THE SON AND THE OTHER STARS: CHRISTOLOGY AND COSMOLOGY IN THE IMAGINATION OF C. S. LEWIS

Michael Ward

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University of St. Andrews

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The Son and the Other Stars: Christology and Cosmology in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis

Michael Ward
St Mary’s College
University of St Andrews

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology

April 15th 2005
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ABSTRACT

The Son and the Other Stars:
Christology and Cosmology in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis

Michael Ward Ph.D in Theology
St Mary’s College April 2005

This dissertation treats the theory and practice of C.S. Lewis’s theological imagination, focussing upon the imaginative use he made of his professional expertise in medieval and renaissance literature. Its approach is principally expository rather than an evaluative.

Chapter One outlines the centrality of the imagination to a proper understanding of Lewis’s works.

Chapter Two examines Lewis’s own theory of imagination and surveys how he practised it as a literary critic. We compare and contrast Lewis’s theory and practice of imagination with that of his friend, the theologian, Austin Farrer.

Chapter Three looks in more detail at Lewis’s imaginative practice, in particular his fascination with the images supplied by the seven planets of the Ptolemaic cosmos, which he termed ‘spiritual symbols of permanent value’. We analyse what he meant by ‘spirit’ and ‘symbol’.

Chapter Four introduces the main argument of the dissertation, namely that these seven spiritual symbols structure the works for which Lewis is best known, the seven ‘Chronicles of Narnia’. We claim to have uncovered the governing imaginative blueprint of the septet. We address Lewis’s capacity for and interest in secrecy and consider why this planetary theme has remained hitherto undetected.

In Chapters Five to Eleven we take the seven planets in turn and trace the use Lewis made of them throughout his writings. We analyse the planetary symbolism undergirding each Chronicle and conclude each chapter with an exegesis of the Christological message of each book so understood.

Chapter Twelve examines factors which motivated Lewis to focus his imaginative energies upon Ptolemaic cosmology and suggests one particular occasioning factor behind the composition of the Chronicles. In addition, we consider theological and pedagogical reasons why he kept silent about the planetary theme. We conclude by indicating certain consequences that our argument has for future readings of these seven works.
The spacious firmament on high,
with all the blue ethereal sky,
and spangled heavens, a shining frame,
their great Original proclaim.
Th'unwearied sun from day to day
does his Creator's pow'r display;
and publishes to every land
the work of an almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
the moon takes up the wondrous tale,
and nightly to the list'ning earth
repeats the story of her birth;
whilst all the stars that round her burn,
and all the planets in their turn,
confirm the tidings, as they roll
and spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice nor sound
amid their radiant orbs be found?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
and utter forth a glorious voice;
for ever singing as they shine,
"The hand that made us is divine."

Joseph Addison, 1712
(after Psalm 19)
There then comes to you a person, saying, "Here is a new bit of the manuscript that I found; it is the central passage of that symphony, or the central chapter of that novel. The text is incomplete without it. I have got the missing passage which is really the centre of the whole work." The only thing you could do would be to put this new piece of the manuscript in that central position, and then see how it reacted on the whole of the rest of the work. If it constantly brought out new meanings for the whole of the rest of the work, if it made you notice things in the rest of the work which you had not noticed before, then I think you would decide that it was authentic.

C.S. Lewis, 'The Grand Miracle'
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Though I am indebted to all these people, I owe them none of the errors which may appear in what follows; they, of course, are my own responsibility.

Since this thesis aims to show that what is left unspoken may sometimes be the key expression, I make no mention of my parents, Keith and Olive Ward. ‘What the reader is made to do for himself has a particular importance in literature.’
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<thead>
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<td>AMR</td>
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<td>The Dark Tower</td>
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<td>THS</td>
<td>That Hideous Strength</td>
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<td>TST</td>
<td>They Stand Together</td>
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<td>TWHF</td>
<td>Till We Have Faces</td>
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<td>VDT</td>
<td>The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

Preamble

*Any theologian will see easily enough what, and how little, I have read*

C.S. Lewis was not a theologian. At neither of his universities did he ever study or teach the subject. When foraying into theological territory, either as speaker or writer, he repeatedly emphasised his amateur and lay status and the unoriginality of his content. Within his circle of close friends, only one was a professional theologian.

In light of these facts, the first task of this thesis must be to justify its submission to the Divinity Faculty of St Andrews University. Lewis would appear to be more suitable as a subject for doctoral study in English literature, a field in which he was well qualified, highly experienced, pioneering, and surrounded by several close, influential and similarly accomplished friends.

Certainly, Lewis was, *au fond*, a literary man. (It is a testimony to his theological achievements that this should even need saying.) His literariness is equally evident whether we consider his life diachronically or synchronically. Studying imaginative works by other hands and writing his own were the verso and recto of his life-long love-affair with the word-filled page. Almost alone among students of Lewis’s oeuvre, George Watson emphasises these considerations: ‘Strictly considered, theology is only an episode in his career as a writer’; ‘it was his passion for the literature of the past...

