but neither challenges any creature who attempts entrance, nor entreats any who chooses not to enter: the choice of each of them

⁴²A transliteration of the Hebrew **אמת**, "truth": cf. Reflections on the Psalms, p. 55.

⁴³Compare Lewis's comments in a letter dated 8 November, 1952 ("to a lady," Letters of C.S. Lewis, p. 247):

I think that every prayer which is sincerely made even to a false god or to a very imperfectly conceived true God, is accepted by the true God. . . . In the parable of the Sheep and the Goats . . . those who are saved do not seem to know that they have served Christ.

rests upon Aslan's mere presence. If they choose reality, they enter into the magnificent New Narnia and the Lion's eternal presence; if they should fear or hate reality when they meet it focussed in the Lion, they pass out into the shadows forever.

There is some mourning among the children for the death of the old Narnia, the land where first they had met the great Lion and where their adventures had taken place. But they soon discover that the land to which they have come is also Narnia -- transmuted, more wonderful than that from which they have come, but still recognizably Narnia. Digory explains that Aslan's New Narnia is the substance of which the old had been merely the shadow -- that solid and ultimate reality for which they had sought so long among the guesses and approximations and shades and deceptions. In The Great Divorce, Lewis has described heaven as that place where "there are no more possibilities left but only the Real,"⁴⁴ and that is precisely what the children find in the New Narnia. Here, reality is not clouded or mixed with the unreal as in the old worlds, but is tangible, edible, potable -- bound up in the person of Aslan himself, the centre of eternal reality, whose presence there the high country perfectly reflects. The children discover too that the real England, and, indeed, all that is real of all worlds, joins with the redeemed Narnia at the mountains of Aslan. With their father and mother walking across to meet them in the new land, the Pevensies have only one last fear: that they will be asked to return,

⁴⁴The Great Divorce, p. 115.

as has happened so often before, to their own country; that they must once again go from the presence of the Lion. But Aslan's quiet voice assures them that they will never again be compelled to leave him and his country:

"There was a real railway accident," said Aslan softly. "Your father and mother and all of you are -- as you used to call it in the Shadowlands -- dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning."

And as He spoke He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them.
(p. 165)

In Lewis's own explanation of how the Chronicles of Narnia came to be written, he insisted that each tale began with him seeing images in his mind, and that it was these images which suggested the fairy-tale as the appropriate form for what he had to say. But although all of the stories of Narnia can be described as fairy-tales, they severally demonstrate the influence of many different kinds of writing. The Magician's Nephew carries some obvious allusions to the Genesis account of creation, which are entirely appropriate to the first entrance of the "sons of Adam and daughters of Eve" into the new world created by Aslan's song. But the atmosphere of the tale, particularly in those scenes set on earth, owes more to the adventure stories loved by an earlier generation which are explicitly invoked in the allusions to the works of Conan Doyle and E. Nesbit on the story's first page. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (which was, of course, the first Chronicle written by Lewis) owes something to Lewis Carroll and traditional Christmas pantomimes, in its account of Lucy's unexpected entrance into a world of evil

witches and talking animals and Santa Claus. The Horse and His Boy evokes a whole library of popular adventure stories set in exotic, oriental lands, from the Arabian Nights to Rider Haggard. Prince Caspian begins with what is perhaps the archetypal dilemma of the fairy-tale, only substituting a wicked uncle for the wicked step-mother which we might have expected. The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader" is a classic sea story of adventures in several remote parts of the world, and of the curiosities which are met there: Caspian thus follows in the wake of Ulysses and St. Brendan and Gulliver. The Silver Chair's opening and closing scenes are reminiscent of the perennial school story, and are separated by a familiar sort of journey to the centre of the earth. And The Last Battle begins in a grim beast fable, and ends with apocalypse and ultimate victory of the forces of good over evil.

With all of these different influences at work in the Chronicles, it is the more remarkable that there is such unity and continuity among them. This unity depends of course on the figure of Aslan, who (as Lewis said) "[pulls] the whole story together."⁴⁵ It is the Lion who alone can satisfy the longings of Digory Kirke's heart, who can effect the redemption of Edmund and Narnia. Aslan is the figure "at the back of all the stories," who can restore to Shasta his rightful identity. Caspian must indeed struggle against a wicked, usurping tyrant, but discovers at last that there is a King in Narnia above all kings, in whom rests the land's only real

⁴⁵"It All Began With a Picture . . . ," Of Other Worlds, p. 42.

hope of freedom and peace and justice. The adventures of the crew of the "Dawn Treader" are certainly important to the development of their maturity and the consolidation of their virtue, but Reepicheep's example and the Lamb's words to Lucy and Edmund argue that ultimately it is the establishment of a personal relationship with Aslan, the lord of all of the worlds, which eclipses the significance of all lesser achievements. Aslan proves to Jill Pole and Eustace Scrubb that his word is immutable in a world where all else appears to suffer disastrous change, and his grace is sufficient for the lesser as well as for the greater evils which they must face in their travels. And in The Last Battle, the whole of the Narnian world fades to insignificance before the unveiled glory of its Author. The Chronicles certainly show their kinship with the science-fiction trilogy and Till We Have Faces in that they too are fantasies, and make extensive use of myth and symbol; but the fundamental likeness of Narnia to Ransom's planetary worlds and to the kingdom of Glome is that each owns one lord, who is the centre of reality, and of whom is all truth.

TILL WE HAVE FACES

The epigraph which Lewis chose for Till We Have Faces is the first line of Shakespeare's sonnet, "Love is too young to know what conscience is." He might well have added the sonnet's second line -- "Yet who knows not that conscience is born of love?" -- for Till We Have Faces is primarily a tale of conscience, "recognition of the moral qualities of one's motives or actions,"¹ born of love. This "myth retold" also depicts two inadequate systems of belief at odds with each other -- cool, atheistic rationalism set against the blood sacrifices and mysteries of a fertility cult. Even though these systems of belief entail profound error, there are faint gleams of truth in each which hint at the existence of a reality far greater than either. It is Orual, whose "conscience is born of love," who also endures the violent contest of these beliefs within her own heart and mind, until at last she discovers, embraces, and is embraced by, that greater reality which neither the philosophy nor the cult had been adequate to describe.

Lewis has listed some of the intertwined themes of Till We Have Faces as "barbarism, the mind of an ugly woman, dark idolatry and pale enlightenment at war with each other and with vision, and

¹O.E.D.

the havoc which a vocation, or even a faith, works on human life."² Each of these themes is attached to one of the novel's principal characters as they are introduced to the reader in the early chapters. The "ugly woman" whose mind is to be considered is Orual herself, first daughter of the King of Glome; she is the supposed author of the work. She writes the story in her old age, after what is dear to her has passed out of danger of the gods, so that she can accuse them; "especially the god who lives on the Grey Mountain." (p. 11) Orual asks the reader of her tale to judge between her and the gods, to decide from this account of her love for her half-sister Psyche, and of how Psyche was "stolen" from her by the gods, whether justice is with the gods or with Orual. Thus she asks implicitly that the reader judge the rightness of her perspective on the gods and on herself, to determine if her charge that the gods are unjust is valid.

The mere fact that she is ugly makes Orual a focal point for the brutality of the time and place which Lewis depicts in his novel, and this brutality is manifested most clearly in the person of Trom, King of Glome. Orual takes the verbal and physical abuse which her father the King vents upon her in his rages, with such resignation (in a child) that the common place of cruelty in the world of the tale is carried to the reader with great force. At one point Orual observes of Trom that she "had known him to do a cruel thing not in anger but in a kind of murderous joke, or because he

²Prefatory note to the Collins paperback edition, 1978.

remembered he had sworn to do it when he was angry." (p. 27) Orual finds some refuge from Glome's brutality in her relationship with the Fox (representative of Lewis's "pale enlightenment"), a Greek of some learning and an Aristotelian cast of mind, who had come into the King's hands after having been once captured in war and sold into slavery. The King had intended that the Fox should be tutor to Orual and her prettier sister Redival (for want of a royal son), to instruct them in his philosophy. The Fox is a thorough-going rationalist, with an insatiable hunger for knowledge, and a gentle contempt for the credence of his own people in their myths. He also scorns the gullibility of the barbarians among whom he lives, with their many superstitions and their devotion to Ungit, a primitive local goddess of fertility. But Ungit's priest (in whom centres the tale's "dark idolatry") enjoys a prestige in Glome second only to the King's, and the young Orual greatly fears him and that dark power which he represents. The priest is so sure of his goddess that he is contemptuous of the Fox's sophistry and Trom's brutal strength alike. When Ungit has apparently ignored the King's sacrifices for a male heir and has allowed a new royal bride to produce yet another girl, the priest silences the Fox and faces the King and his dagger, without a tremor.

The new child, third daughter of the King, is Psyche, and her overpowering beauty is her mark, just as Orual's ugliness sets her apart from others:

It was beauty that did not astonish you till afterwards when you had gone out of sight of her and reflected on it. While she was with you, you were not astonished. It

seemed the most natural thing in the world. As the Fox delighted to say, she was "according to nature"; what every woman, or even every thing, ought to have been and meant to be, but had missed by some trip of chance.
(p. 30)

It is of course Psyche whose vision, vocation and faith are to make her life the battleground for the various forces which struggle for pre-eminence in Glome.

Orual recounts how that the idyllic early years of her life, in which she had spent nearly all her hours with the beloved Fox and Psyche, ended at the time her father the King found Redival "kissing and whispering love-talk" with a boy named Tarin; (p. 33) the boy was summarily made a eunuch at the King's command, and Redival committed to safekeeping under Orual and the Fox. Orual writes of a day, soon after this event, in which Redival happened to strike the child Psyche. At this, Orual flew into such a rage that afterward she could remember only that she came to be "astride of Redival, [Redival] on the ground with her face a lather of blood, and [Orual's] hands about her throat." (p. 34) By the intervention of the Fox "some kind of peace" was arrived at among them. But in this account of Redival's beating is the first of the novel's many implicit warnings to the reader against the trustworthiness of Orual's perspective upon her own story. In one of the King's brutal fits of rage (on the occasion of the birth of Psyche, when he had hoped and sacrificed to Ungit so grandly for a male heir), a young slave, page to the King, was by his master stabbed to death in an instant, when the boy happened in his terrified haste to trip up and drop the wine which he carried. (p. 23) When the rage had

abated in some measure, the King did not seem to know who had killed the lad. And here, on the provocation of Redival having struck the little girl Psyche, Orual recalls that she "hardly knew [herself] again" until she had beaten Redival, and even begun to throttle her. (p. 34) On another, later occasion when Orual's anger again seemed ready to take possession of her, Psyche warned her: "You look just like our father when you say those things." (p. 48) Lewis reminds us of the heritage of brutality in Orual, with the very pointed caution that memory itself is the first casualty of these paroxysms of rage which Orual has inherited from the King.

When Glome falls into great danger from the triple threat of famine, rebellion and pestilence, the people of Glome and their priest cast the blame for the city's misfortunes upon Psyche. The girl's beauty had marked her already as a prodigy in Glome, and superstitious women had brought babies to her to be kissed (and so, they felt, to receive something of her beauty); for this kindness they had made obeisance to her as to a goddess. When the pestilence fell on Glome, and Psyche had nursed the Fox through his fever to recovery, the rumour circulated that the hands of the lovely princess could cure even the fever, and Psyche was obliged to touch a mob of the diseased citizens who would otherwise have razed the palace in their fear and anger arising from the plague and famine. When this sacrificial act did not give the instant results demanded by the mob (and with the drought and famine continuing unabated) the mob began to suspect Ungit's jealous wrath for the impious tribute paid to Psyche for her beauty, and so at last to

see in Psyche herself the cause of their misfortunes.

The old priest of Ungit comes to the palace with the message that the woes suffered by Glome have come by Ungit's curse, and that the city's sins demand expiation by the rite of the Great Offering: Psyche is to be sacrificed to Ungit's son, to become the Bride of the mountain god, tethered to a holy tree to die there, "married" to the Shadowbrute or devoured by him. The Fox invokes reason to defend his darling from the priest's holy mysteries, scoffing that (according to the priest's explanation of the rite) "'a shadow is to be an animal which is also a goddess which is also a god, and loving is to be eating -- a child of six would talk more sense.'" (p. 57) But the priest answers the Fox's mocking scepticism with a calm and deadly assurance of the reality and power of the mysteries in which he serves, taunting the Fox with the fact that his thin Greek philosophy had not given him even the courage to die in battle -- that he had surrendered instead, to become Trom's slave. This taunt concerning the insufficiency of rationalism in the face of personal danger (which implies the sufficiency of Ungit-worship) is dramatically upheld only a few moments later, when the King (convinced that the priest's lot for the sacrificial offering has fallen on himself) uses a dagger between the ribs of the priest to force his submission. The priest's unearthly calm is token of his certainty of the power within him, and this terrifies Orual with the knowledge of what it is she must wrestle with for possession of Psyche:

The Fox had taught me to think -- at any rate to speak -- of the Priest as of a mere schemer and a politic man who put into the mouth of Ungit whatever might most increase his own power and lands or most harm his enemies. I saw it was not so. He was sure of Ungit. . . . Our real enemy was not a mortal.

(p. 62)

Orual's struggle against his power is known by her to be futile even as it is begun, but in her frenzy to avert Psyche's death, Orual wields a sword to attack the kindly captain, Bardia, who guards the five-sided room in which Psyche is held pending the ceremony of the next day. Although he easily thwarts the attack, Orual's bravery (and Psyche's beauty) so move Bardia that he allows the sisters to talk together in the prison room.

Because Orual had taken a severe beating from the King (for her insistent and impertinent demands that he somehow prevent the Great Offering), in her first moments with the imprisoned Psyche it is the younger girl who seeks to succour her sister:

. . . all this time she had been petting and comforting me as if it were I who was the child and the victim. And this, even in the midst of the great anguish, made its own little eddy of pain. It was so unlike the sort of love that used to be between us in our happy times.

(p. 75)

Here we learn something significant concerning Orual's concept of love, and especially of "the sort of love that used to be" between Orual and Psyche. Orual cannot accept the inferior position of the beloved (the child, the object of that kind of love which seeks to give of itself). She is not satisfied in love except as the giver of love, the superior in the commerce of love, a lover who does not accept the returned affections of the beloved. We recall Orual's own account of the "loves" called up in her by Psyche in their

early childhood:

I wanted to be a wife so that I could have been her real mother. I wanted to be a boy so that she could be in love with me. I wanted her to be my full sister instead of my half-sister. I wanted her to be a slave so that I could set her free and make her rich.

(p. 31)

This list of "loves" demonstrates that in Orual, loving and possessing Psyche are all one: she must have some power over Psyche in order for her to acknowledge their relationship as being of the right "sort" of love. When this urge to possess or to master Psyche is frustrated by Psyche's superior strength in the crisis, a "little eddy of pain" moves in Orual.

The conversation in the palace between the condemned Psyche and her sister becomes virtually a debate concerning the true nature of the gods and of the sacrifice to which Psyche has been committed. Although Orual intends to comfort Psyche, in fact her words are chosen so as to instill fear (of separation, of the god's hideous form or his lust, or of a terrible death) so as to increase in Psyche's mind her dependence upon Orual. It is because of Orual's invalid perspective upon love and power over the beloved that her words do not accord with her intentions. When at one point in their conversation Orual causes Psyche to doubt for a moment the very existence of the Son of Ungit, and to imagine a slow death by starvation or exposure, Psyche's terrified clinging to her is, as she admits, gratifying to Orual:

And now she did weep and now she was a child again. What could I do but ffordle and weep with her? But this is a great shame to write; there was now (for me) a kind of sweetness in our misery for the first time. This was what I had come

to her in her prison to do.

(p. 78)

Lewis helps us to qualify our judgement of Orual somewhat by noting here that she admits the sweetness of her possessive love to be mixed with shame for the fact that she had been obliged to hurt Psyche terribly and deliberately so as to re-establish her own pre-eminence in their relationship.

Psyche is soon mistress of herself again, for she calls on that same power trusted by the priest of Ungit: Psyche summons faith to the aid of her will, in defiance of those very emotional tides which are welcomed by Orual. She speaks to Orual of a kind of longing vision for death and for the Grey Mountain of the god, which has from her earliest memories been a part of her. She recognizes (and attempts to show to Orual) that this inconsolable longing might indeed be satisfied in death, in a union with the god which would be the reality behind the insufficient images of being eaten by, or married to, the god. Her intuition prompts her to believe that the real nature of the gods might be such that neither the Fox's philosophy nor the priest's rites could furnish an adequate image of it: "'We don't understand. There must be so much that neither the Priest nor the Fox knows.'" (p. 80) Orual admits in her account of this conversation that she is dismayed by the comfort which Psyche draws from faith, for Orual's love can accept nothing interposed between herself and her young sister:

Since I write this book against the gods, it is just that I should put into it whatever can be said against myself. So let me set this down; as she spoke I felt, amid all my love, a bitterness. Though the things she was saying gave her (that was plain enough) courage

and comfort, I grudged her that courage and comfort.
It was as if someone or something else had come in
between us.

(p. 83)

In this admission, it is evident that Orual's perspective and Psyche's are perhaps not so far apart as Orual herself believes them to be: Orual too intuits the reality of "someone or something" which neither the Fox's teachings nor the priest's can help her to name. Although she continues to observe what is taking place from a point of view very different from Psyche's own, there remains a nugget of agreement between them, a shared truth which the reader is invited to accept, since it is acknowledged from these two perspectives. And in Orual's admission of this perception Lewis also indicates once more that the very process of setting down her complaint against the gods is serving to clarify Orual's own perspective on the events and feelings which she describes: it awakens an instinct for justice in Orual which compels her to put into her tale that information concerning her own emotions which will help the reader to arbitrate justly between Orual and the gods.

The wounds of her beating put Orual into a violent fever, so that on the day of the sacrifice she is unable to go with the procession to the mountain. With her fever come bad dreams, whose common theme is that somehow Psyche is responsible for Orual's torment:

. . . it was all confused and dim -- Psyche throwing me down high precipices, Psyche (now very like the King, but still Psyche) kicking me and dragging me by the hair, Psyche with a torch or a sword or a whip pursuing me over vast swamps and dark mountains; I running to save my life. But always wrong, hatred, mockery, and my determination to be avenged.

The beginning of my recovery was when the visions ceased and left behind them only a settled sense of some great injury that Psyche had done me, though I could not gather my wits to think what it was. They say I lay for hours saying, "Cruel girl. Cruel Psyche. Her heart is of stone." And soon I was in my right mind again and knew how I loved her and that she had never willingly done me any wrong; though it hurt me somewhat that she should have found time, at our last meeting of all, talking so little of me, and to talk so much about the god of the Mountain, and the King, and the Fox and Redival, and even Bardia.

(pp. 89-90)

Orual here contrasts the "confused and dim" perception lent by the dreams, with the lucid sight afforded her upon recovery to her "right mind." But the dreams speak truly, if confusedly, to Orual, concerning the sense of injury she harbours against Psyche, that which surfaced repeatedly in her own account of their last moments together. It surfaces here again in Orual's acknowledgement of the "hurt" felt at the notion of Psyche's love and attention being shared by the god, the King and the others. Orual's waking perception does not in fact show "how" she loves Psyche: that she does love is beyond question, but the character of that love is tinged by the sense of injured merit dramatized in the dreams, for, like Milton's Satan, Orual "thinks herself impaired" in the order of her relationship with Psyche. In her account of the feverish dreams, Orual calls them an instance of the gods' cruelty, imputing an unworthy sentiment towards Psyche to Orual, and poisoning her memory of her lovely sister. Orual writes coldly of the poor defences held by mortals against the malicious intervention of the gods: "to be very wide awake and sober and hard at work, to hear no music, never to look at earth or sky and (above all) to love no one." (pp. 88-89) Her intuition warns that the giving of love is

dangerous to one's determination to avoid becoming vulnerable to the gods. But she does not recognise that her own hatred of the gods, and the very strength of her impulse to keep herself and Psyche from them, reflect upon the quality of the love she holds so desperately for her sister.

When the day of the Great Offering is past, Orual determines to ride to the Grey Mountain to perform the rites of burial for Psyche, and it is Bardia who offers himself as companion for her journey. As together they ride out from Glome, past the temple of Ungit, Orual finds herself struggling against a "temptation" to be joyful. She has veiled her face as a safeguard against recognition on this very private quest, and the veil is taken also of the privacy of soul and its internal storms which she seeks to maintain against the intrusive gods. But the journey through the life-giving rains which followed the Great Sacrifice, to that mountain which all Glome believes to be the home of the god, does not allow Orual her sullen peace:

You may well believe that I had set out sad enough; I came on a sad errand. Now, flung at me like frolic or insolence, there came as if it were a voice -- no words, but if you made it into words it would be, "Why should your heart not dance?" It's the measure of my folly that my heart almost answered, Why not? I had to tell myself over like a lesson the infinite reasons it had not to dance. My heart to dance? Mine whose love was taken from me, I, the ugly princess who must never look for other love, the drudge of the King, the jailer of hateful Redival, perhaps to be murdered or turned out as a beggar when my father died (for who knew what Glome would do then?). And yet, it was a lesson I could hardly keep in my mind. The sight of the huge world put mad ideas into me; as if I could wander away, wander for ever, see strange and beautiful things, one after the other to the world's end.

(p. 104)

Here again, Orual attributes her inner storms to "mad ideas," and summons her will and her Fox-taught rationalism to quell them. What she struggles against is the joy which is everywhere and at all times latent in the great universe of diverse creatures and conditions as it is depicted by Lewis, in the "strange and beautiful things" which surround even the grief-stricken, and is perhaps excited in Orual here by the imminence of the god himself. Orual prefers instead the dreary but defensible world of her solipsism to what she sees as its alternative: "this god-haunted, plague-breeding, decaying, tyrannous world." (p. 105) Orual's curses on the world are very clearly intended to put the truth away from her, to falsify her own perspective upon reality. It is noteworthy that Lewis here causes Orual to report that it is "the sight of the huge world" which incites her to the joy she fears and hates. In that "huge world" it might be true (as Psyche has said) that "anything is possible," that Psyche might indeed be the wife of a god, and that Orual might have no real cause of complaint. And so Orual rehearses her woes, in an effort to retreat once more into the safety of solipsism.

When at last Orual and Bardia venture past the Holy Tree (to which Psyche had been chained for the Great Offering) there is yet more evidence for the injustice of Orual's calumnies on the world, in their first glimpse of Psyche's valley:

It was like looking down into a new world. At our feet, cradled amid a vast confusion of mountains, lay a small valley bright as a gem . . . I never saw greener turf. There was gorse in bloom, and wild vines, and many groves of flourishing trees; and plenty of

bright water -- pools, streams, and little cataracts. And when . . . we began descending, the air came up to us warmer and sweeter every minute. We were out of the wind now and could hear ourselves speak; soon we could hear the very chattering of the streams and the sound of bees.

(p. 109)

Bardia's contention that "'this may well be the secret valley of the god'" is of course very well founded: the reader may recall this description of Ransom's descent into Meldilorn, the seat of God's regent on the planet Malacandra:

The beauty of this new [valley] as it opened before him took his breath away. It was wider than that in which he had hitherto lived and right below him lay an almost circular lake -- a sapphire twelve miles in diameter set in a border of purple forest. . . . he had not looked for anything quite so classic, so virginal, as this bright grove -- lying so still, so secret, in its coloured valley. . . . At every step of his descent the comparative warmth of the valley came up to him more deliciously. He looked above -- the sky was turning to a paler blue. He looked below -- and sweet and faint the thin fragrance of the giant blooms came up to him. . . . He lifted the ear-flaps of his cap and found his ears instantly filled with the sound of falling water.²

Orual's complaint throughout Till We Have Faces is that "holy places are dark places," but her complaint is founded on her own false perspective: Lewis depicts this "holy place" as he has done in the other tales, as being full of light, of great natural beauty, warmth, fragrance, and the sound of water.

Orual and Bardia are welcomed to this beautiful hidden valley by Psyche herself, who tells Orual about the Great Offering from her own perspective. Psyche speaks of her fears, of being drugged by the priest of Ungit so as to simulate holy patience, and finally of being chained to the Holy Tree and left there; then of the

²Out of the Silent Planet, pp. 105-106.

despair which swept through her. Psyche's account of this moment of despair is, in Orual's own telling, a cause for celebration in her sceptical sister:

I pressed her hands and said nothing. But inwardly I rejoiced. It might have been good (I don't know) to encourage that fancy the night before the Offering, if it supported her. Now, I was glad she had got over it. It was a thing I could not like; unnatural and estranging. Perhaps this gladness of mine is one of the things the gods have against me. They never tell.
(p. 118)

As Psyche continues her tale, she describes how there came first a change in herself -- a resignation to the workings of whatever god or power she had been left to -- and then a great physical change around her: the coming of the storm and the breaking of the terrible drought, which convinced Psyche at last that she had been accepted as the Great Offering. She describes to Orual how she was released from her chains and lofted to a palatial home by "the god of the wind: Westwind himself." (p. 120) Of course Orual cannot accept this without challenge, and she therefore tries to convince Psyche that her experience -- and particularly her vision of the god Zephyrus -- must have been a dream. But Psyche is adamant that her memory is veridical on this matter, and offers two proofs for her assurance. The first is the complete newness of the things perceived: of the coming of Westwind Psyche says, "One can't dream things like that, because one's never seen things like that"; (p. 120) of the palace to which Westwind brought her at last she says something very similar:

"it wasn't, you see, just the gold and amber House I used to imagine. If it had been just that, I might indeed have

thought I was dreaming. But I saw it wasn't. And not quite like any house in this land, nor quite like those Greek houses the Fox describes to us. Something new, never conceived of . . . "

(p. 122)

The images with which ordinary dreams -- the kind to which Orual alludes -- are furnished, are always selections from waking memory. Thus, when (for instance) Jane Studdock found in one of her "dreams" that she was listening to a conversation in fluent French of which she understood only part, as she would in waking life but certainly would not in an ordinary dream, it helped her to recognize the "dream" as a true vision of real events in the waking world.³ It is therefore true, as Psyche insists, that an experience which admits knowledge of hitherto unseen realities cannot be merely an irresponsible "dream" of the ordinary kind: if it were a dream at all, it would be like Jane Studdock's visions of reality (but here, since Psyche has been aware of no trance or sleep at all, it is much more likely to be a waking perception). The other evidence which Psyche offers her sister in support of the literal truth of her experience is the incontrovertible fact of her own presence in the mountain valley, of her obvious sanity and health and freedom from the shackles left hanging where they were on the Holy Tree.

But these assurances of the veracity of Psyche's perception of the events following the Great Offering are not accepted by Orual: she demands to see the very palace to which Westwind had carried Psyche. And this is where a great gulf opens between the two sisters, for Psyche cries out that she and Orual are even now

³cf. That Hideous Strength, pp. 220 ff.

standing in the palace gate. (p. 125) By this, Orual knows that the god's palace which Psyche claims as her own home is invisible to Orual's own eyes. Orual's account of the struggle which this notion arouses within her own mind betrays at once a certain belief in the truth of Psyche's tale, and a fierce determination to resist that belief:

my whole heart leaped to shut the door against something monstrously amiss; not to be endured. And to keep it shut. Perhaps I was fighting not to be mad myself. . . .

Was I believing in her invisible palace? A Greek will laugh at the thought. But it's different in Glome. There the gods are too close to us. Up in the Mountain, in the very heart of the Mountain, where Bardia had been afraid and even the priests don't go, anything was possible. No door could be kept shut. Yes, that was it; not plain belief, but infinite misgiving -- the whole world (Psyche with it) slipping out of my hands.

(pp. 126-127)

With this, Orual explicitly joins company with quite a number of the characters of Lewis's fiction whose hearts "leap to shut the door" against divine reality. We might recall once again Uncle Andrew (of The Magician's Nephew) whose determination to hear nothing but roaring from Aslan had brought him at last to the place where he could hear nothing more.⁴ But Orual's admission that "anything was possible" on the Mountain of the god puts her among those of Lewis's characters who went on from that recognition to meet the Person at the centre of this universe of infinite possibility: Jane Studdock had used these very words in her first interview with Ransom before she came into the presence of Maleldil; Digory Kirke had said as much when his uncle's dabblings in magic

⁴The Magician's Nephew, p. 117.

had opened for him a door into Narnia and ultimately into the presence of Aslan.⁵ On some level, Orual intuitively senses the existence of realities in that place which her own senses will not or cannot reveal to her: "This valley was indeed a dreadful place; full of the divine, sacred, no place for mortals. There might be a hundred things in it I could not see." (p. 129) Orual recognizes that it is a matter of perspective which now separates Psyche from her, but it does not enter into her thoughts either that the limitations of her own vision have been imposed by the action of her own will, or that she might be able to adopt for herself Psyche's point of view. When Psyche begs her sister at least to observe the plain fact that she, Psyche, is obviously healthy and fit and has not been shifting for herself in the wild mountains -- and to draw the obvious inference that someone has been caring for her -- Orual reveals the nature of the real barrier to her perception when she cries out savagely: "I don't want it. I hate it. Hate it, hate it, hate it." (p. 133) Because Orual will not see reality, she can not.

After the growing darkness of the evening has obliged Orual to leave Psyche and to return to Bardia's side of the little stream which is on the border of Psyche's valley, Orual is afforded -- in spite of her stubborn refusal to this point to see anything associated with the gods -- a brief vision of the palace which Psyche shares with her husband:

solid and motionless, wall within wall, pillar and arch and architrave, acres of it, a labyrinthine beauty. As she had

⁵See The Magician's Nephew, p. 28, and That Hideous Strength, p. 173.

said, it was like no house ever seen in our land or age.
 Pinnacles and buttresses leaped up -- no memories of mine,
 you would think, could help me to imagine them --
 unbelievably tall and slender, pointed and prickly as if
 stone were shooting out into branch and flower.

(p. 141)

The verbs which Lewis employs in this description hint that what Orual here observes is not an objective but a dynamic reality, which (by definition) exists not in space, but in time only. Thus her desire to ratify the experience later on will of course be frustrated. The images of living, growing and branching plants, "as if stone were shooting out into branch and flower," recall Orual's earlier conversation with Psyche, when she had experienced for a moment a healthy twinge of doubt concerning her own right to possess her sister: Lewis had described this instant of perception as "a thought [which] pierced up through the crust of [Orual's] mind like a crocus." (p. 130) The image is the same because it is the fact of these ramifications, this unpredictable potential in that world which has now claimed Psyche, which so dismays Orual. She had said earlier that in her world where the gods were "too close" that "anything was possible," (p. 126) and it is Lewis's image of irresistible growth -- the seed becoming ever less like the soil which nourishes it and ever more like the mature plant it is to be -- which fixes that quality of illimitable possibility which so daunts Orual when she considers that reality which speaks from beyond the limits of her mortal world. When the vision of the palace fades, Orual begins the task of rationalizing her experience. She says at one moment that "it might have been a true seeing; the cloud over my mortal eyes may have been lifted for a moment," but

counters immediately with the reflection that "it might not; what would be easier than . . . to fancy what had filled [my] thoughts for so many hours?" (p. 143) Orual ignores two important guides here: Psyche's own advice that, once a vision of supernatural reality has been vouchsafed, the vision's brevity in no way qualifies its veracity, (p. 124) and Orual's own previous admission that the architectural details of the palace itself had not been "what had filled her thoughts," for the very good reason that they had been beyond her experience to that point and thus could not have been furnished to her "vision" by her memory. But to pretend that this transmortal dimension of her experience was not in fact real is comforting to Orual, and so it is that when she returns to Bardia she decides "to tell him the whole story; always excepting that moment when [she] looked into the mist." (p. 143, emphasis added) Her aim in giving the story to Bardia is (so she tells him) that she might have his counsel in the matter. But her carefully expurgated account of her experience ensures that she will have nothing but false counsel from Bardia -- false because it can not take into account all of the available facts of the matter. Thus Orual hears from Bardia what she desires already to believe: he guesses that Psyche's husband remains hidden because his "face or form would give her little pleasure if she saw them." (p. 145) Orual holds tightly to this, and elaborates on it within her own mind until she is convinced that Psyche's husband is the horrible Shadowbrute spoken of by the Priest.

Upon returning to Glome, Orual tells the Fox just what she

has told Bardia, omitting again any mention of her vision of the god's palace, and the Fox ventures his opinion that Psyche is being cared for by some outlaw of the mountains. When Orual says that she would prefer for Psyche to die by her hand rather than to live in such disgrace, the Fox warns Orual sternly of the corruption evident within her motives: "There's one part love in your heart, and five parts anger, and seven parts pride." (p. 157) The rebuke stings Orual, and she determines not to listen to her old teacher, preferring once more the sanctuary of self-pity and isolation:

You are alone, Orual. Whatever is to be done, you must devise and do it. No help will come. All gods and mortals have drawn away from you. You must guess the riddle. Not a word will come to you until you have guessed wrong and they all come crowding back to accuse and mock and punish you for it.

(p. 159)

Implicit in this lament is Orual's solipsism: to her mind it is not she who has drawn away from the gods, but they from her. Orual seeks to be the centre of her own world, the centre of reality itself in that world; if the gods should choose to answer they must pay court to Orual. Thus the "prayer" she makes to the gods (which is self-consciously exceptional, made "alone, in such words as came to [her], not in a temple, without a sacrifice," p. 159) is a mockery. Orual asks for a "sign" from the gods, and cannot recognize the "rain on the roof," which "drummed on as before," to be that sign: she, a mortal, has dictated the very terms of the gods' descent, and complains that they do not descend.⁶

⁶That the rain is precisely the sign of the gods' willingness to hear mortals has been demonstrated already by the

The discrepancy between Bardia's interpretation of Psyche's condition and the opinion held by the Fox forces Orual to recognize that she has vacillated these years between Glome's superstitious fears of the gods and Greek scepticism, that her life has been lived "in two halves, never fitted together." (p. 160) She attempts at first to judge between the two perspectives, without recognizing that the "certain truth" which she seeks might well be seen only from some third vantage point apart from either scepticism or superstition, perhaps even that point of view which Psyche claims for her own. For a moment it seems that Orual will recognize the insufficiency of her own perspective upon reality, when her memory of Psyche's joy in her valley home prompts her to say once again, "Anything might be true. You are among marvels that you don't understand. . . . Who knows what ruin you might pull down on her head and yours?" (p. 161) But her great desire for mastery in her love for Psyche silences her own wise counsel, with the thought that Orual herself carries a parent's responsibility to discipline her sister, to impose upon Psyche her own way of seeing and her own idea of right conduct: "After all, what was she but a child? . . . Children must obey." (p. 161) It is a measure of the power of Orual's will over her own perspective that she persists in thinking of Psyche as a child. Their conversation in Psyche's own valley had given the

breaking of the drought on the day of the Great Offering. Psyche had said that by the coming of the rains she "knew quite well that the gods really are." (p. 119) The sign of rain had come again to Orual when in her conversation with Psyche in the valley she had wished that "the gods would speak" to solve the riddle. (p. 135) Professor Kilby has noted two of these "signs" in "Till We Have Faces: An Interpretation," in The Longing for a Form, pp. 172,174.

lie to this conception: Psyche's queenliness, her new status as a wife, and her superior physical strength were three plain proofs of her maturity, and Orual had understood them as such at the time. But now, Orual's overwhelming fear that Psyche is being drawn out of her orbit compels her to take direct action, and she determines to return to the valley on the following day.

Orual is determined to interpose herself between Psyche and her husband, by compelling Psyche to look upon him by lamplight when he comes to her in the night, and so to disobey his direct order that she must never see him. Lewis's description of the cloth which Orual carries with her lamp and dagger hints at a hidden motive in Orual's desire that Psyche should disobey her husband. The cloth, "a long band of linen about a span and a half broad," is a bridesmaid's garment, and Orual describes how this garment had been kept hidden away "ever since the marriage night of Psyche's mother."

(p. 163) It was that night (perhaps the very night of Psyche's conception) that Orual was first made to understand the fact of her own ugliness: her father mockingly ordered that the bridesmaids should be provided with "good thick veils" so as not to frighten his new bride. (p. 19) That night as a bridesmaid, Orual learned of the facial deformity that was destined to keep her from ever becoming a bride in her own right. Thus Orual's desire that Psyche should remain forever a child, never a woman, is not surprising. And now Orual comes to her beautiful half-sister Psyche -- daughter of the King's bride of that memorable night, and now not merely a woman and bride herself, but the bride of a god. It is perhaps

then to be expected that Psyche's remonstrances against the plan to betray her husband, wrapped as they are in the mystery of her new position as his wife, seem to Orual as taunts and "matronly primness"; she accuses Psyche: "'You fling my virginity in my face.'"

(p. 172) It may be that Orual misunderstands Psyche's calm faith in her husband in part because of the consciousness of the stigma of her virginity. The great distance between the perceptions of Orual and those of Psyche in the matter of love are illustrated here in Orual's own words: "We might have been two images of love, the happy and the stern; she so young, so brightface, joy in her eyes and limbs; I, burdened and resolute, bringing pain in my hand."

(p. 166)

The "pain" which Orual brings in her hand is her dagger, by threat of which she intends to coerce Psyche into betraying the confidence of her husband. By it, Orual unconsciously identifies herself with the King whom she so despises. We recall that the King's dagger first came into prominence when he used it, in a paroxysm of rage, to kill an innocent page boy who had spilled his wine: Orual's dagger identifies her with this murderous temper which is so blinding to the one whom it controls. The King's dagger had also been used against the priest of Ungit in an attempt to intimidate him, when the King suspected a plot to seize power; on that occasion the priest's utter lack of fear, and complete impassiveness, even with the point of the dagger between his ribs, had clearly shown his mastery over the King in spiritual matters, and the King's impotence in the holy man's presence. (p. 61) Lewis

reminds the reader (by Orual's dagger) of this latter episode in the palace, to suggest that Orual before Psyche is here in much the same place as the King had taken before the priest: Psyche's calm strength in the face of her sister's blustering terrifies Orual, because she dare not acknowledge its source.

This second conversation between the sisters in the valley shows very clearly that Orual's intense desire to come between Psyche and her husband has grown much stronger than her desire to know the truth about Psyche's condition. She misrepresents the opinions of both Bardia and the Fox to Psyche, by implying that they both concur with her own view that Psyche's husband is either "Shadowbrute or felon." (p. 170) In point of fact, from the limited information given them by Orual, Bardia believes the one thing true, the Fox the other, and Orual herself has merely put the two views together, without attempting either to reconcile their differences or to go on to a third theory of her own which might better account for all of the information available, including Orual's moment of vision beside the stream. Thus, when Psyche takes from Orual's report of these theories the mistaken impression that the Fox has somehow come to believe in the existence of the Shadowbrute, Orual welcomes the misunderstanding, claiming that it is "an error helping [Psyche] towards the main truth." (p. 170) But Lewis adds a very pointedly ironic comment on Orual's own understanding of this "truth" towards which she seeks to drive Psyche, when, a moment later, Orual says that the truth of the matter "'is too clear.'" (p. 170) Of course Orual does not see

the irony of this phrase as it reflects back upon the murk of evasions and half-truths which Psyche has had from her.

Psyche understands that her sister's appeals to the love between them stem from Orual's misunderstanding of Psyche's new position as a wife. She seeks to expound the principle of hierarchy to Orual: that because she (Psyche) is under the authority and enjoys the love of her husband, her duty to submit to Orual's authority as the elder sister has been superseded; but her ability to give and to receive love in the old relationship has been not diminished but increased because of the new relationship: she claims "'it makes me love everyone and everything -- more.'" (p. 167) This is completely consistent with Lewis's account of the universal hierarchy as it is given in his Preface to Paradise Lost, in which "Every being is a conductor of superior love or agape to the being below it, and of inferior love or eros to the being above."⁷ Thus, in addition to that measure of love which flows upward from Psyche to Orual in their fraternal relationship, there is a new measure of love which flows from the god downward to Psyche, and through her to Orual.

Psyche offers two additional proofs of her clearer sight in the matter of judging the nature of her mysterious husband. The first is the plain but (naturally) ineffable evidence of the intimacy between herself and the god. She accordingly dismisses the theories of the Fox, Bardia and Orual herself, with the calmly assured (and,

⁷p. 75.

to her unwed sister, both mocking and infuriating) words, "'How should they know? I am his wife. I know.'" (p. 170) The other proof of Psyche's superior discernment is that she understands the nature of her husband's command that he should not be seen, and the reason for it, while the others cannot or will not: that the prohibition is the means by which she can manifest her great love for, and faith in, the god. (p. 171) We recall Tinidril's words when first she understood the true reason for Maleldil's command not to remain overnight on the Fixed Land: "'We cannot walk out of Maleldil's will: but He has given us a way to walk out of our will. And there could be no such way except a command like this.'"⁸ And in an essay entitled "On Obstinacy in Belief," Lewis has discussed the effect of precisely this sort of ambiguity on a relationship like that between Psyche and her husband:

the ambiguity is not something that conflicts with faith so much as a condition which makes faith possible. When you are asked for trust you may give it or withhold it; it is senseless to say that you will trust if you are given demonstrative certainty. There would be no room for trust if demonstration were given. . . . Our relation to those who trusted us only after we were proved innocent in court cannot be the same as our relation to those who trusted us all through.⁹

Finding that her arguments fail to persuade Psyche to betray her husband, Orual resorts to the use of her father's weapon, the dagger. She plunges it through her own arm to demonstrate the strength of her resolve, and blackmails her sister by its bloody edge, vowing

⁸Perelandra, pp. 134-135.

⁹"The World's Last Night" and Other Essays, pp. 28-29.

to take Psyche's life and her own if her will is not obeyed. Orual's threat of suicide (though not of murder) compels Psyche to agree to betray her husband by lighting the lamp that night. But Orual's brutality inspires in Psyche a cold horror like that which the King's rages used to inspire in Orual herself. Thus the sacrifice which Orual would not offer the gods is offered here in defiance of them: Orual seeks to win Psyche back from her faith in the god, to Orual's own protection and possession, and pays for it with her own blood. Psyche seeks to make Orual understand the true nature of the passion which would inspire her to commit this ugly act of coercion, showing how that Orual has twisted Psyche's own love for her "to make of it a tool, a weapon, an instrument of torture." (p. 174) Whatever of goodness had been in their old relationship has been twisted and rendered evil by Orual's desperate act.

As she waits on the other side of the stream for Psyche to carry out the betrayal, Orual is haunted by the fear that the one theory concerning Psyche's husband which she had resolutely refused to consider might prove to be the true one -- that the husband might be indeed a god. And this phantom in the mind becomes real when Orual first hears the voice, and then sees the awful beauty of the face and form of the God of the Grey Mountain as he looks upon her from his valley, with what seems to Orual to be "passionless and measureless rejection":

He rejected, denied, answered, and (worst of all) he knew, all I had thought, done or been. . . . He made it to be as if, from the beginning, I had known that Psyche's lover was a god, and as if all my doubtings, fears, guessings, debatings, questionings of Bardia, questionings of the Fox,

all the rummage and business of it, had been trumped-up foolery, dust blown in my own eyes by myself. You, who read my book, judge. Was it so?

(p. 182)

Although Orual here appeals once again to the reader of the book to judge her case, her fears (of what that judgement might determine) are betrayed in the admission that it is the god's knowledge, his unclouded perception of her real self and real motives, which is "worst of all."

When she returns to Glome and endures a cross-examination from the Fox which is uncomfortably reminiscent of the god's wordless judgement upon her, Orual determines that from this time onward she will not remove her veil. She had first worn the veil simply to disguise her identity on her journeys out of the palace to Psyche's valley; now she suggests that the decision to adopt it permanently is "a sort of treaty made with [her] ugliness," (p. 189) a means of escape from the jokes and insults which she has endured from childhood. Orual also soon discovers that the mystery lent her by the veil serves her well with the King (who, as Bardia puts it, has been ever "half afraid" of subtleties, and "at his worst with women and priests and politic men," (p. 101) and in political matters. But Lewis allows the reader to see the significance of the veil as Orual cannot see it -- and, indeed, it is the special property of a veil to be seen more clearly at a distance. By placing Orual's account of the taking-up of the veil immediately after that of her perception of the god's judgement upon her, and her uncomfortable interview with the Fox, Lewis shows that it is her true self which Orual seeks to conceal behind the veil, all she had

"thought, done or been." (p. 182)¹⁰

When the King and the old priest of Ungit die, Orual becomes a very wise and mighty Queen of Glome, who attributes the strength of her reign to good counsel from Arnom, the Fox and Bardia, and to her veil. She had wished for the protection of the veil when it was her care to conceal the truth concerning her own last dealings with Psyche from the judging eyes of the Fox; now, herself become the judge of Glome, she discovers that her veiled face forces the conviction, in those whom she judges, that their own thoughts and motives stand naked in her sight:

I have seen ambassadors, who were brave men in battle, turn white like scared children in my Pillar Room when I turned and looked at them (and they couldn't see whether I was looking or not) and was silent. I have made the most seasoned liars turn red and blurt out the truth with the same weapon.

(p. 238)

The defence which guards the truth within Orual from the apprehension of others thus ironically becomes a weapon which enables her to breach the fortresses of other minds. As time passes, she discovers too that, more than merely masking her ugliness, the veil has actually lent Orual the reputation of loveliness: first "people began to discover all manner of beauties in [her] voice," and then some began to say that Orual was obliged to go about with her face covered because she "was of a beauty so dazzling that . . . Ungit was jealous and had promised to blast [her] if [she] went bareface."

¹⁰Cf. Walsh, The Literary Legacy of C.S. Lewis, p. 167, in which Walsh states that the veil suggests "alienation both from others and from self, and a refusal to show or accept her true identity."

(p. 237) Thus, at least in some quarters, Orual comes to enjoy the same reputation which had been accorded Psyche. But some theorized that Orual's veil hid a monstrous deformity: "a pig's, bear's, cat's, or elephant's face." (p. 237) Orual's report of these stories born out of jealousy is dryly ironic, and perhaps indicates that she has been aware of a similar impulse within herself, for certainly she seems to pardon its pettiness. But another theory held by some of her people is that Orual has no face at all, that if you removed the veil you would find mere "emptiness." (p. 237) Orual is ponderously ironic in calling this the "best story," for she knows that although it is not in the plainest sense true that there is no face under the veil, yet the story carries with it a kind of truth, because there is an emptiness within Orual for which the throne itself can provide no final remedy:

It was so with me almost every evening of my life; one little stairway led me from feast or council, all the bustle and skill and glory of queenship, to my own chamber, to be alone with myself; that is, with a nothingness.
(p. 245)

Although Orual finds that the many political and military victories which follow her accession can finally provide nothing to fill the emptiness within, three victories of another sort are at least palliative. The first of these is victory, of a sort, over her own virginal isolation, and Bardia is the means to this victory even as he is so often the instrument of military conquest for Glome's Queen. Bardia does not become Orual's lover, but her possession of him, as his commander and his prince, is bittersweet compensation for the fact that his love and duty as husband are to

another woman. The second private triumph which Orual enjoys is over the goddess Ungit herself, whose terror had so filled Orual's childhood, and whose son (the bright God of the Grey Mountain) had claimed Psyche from her. This campaign over her immortal rival had begun to turn to Orual's favour with the death of the old priest, that man who had been so sure of his goddess that the King's dagger point between his ribs could not move him. Arnom, the new priest, had come under the tuition of the Fox and what books of Greek wisdom could be purchased from traders; when he assumed the priesthood, the old superstitious piety had given way to sceptical rationalism: Arnom began "to talk like a philosopher about the gods." (p. 243)

The symbol of Glome's "enlightenment," her coming out from the shadow of the fear of the gods, is the new image of Ungit which Orual helps Arnom to acquire for the House of Ungit, "a woman-shaped image in the Greek fashion" which Orual thought "would be somehow a defeat for the old, hungry, faceless Ungit whose terror had been over [her] in childhood." (p. 243) By arranging that Arnom should set up this new image of the goddess, Orual steals some of the mystery (and, with the mystery, the power) from Ungit by removing her veil. And with this, Orual has only one further victory to accomplish: it is necessary that she defeat, at least in some measure, the tyrannous memory of Psyche and of Orual's own guilt in those events which had culminated in Psyche's exile from her home and husband. Orual accordingly takes such measures as will deliver her from the sound of the chains swinging in the well in the palace courtyard, "that noise which was sometimes chains swinging in the wind and

sometimes lost and beggared Psyche weeping." (p. 244) The well is thickly walled and roofed, and a door is fitted to silence the chains and the memories which they stir.

The uneasy truce which Orual strikes with the world on the basis of her small victories is soon shattered. She sets out on a journey from Glome to neighbouring countries, and happens upon the shrine of a goddess whose image, carved from wood and beautiful for its simplicity, is veiled like Orual herself. This so piques Orual's curiosity that she induces the priest of the shrine to tell her the "sacred story" of the goddess Istra -- Psyche. The tale is in such large part true to Orual's knowledge of her sister's story that Orual knows that it could have come only from the gods. But some of the details do not accord with what Orual remembers: in particular, Psyche's palace had been plainly visible, and Psyche herself had been destroyed because of her sisters' jealousy, according to the priest's account. (p. 252) Orual considers this to be sure evidence that the gods themselves have spread a false tale out of malice against her, and determines to answer the false charge with her own account of the matter, to "set down the truth" against their lies. (p. 254) This account of the "truth" concerning Orual and Psyche and the gods is, of course, the book itself.

With this resolution newly established, Orual begins to undo all the work of forgetting, of putting the past behind or beneath her, which had for so long been the Queen's occupation. The image which Lewis had used once before -- of the perverse "pregnancy" of the Queen of Glome, within whom "Orual," her true self, "grew

slowly smaller and less alive" -- is brought out again in a new form. Orual now feels her charge against the gods growing like a live thing within her: she says of this "I was with book, as a woman is with child." (p. 256) The image of the well which had been walled in so as to silence its chains (which could sound to Orual's ears like the weeping of Psyche) is similarly brought back into Orual's text:

I was recalling every passage of the true story, dragging up terrors, humiliations, struggles, and anguish that I had not thought of for years, letting Orual wake and speak, digging her almost out of a grave, out of the walled well.
(p. 257)

This "digging . . . out of a grave" is doubly significant. In addition to taking the reader back to the walled well, it recalls Orual's account of her new management of her father's silver mines (this account of the mines had been placed by Lewis between the first images of the Queen's "pregnancy" and the account of the walling of the well). During the King's reign, the mines had been used almost exclusively as a means of assuring a miserable and lingering death for those out of royal favor. But Orual recognized that there had been "more death than work in the mines, and the yield was light." (p. 240) In order to render the business of the mines at once more humane and more profitable, she

bought strong, young slaves for the mines, saw that they had dry lodging and good feeding, and let every man know that he should go free when he had, adding day by day, dug so much ore. The tale was such that a steady man could hope for his freedom in ten years; later, we brought it down to seven.
(p. 240)

Thus the mines which had been a place of death became a place of life; more than this, they came to provide the means to achieve

freedom. Lewis links the image of the mines to the images of pregnancy and the walled well, to indicate that Orual's determination to bring her complaint against the gods to fruition -- unearthing her own past in the process -- may well bring both life out of death and freedom out of slavery for Glome's queen: her "tale" may accomplish for her what the "tale" of the mine slaves does for them.

When the God of the Grey Mountain had faced Orual in the valley (and she had seen his glory and felt his judgement upon her) he had told Orual first that her own actions had doomed Psyche to a period of wandering and suffering, but had then added two prophecies concerning Orual herself: that she should "know herself," and that she should "be Psyche.'" (p. 182) In the opening pages of the second part of the novel, Lewis begins to show the workings-out of these two mysterious oracles. The second part of Orual's tale is written when she is near death and, by her own admission, it derives from a new perspective upon reality. This new perspective certainly includes a much clearer understanding of herself -- she is unwilling to leave her story as it is because that would be "to die perjured": she adds another part to the original account because she now knows "more . . . about the woman who wrote it." (p. 263) Thus one part of the god's prophecy concerning Orual begins to be fulfilled. The correction of Orual's perspective had begun with the very task of writing the first part of her tale, "a labour of sifting and sorting, separating motive from motive and both from pretext," which labour began to enter even into her dreams, where it seemed to Orual that she must sort "a huge hopeless pile of seeds,

wheat, barley, poppy, rye, millet, what not?" (p. 266) Lewis certainly intends his reader to recognize in this the first of the labours of Psyche from Apuleius' version of the myth; thus it is a token of the fulfillment of the god's prophecy that Orual also should "be Psyche." It is a measure of Lewis's mythopoeic power that the image accords so precisely with the actual nature of Orual's self-imposed task, to the extent that when one looks back from Orual's dream of the sorting of the seeds to Apuleius, it is difficult not to see in Lewis's source some suggestion of that "separating of motive from motive and both from context" which it so fitly comes to represent in Lewis's novel.

Orual soon discovers that she cannot put limits to the change in her own perspective which began with the writing of her accusation of the gods, that the gods themselves are preparing her through this labour for their own "surgery," the laying-bare of the real Orual behind the cloth veil and the veil of her queenship. (p. 263) The next goad of circumstance brought to bear upon Orual is the arrival in her court of Tarin, who had been made a eunuch by Trom so many years past for his dalliance with Redival. Tarin's part in the gods' surgery is to show Orual how she had misjudged her prettier sister, how that Redival had felt lonely and unloved when Orual's time and affections had been divided between the Fox and Psyche. From Tarin's account, Orual begins to see little by little the jealousy which had ever been such a large part of her private motives, that she had considered Redival's "gold curls" sufficient compensation for being ignored by Orual

herself.

When Bardia dies, and the Queen pays a formal visit to his widow, Ansit, Orual is confronted with yet another uncomfortable appraisal of her past. Ansit's grief robs her of diplomacy, and she condemns Orual openly for the way in which her husband's life had been used up in his labours for Glome's Queen: "'devising, consulting, remembering, guessing, forecasting . . . and the Pillar Room and the Pillar Room. The mines are not the only place where a man can be worked to death.'" (p. 271; ellipsis in the original) The whisper of truth which these words convey to a horrified Orual is substantiated only a few moments later in the same conversation, when Ansit continues her complaint against the comradeship between Orual and Bardia which had ever been denied his wife, "'you and he night and day together, sharing the councils, the dangers, the victories, the soldiers' bread, the very jokes. . . .'" (p. 272) This echoes that which Orual herself had written concerning her small personal triumph in achieving an intimacy with Bardia deeper even than that between him and his wife: "'has she ever crouched beside him in the ambush? Ever ridden knee to knee with him in the charge? Or shared a stinking water-bottle with him at the thirsty day's end?'" (p. 242) Orual is thus obliged to take Ansit's condemnation seriously. Ansit's charge against Orual is that the Queen had used up Bardia's life without giving anything back, that Orual's love for her general (and indeed for the Fox, Redival and Psyche too) had been like the "love" of the Shadowbrute, in whom "the loving and devouring are all one." (p. 275) When Orual's rage

subsides, her perspective broadens to the extent that she can recognize the validity of Ansit's accusation:

My anger protected me only for a short time; anger wearies itself out and truth comes in. For it was all true; truer than Ansit could know. . . . Men have a hundred ways of mocking a man who's thought to love his wife too well . . . I never mocked him myself; but I had endless sleights and contrivances (behind my veil) for pushing the talk in such directions as, I knew, would make others mock him. I hated them for doing it, but I had a bittersweet pleasure at his clouded face. Did I hate him then? Indeed, I believe so. A love can grow to be nine-tenths hatred and still call itself love.

(pp. 276-277)

The recognition of the true character of her "love" for Bardia sickens Orual, and she expresses her revulsion for her own actions and their motives in language which recalls her own journeys past the foetid House of Ungit to the clear air of the Grey Mountain and the home of the god:

My love for Bardia (not Bardia himself) had become to me a sickening thing. I had been dragged up and out on to such heights and precipices of truth, that I came into an air where it could not live. It stank; a gnawing greed for one to whom I could give nothing, of whom I craved all.

(p. 277)

Orual's interview with Ansit has led her to consider her own unredeemed "love" to be of Ungit's own nature, devouring and never satisfied, returning nothing. But by alluding here to Orual's two journeys past Ungit's temple and into the precincts of the god, Lewis intimates that Orual's love must itself somehow ascend to a higher plane, must be changed from the consuming Ungit-desire to become a love with the qualities of beauty and purity which Orual associates with the god in his valley garden.

The pace of Orual's journey into self-knowledge is quickened

when she is obliged, as Glome's monarch, to witness the ceremony of the year's birth in the House of Ungit. As she waits there for the rite to begin, Orual speaks to a woman who comes into the temple to make an offering, who has implicit faith in the old goddess Ungit (though not in the new image of Aphrodite which Arnom had set up) to answer her prayer. The almost palpable comfort which the woman derives from her devotions sets Orual to consider what truth and power indeed there might be at the heart of the rituals, sacrifices and ceremonies surrounding the old stone idol, which seems (to Orual) to return so little for the worship it receives.

Orual's vigil at the House of Ungit brings on the first of three dream visions which the gods send. In her first dream, her father compels her to dig down through the floor of the Pillar Room (which is associated with her public life, her queenship) into a smaller Pillar room of earth (perhaps the private Orual behind the veil) and then again down into a still smaller room "of living rock," where, Trom tells Orual, there is "no Fox to help." (p. 286) This last room seems to represent to Orual her essential self, the real woman, stripped of all her accustomed defenses. It is in this deepest room that Orual is compelled by Trom to look in the mirror, and sees by it that she is Ungit, "that all-devouring, womblike, yet barren, thing." (p. 287) Orual says of this horrible vision of her self, of what she takes to be a revelation of her essential nature, that it "allowed no denial": she has very clearly accepted for truth Ansit's perspective upon her. Certain aspects of this vision support Orual's self-condemnation: her veil is removed, she

and Trom use picks and spades (the implements of the freedom-giving silver mines) for the digging, the last room is like a "wide well" similar to that which had been walled against the memory of her own responsibility for Psyche's exile, and (again in the last room) the image of the water trickling down the stone walls explicitly invokes the walled well. But Lewis has given the reader implicit warning not to accept (as Orual does) this identification of Orual with Ungit as very truth: in the vision Orual seems to "see" that her years of rule and her great accomplishments as Glome's Queen are nothing, "like a dream. . . . How could I have believed in them?" (p. 284) -- when in fact these things have been real. The vision is not (as Orual assumes) completely veridical. There is another implicit warning in the fact that Lewis places this account of the descent into the "real" Orual immediately after her own recognition that the gods have been leading her on to "heights and precipices of truth." (p. 277) Orual's discovery of her own true self and the relationships between that self and Psyche, and the gods, is to come by a journey upward, not down into the plane of Ungit-worship. Lewis intends for the reader to recall Psyche's opinion, that the reality of the gods and the true nature of their dealings with mortals might well be beyond the understanding of either the old priest of Ungit with his barbarous mysteries or the Fox with his thin philosophy. Orual has, quite clearly, some way to travel yet in her search for the truth about herself.

Orual's next vision corrects her perspective upon the gods. In Lewis's adaptation of Psyche's second labour, Orual must steal

a golden fleece from the rams of the gods in order to appropriate the "beauty of soul" which she now believes one must have in order to be loved by the gods. (p. 294) But she discovers first that she cannot hope to take the wool from these rams because they rush at her and trample her underfoot. She then realizes that this trampling does not come from the gods' malice, but that it is the inevitable result of the meeting of the divine reality with her own unredeemed mortality:

They were not doing it in anger. They rushed over me in their joy; perhaps they did not see me; certainly I was nothing in their minds. I understood it well. They butted and trampled me because their gladness led them on; the Divine Nature wounds and perhaps destroys us merely by being what it is. We call it the wrath of the gods; as if the great cataract in Phars were angry with every fly it sweeps down in its green thunder.

(pp. 294-295)

In The Great Divorce, Lewis pictures the eternal reality of heavenly things as being so solid and substantial that mortals who reach the borders of that country appear as mere ghosts and shadows, whose feet cannot bear the diamond-hardness of the grass. The notion that this grass desired to be cruel to the feet of the mortal ghosts who attempted to walk on it would, of course, be absurd: the pain is the inescapable consequence of the meeting of the two natures, before the mortal elements of the lower nature have been purged. And so it is that Orual begins to recognize the distance between her accustomed perception of the gods and the reality. Although she fails to accomplish this second labour, while the vision remains Orual is able to see in that pasture "another mortal woman" who accomplishes what she could not, by gleaning bits of the gold fleece

from the thorns which hedge the field, and in this is Lewis's first hint of the coming reunion of Orual and Psyche.

Orual ceases, at this disappointment, her attempt to achieve by her own efforts that elusive "beauty of soul," and returns to her work as Glome's judge. Though she takes no satisfaction in the fact that her judgements "about this time were thought to be even wiser and more just than before," (p. 296) she is at least reminded of the reality of her own mortal accomplishments, and in a certain measure less likely to sink into the despairing perspective of her vision of the Throne Room excavations. It is likely too that Lewis includes the mention of Orual's unprecedented accomplishments in wisdom and justice during this period to indicate that she is drawing closer to that Person at the heart of reality who is, in Lewis's thought, both Wisdom and Justice personified, and the source of those virtues in men.

Only one reservation remains to Orual at this juncture, one part of her complaint against the gods which has not been answered by circumstance or vision: that she had "at least loved Psyche truly. There, if nowhere else, I had the right of it and the gods were in the wrong." (p. 296) No sooner is this "comfort" articulated than the answer comes to Orual in a final vision, and with it, a last labour:

I was walking over burning sands, carrying an empty bowl. I knew well what I had to do. I must find the spring that rises from the river that flows in the deadlands, and fill it with the water of death and bring it back without spilling a drop and give it to Ungit.

(pp. 296-297)

But when Orual is challenged as to the reason for her journey, it is discovered that she had not been delivering the water of death to Ungit at all, but carries in her hands only her complaint against the gods. Brought before a veiled judge, and compelled to read her complaint, Orual is chagrined to discover that the scroll which she holds does not seem to be the same she had written: it seems to her now "far too small. And too old -- a little, shabby, crumpled thing, nothing like my great book. . . ." (p. 300) And when it is read, that which had been always latent in Orual's plaint is exposed, just as she is herself exposed, unveiled before her judge:

"Can it be that you really don't understand? Do you think we mortals will find you gods easier to bear if you're beautiful? . . . It would be far better for us if you were foul and ravening. We'd rather you drank their blood than stole their hearts. We'd rather they were ours and dead than yours and made immortal. . . . oh, you'll say (you've been whispering it to me these forty years) that I'd signs enough her palace was real; could have known the truth if I'd wanted. But how could I want to know it? Tell me that. The girl was mine. What right had you to steal her away into your dreadful heights?"

(pp. 301-302)

Here at last Orual's ugliness is manifest as a symbol of her mortality, of mortal insufficiency, of her distance from the gods and their beauty, of the ugliness of that "love" which would choose the death of the beloved Psyche over her immortality. At the last of her complaint, Orual expresses that fundamental philosophical contradiction within her which has occasioned so much of her life's misery: she says in one breath that all we mortals "'want to be our own'" and not in the shadow of the gods; in the next: "'Psyche was mine . . . She was mine. Mine; do you not know what the word means? Mine!'" (p. 303) Orual's judge at last orders her to be silent, and

she realizes that she has read out her bitterly self-contradictory complaint not once but many times, and would perhaps have gone on doing so forever except for the gods' merciful command to be silent. Moreover, her feverish reading has revealed to Orual at last the true nature of the feelings which she has held for her sister through all the years, the truth about herself: she hears in it, for the first time, what she knows to be her "real voice," and it is itself her answer. Of this terrible meeting with reality, Orual writes:

When the time comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the centre of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like been saying over and over, you'll not talk about joy of words. I saw well why the gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?

(p. 305)

The "face" of which Orual speaks in the phrase "till we have faces," that which she deems necessary for mortals who would meet the gods, is an outward aspect ordinate to the inward personal reality. She has had to discover the reality deep within herself -- her own true nature, stripped of all dissimulation and pretense -- in order to elicit the gods' response to her charges against them. The gods are, as always in Lewis's fiction, at the very centre of reality, and will not or cannot treat with the unreal: those veils and postures with which mortals hide themselves from themselves must be put off before there can be any real meeting with immortal reality. The fact that Orual has indeed suffered just such a personal unveiling -- that she is prepared at last to meet the

gods "face to face" and to accept their judgement upon her -- is attested to in the remaining details of her final dream vision, in which she learns much about the nature of the gods, and especially of the God of Love himself.

The Fox comes to Orual, admitting the insufficiency of his thin rationalism even to adequately picture the divine nature, let alone to effect a soul's union with it; that even the barbaric cult of Ungit, based as it was on blood sacrifices, conveyed more truth concerning the means by which man might approach the gods:

"the way to the true gods is more like the House of Ungit . . . oh, it's unlike too, more unlike than we yet dream, but that's easy knowledge, the first lesson; only a fool would stay there, posturing and repeating it. The Priest knew at least that there must be sacrifices. They will have sacrifice; will have man. Yes, and the very heart, centre, ground, roots of a man; dark and strong and costly as blood."

(p. 306; ellipsis in the original)

This information concerning the kind of relationship with mortals which the gods desire helps to clarify further Orual's earlier intuition of the need to strip away the unreal veils and to meet the gods "face to face." It is only at the centre of personal reality -- "the very heart, centre, ground, roots of a man" -- that the gods can meet with mortals. This meeting is closer in spirit to that of the woman in Ungit's temple who had brought her sacrifice before the stone idol than to the Fox's and Arnom's academic disputations on the divine nature: it is an intense personal relationship which can exist only at the very centre of one's being, and it is costly.

For the remainder of Orual's vision, the Fox becomes her

Virgil, to lead her to the god whom she had accused. She is brought first to an open chamber whose walls bear a sort of living fresco depicting Orual's own labours; but in the fresco it is Psyche who sorts the seeds into piles, who gathers the golden fleece from the thorns, who carries the bowl of the water of death. The Fox tells Orual that Psyche had been able to perform the labours where Orual had failed, for the reason that "'Another bore nearly all the anguish.'" (p. 311) Lewis here adopts Charles Williams' doctrine of "Exchange," to suggest that the element of true love in Orual's relationship with Psyche had (though mixed with those "five parts anger and seven parts pride") caused her to bear Psyche's pains in the Labours: thus Orual had "become Psyche" in yet another fulfillment of the god's prophecy.¹¹

The last labour depicted in the fresco is Psyche's journey into Hades to bring back death's beauty for Ungit, so that she too may be beautiful. The Fox explains that "'All, even Psyche, are born into the house of Ungit. And all must get free from her. Or say that Ungit in each must bear Ungit's son and die in childbed -- or

¹¹Lewis's comments on Williams' "doctrine of Exchange or Substitution" are quoted from Arthurian Torso, p. 123:

All salvation, everywhere and at all times, in great things or in little, is vicarious. . . . We can and should "bear one another's burdens" in a sense much more nearly literal than is usually dreamed of. Any two souls can ("Under the Omnipotence") make an agreement to do so: the one can offer to take another's shame or anxiety or grief and the burden will actually be transferred. . . . Such "exchanges," however, are not made only by mutual compact. We can be their beneficiaries without our own knowledge or consent.

Evan Gibson has noted the link between the Arthurian Torso passage and Till We Have Faces (in Spinner of Tales, pp. 253-254), as has Chad Walsh (The Literary Legacy, pp. 171-172).

change.'" (p. 314) Certainly one aspect of the truth in this myth is immediately intelligible to Orual, for she had acknowledged the ugliness of Ungit in her own "love" for Psyche, and had sought for some time for a method of destroying (or lending real beauty to) that cruel, devouring Ungit in her own mortal love. Thus the fresco which depicts Psyche's last labour depicts in mythic form the struggle of every soul to exchange the corrupted (and corruptible) "love" of the mortal nature for the incorruptible love of God. Psyche suffers three temptations to put aside the quest whose fulfillment is her only hope of reconciliation to the gods. She does not yield to the first temptation, in which the common people cry out to her to be their goddess, to consider herself sufficient within herself and apart from union with the god; that is, to wear the veil of self-sufficiency. The second temptation is from the Fox, and is again an appeal to Psyche to consider herself personally sufficient, to trust in the humanist's virtues: "'reason, calmness, self-discipline.'" (p. 314) This too is ignored: Psyche had long ago intuited the existence of realities beyond the Fox's perception. But Psyche's third temptation comes from Orual herself (as a figure in the fresco, apart from the true Orual who witnesses these things): to choose between mortal love and immortal, between sister and husband, Orual and the God of the Grey Mountain himself.

As they watch Psyche overcome even this last temptation, Orual and the Fox discuss the perspective lent them by this vision on the reality of their own motives in their dealings with Psyche. The Fox tells Orual that mortal jealousy of the immortals

masquerading as love will become more and more common as the gods reveal more about themselves and their beauty to man. Orual asks if the gods will indeed one day be beautiful; with the Fox's reply that "'Nothing is yet in its true form,'" Lewis hints at something which he has put explicitly in other works, that the pagan manifestations which are the only perspective available to Orual and the Fox on the gods' reality are one day to be fulfilled in a much greater revelation, by which man will understand that what reality has been perceived in "the gods" has been in fact glimpses of the one true God, reality's author and centre:

The whole religious history of the pre-Christian world, on its better side, anticipates Him. It could not be otherwise. The Light which has lightened every man from the beginning may shine more clearly but cannot change. The Origin cannot suddenly start being, in the popular sense of the word, "original."¹²

By descending into death, Psyche wins that which will lend "Ungit" (the unredeemed Orual) that beauty which will fit her for the company of the gods. Thus the "exchange" between Psyche and Orual is complete: each has paid the price of redemption for the other. Orual comments on seeing the redeemed Psyche, goddess-like in her transfigured glory, that yet "she was the old Psyche still; a thousand times more her very self than she had been. . . . For all that had then but flashed out in a glance or a gesture . . . was now wholly present." (p. 317) That lovely reality which had ever been at the heart of the mortal Psyche now (since this mortal has "put on immortality") declares itself in every aspect of her being,

¹²Reflections on the Psalms, p. 28.

and she is obviously become a fit consort for the god. But as the god himself arrives to "judge" Orual, and she casts her eyes down in humility, she sees reflected in the pool at their feet two images of Psyche: Orual too has been redeemed, and the Ungit-love has been transfigured into immortal love. In Lewis's description of the coming of the god, there are hints of the figure of Eros (in the "arrows" which "pierce" Orual with joy, p. 318), who was in Apuleius the god with whom Psyche became united. But Orual's celebration of him -- "The earth and stars and sun, all that was or will be, existed for his sake . . . the most dreadful, the most beautiful, the only dread and beauty there is" -- could hardly be applied to one god out of the classical pantheon. Lewis shows by this that the promised further revelations of truth concerning the divine nature have in fact begun: Orual is met at last not by the God of the Grey Mountain, but by God Himself, the creator of "earth and stars and sun," centre of reality, "the only dread and beauty." Orual's book ends with a loving acknowledgement of what she has seen by looking, in her vision, upon the face of Reality: "'I ended my first book with the words No answer. I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice?'" (p. 319) A passage from one of Lewis's letters to Arthur Greeves elucidates Orual's claim that God is Himself the answer to all questions brought before Him:

the Pagan stories are God expressing Himself through the minds of poets, using such images as He found there, while Christianity is God expressing Himself through what we call "real things". Therefore it is true, not in the sense of

being a "description" of God (that no finite mind could take in) but in the sense of being the way in which God chooses to (or can) appear to our faculties. The "doctrines" we get out of of the true myth are of course less true: they are translations into our concepts and ideas of that wh. God has already expressed in a language more adequate, namely the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.¹³

He whom Orual here meets is, in his own person, the reality whom those small truths (amid gross errors) in the Fox's devotion to moral virtue and the priest's conviction that redemption must be at the price of blood, sought to describe: now the reality declares itself to Orual in "a language more adequate." The satisfaction of all of Orual's longings thus comes neither in rationalism nor Ungit-worship nor yet in Psyche: all that had been real in all of these is bound up in reality's master, whom in her last moments of mortal life Orual acknowledges lord.

In a letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, Lewis wrote that the difficulty for a Christian in coming to terms with paganism turns on the "double task of reconciling and converting. . . . We have to hurl down false gods and also elicit the peculiar truth preserved in the worship of each."¹⁴ It is quite clear that Lewis has exercised himself in this "double task" in Till We Have Faces; hurling down the false gods of Ungit and of atheistic rationalism, while preserving the peculiar truths bound up in each devotion; the necessity for redemption by sacrifice (which the old Priest knew),

¹³They Stand Together: The Letters of C.S. Lewis to Arthur Greeves (1914-1963), pp. 427-428.

¹⁴Letters of C.S. Lewis, p. 300.

and the necessity for moral integrity and a rational understanding of the universe (which the Fox had taught). Chad Walsh has discussed this movement, from the early glimpses of truth held by the rival systems of belief, to a new perspective upon reality which ultimately will embrace whatever has been true in the old ways of seeing and believing:

The reader scarcely notices it at first, but a glimmer of Christianity is beginning to infiltrate into the rational world of the Greeks and the intuitive wisdom of the old pagans. This foreshadowing of the supreme revelation that lies perhaps several centuries in the future is done quietly and adroitly. There is simply the growing sense that neither the Fox's rationalism nor the bloody cult of Ungit is adequate to make sense of the insights Orual has so painfully arrived at. The meaning of her life lies in a future she will never see.¹⁵

In Perelandra, Ransom had learned from Tor and Tinidril how stories and myths which had come before Christ, and which claimed no relationship with the Hebrew or Christian revelations, could yet carry much of that truth which came to be expressed most fully and perfectly in the Incarnation. The answer from Perelandra's new lord and lady is paraphrased here in Ransom's account:

There is an environment of minds as well as of space. The universe is one -- a spider's web wherein each mind lives along every line, a vast whispering gallery where (save for the direct action of Maleldil) though no news travels unchanged yet no secret can be rigorously kept. . . . Memory passes through the womb and hovers in the air. The Muse is a real thing. A faint breath, as Virgil says, reaches even the late generations. Our mythology is based on a solidier reality than we dream: but it is also at an almost infinite distance from that base. And when they told him this, Ransom at last understood why mythology was what it was -- gleams of celestial strength and beauty falling on

¹⁵The Literary Legacy, p. 172.

a jungle of filth and imbecility.¹⁶

And so it is that Lewis's ideas on reality, truth and perspective find their most triumphant expression in the "gleams of celestial strength and beauty" which at last illumine the dark mind of Orual of Glome. The Fox had used the image of the "great web," "which is called Nature, or the Whole," to quell Orual's suspicion that Glome had seen the hand of a god in the country's deliverance from drought at the Great Offering:

"That south-west wind came over a thousand miles of sea and land. The weather of the whole world would have to have been different from the beginning if that wind was not to blow. It's all one web; you can't pick threads out nor put them in."

(p. 93)

When we, with Orual, return to this truth from the new perspective that the God of the Grey Mountain (or, simply, God) had indeed accomplished all these things, the Fox's words suddenly take on an awesome significance. The universe is not merely a web arranged anyhow and left to itself; it is rather that intricate web which Tor and Tinidrel had described to Ransom, "'wherein each mind lives along every line, a vast whispering gallery'" of truth, all of which seeks to describe the author of the whole, the logos, the centre of reality.

¹⁶Perelandra, p. 187.

CONCLUSION

C.S. Lewis expressed the fundamental importance of his faith in Christ to the whole of his own perspective upon reality in this credo: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."¹ Certainly a close examination of Lewis's fiction shows that this perspective was above all things what Lewis sought to communicate to his reader. He complained that modern western society, with its philosophical bases in materialism and naturalism, sought to impress upon the popular imagination the image of a "tiny, windowless universe" without the infinite personal God of whom Lewis himself claimed intimate knowledge, and with hardly any room even for the abundance of good and real things created by His word and for His (and our) pleasure. Lewis insisted not only that objective reality exists, but that its existence is centred in and dependent upon the ultimate Reality of the person of God, its author. He contended further that objective truth -- valid knowledge of these realities -- could be known by man through the operation of his reason: since the God whom Lewis acknowledged claims the title of logos, human reason is a sharing of divine Reason. But since our participation in God's Reason is at best both

¹quoted by Beverly Arlton, "Belief: A Functional View," C.S. Lewis Bulletin, VI, xii, 1.

partial and intermittent (because of our creaturely limitations) Lewis inferred that other means of participating in the divine reality must be available to man. One such avenue was "joy," or Sehnsucht, the passionate longing which Lewis believed to be innate in every creature for its creator, the operation of which he often dramatised in his fiction: as (for example) in Ransom's turmoil of heart and mind when Perelandra's imminence in the Blue Room of St. Anne's awoke his longing for her planet (That Hideous Strength). Another means of participating in the divine reality, Lewis believed, was adherence to the premisses of the Tao, the universal moral law whose precepts are valid because they reflect the very character of God. Lewis also considered myth to be an important means of participation in divine reality in that myth is capable of conveying reality whole into the imagination, and capable also of alerting the reader to prejudices and defects of perspective which had cut him off from perceiving reality. But the greatest of myths -- "greatest" because it alone is also a fact while no less a myth -- is the story of Christ: "the utterly historical and concrete reality which is the centre of all our hope, faith and love."² Thus in Lewis's own myths those characters who make the journey out of the self and into reality arrive neither at a place nor at an understanding per se: they come ultimately into relationship with a person, with the Person of reality: Jane Studdock discovers Maleldil, Eustace Scrubb finds Aslan, Orual is met at last by the God of the Grey Mountain.

²"Transposition", "The Weight of Glory" and Other Addresses, p. 27.

In his study of Lewis's thought, called Patches of Godlight, Robert Houston Smith has written that "from the mid-1950's onward . . . [Lewis] became less confident of mankind's ability to comprehend reality. This loss of confidence may be detected in Till We Have Faces. . . ." ³ But Orual's entrance into reality by way of entrance into a relationship with her Lord (rather than by the operation of her reason alone) is anything but a departure from the pattern which Lewis had established in the Ransom trilogy and the Chronicles of Narnia. Ransom had learned from his journey out of the "silent planet" that his own perspective upon reality must suffer some refinement, and also had become able to grasp many truths concerning the real arrangement of the universe which he had not previously suspected. But the ultimate satisfaction of Ransom's early longings had come only when his meeting with Oyarsa had helped him to enter more deeply into a relationship with Maleldil, to understand that it was He who had fashioned the universe pulsing with life and light, and who had called Ransom to Malacandra so that he might take up his own part in the great design. Similarly in Perelandra, it had been the Voice from the Darkness, Maleldil's own voice, which had given Ransom the assurance he needed, that the act of redemption which he was called to perform was necessary -- was indeed analogous and complementary to Maleldil's own act of redemption -- and that by the grace given to him Ransom would accomplish that for which he had been brought to Venus. In That

³p. 11.

Hideous Strength, Mark's sudden intuition of the existence of the "Normal" and "Real" had led him to a determination not to betray the Christ of the crucifix (in spite of Mark's ignorance of the crucifixion's full significance). And Jane's doubts and fears and pride were conquered only when at last she "agreed with her adversary" and came into the presence of Maleldil. The children who entered Narnia had discovered there a great assortment of marvels and adventures: some had been called to help restore a king to his throne, others to sail into Narnia's utter East and the borders of Aslan's own country, all had met the Talking Beasts and longaevi of that world. But each of the children had to discover at last (like Cor in The Horse and His Boy) that it was Aslan "at the back of all the stories": his blood which effected the redemption of Narnia, his word which was their guide, his presence which was their comfort and strength. And it was Aslan himself who told them that their meeting with him in Narnia was to prepare them to know him better (though by another Name) in their own world. Thus when Lewis made of Apuleius' tale of Cupid and Psyche a story of two very different perspectives upon the fundamental reality of the person of God, and of two very different paths to Him, he was working in the very centre of his own tradition in imaginative fiction.

Of Ariosto's genius for invention, Lewis wrote (in The Allegory of Love):

The fertility of his fancy is "beyond expectation, beyond hope." His actors range from archangels to horses, his scene from Cathay to the Hebrides. In every stanza there is something new: battles in all their detail, strange lands with their laws, customs, history and geography, storm and

sunshine, mountains, islands, rivers, monsters, anecdotes, conversations -- there seems no end to it. . . . It is "God's plenty."⁴

Surely this description applies equally well to Lewis himself and his own fictional creations, to his depiction of a bright and full universe "packed and tingling with . . . life." Every quality for which he praises Ariosto's work is abundantly present in his own. Lewis depicts a universe where all lesser realities are dependent upon the central reality of the person of God; where truth can be known by the operation of reason and adherence to the Tao; where myth can afford reality an entrance into the imagination; where a man's perspective upon reality dictates his experience of it; and where the truest way of thought and action -- that response which is most ordinate to reality -- can come only through a personal relationship with Him who is the centre and creator of reality. In his fiction, Lewis depicts "God's plenty" so as to broaden and deepen the perspective of his reader, that ultimately the reader might acknowledge the real Author of this "plenty."

⁴p. 302.

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