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1 POP viii.
2 He would bring theological questions into his teaching only when they had ‘some bearing on the literature under discussion . . . never would he intrude his beliefs’, Carolyn Keefe, ‘In the Tutorial and Lecture Hall’ in Martin, Thomas L. (ed.) *Reading the Classics with C.S. Lewis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, Academic, 2000) 32-51: 41. The same may be said of his academic writings; see, e.g., EL 33. His private reading of modern theologians was not extensive (see letter to Corbin Scott Carmell, 13/10/58, Wade Center), but he was well-acquainted with several pre-twentieth century theologians, e.g., Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Hooker.
3 E.g., he describes himself as not belonging among ‘real theologians’ (‘Transposition’, sermon preached in Mansfield College, Oxford, 28/5/44; revised and reprinted EC 267-278: 277); as only ‘a layman’ (POP 140); as ‘not good enough at Theology’ (LTM 103); as an ‘amateur’ (ROP 9; cf. 51). These remarks arise partly out of a rhetorical technique of assumed humility; partly out of a desire to maintain useful categories (he thought disciplines should have space around them to breathe); partly out of plain honesty.
4 E.g., MC 6; POP viii. Lewis’s unoriginality did not trouble him for he was of the opinion, with Dr Johnson, that men require to be reminded more often than they require to be informed. The only occasion on which he claimed to be offering an original contribution to theology comes in ‘Transposition’, EC 267-278.
5 Austin Farrer. See Chapter Two below.
6 Following a double First in Classics at University College, Oxford, he read English (1922-23) and took another First. He was made honorary Doctor of Letters by the universities of Laval (1952), Manchester (1959), Dijon (1962), Lyon (1963).
7 He was Fellow and Tutor at Magdalen College, Oxford University (1925-1954), and Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Cambridge University (1955-1963).
8 AOL is generally regarded as his finest scholarly work: for a balanced assessment see Peter Bayley, ‘From Master to Colleague’ in Como, James T. (ed.) *C.S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table and Other Reminiscences* (London: Collins, 1980) 77-86. PII and EIC in different ways anticipated reader response theory by many years: see Watson, George. ‘The Art of Disagreement: C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)’, The Hudson Review (1995) 229-239.
9 E.g., J.R.R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield, Charles Williams, Nevill Coghill, Lord David Cecil, Roger Lancelyn Green, John Wain.
that came first and lasted longest'; his literary criticism did not arise out of his religion, 'on the contrary, it was religion that arose out of a love of literature, more particularly of literary myth'".

Given that Lewis defined true religion as all-encompassing\(^\text{11}\), this last remark of Watson's might appear to be off-target. How can the set derive from the subset? How can the primary category emerge from the secondary? But Watson has put his finger on just that biographical peculiarity which needs to be clarified before this thesis starts its real work. The set can derive from the subset easily and naturally if we are thinking not of logical principles or Venn diagrams, but of the perception of living organisms which reveal their full nature over time.

Lewis's religion and the theological writings which sprang from it are best understood as his imaginative faculty full grown\(^\text{12}\). That faculty, which he described as being 'older, more continuously operative . . . more basic'\(^\text{13}\) than either his religious or his critical dispositions, had from earliest days fired his literary interests, both as reader and as would-be poet. Most importantly, it had fired his appreciation of the heathen myths of dying and rising gods.

Even before he found reason to accept Christianity as historically truthful, Lewis had considered it to be 'full of meaning'\(^\text{14}\), just like the fables of dead and resurrected pagan deities who populated the literature in which he immersed himself. Only when he became convinced that rational\(^\text{15}\) acceptance of Christianity need not exclude imaginative reception of it did he find himself believing in a crucified and risen Christ who was the Son of the living God. Christ could be responded to imaginatively 'in the same way'\(^\text{16}\) as Lewis had already imaginatively responded to Bacchus, Adonis, Balder and the corn-gods. The similarity between his believed religion and the pagan stories did not drive him to conclude, 'So much the worse for the Christians', but, 'So much the better for the Pagans'\(^\text{17}\). (The continuing role which Lewis found for pagan gods will provide the main matter of this thesis.) It is thus correct to say that his religion 'arose' from his imaginative engagement with literature, - arose without separating, as a rose does not separate from its stem but completes it and perfects it and provides a new and retroactive context for its proper assessment.

It was of immense importance that his Christianity should have been received with an 'imaginative embrace'\(^\text{18}\) and not simply assented to as a rational proposition. Christianity was, of course, rational; indeed, it was supra-rational (although, as we shall see, the supra-rational dimension may

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\(^{12}\) LTM 32-33.

\(^{13}\) Lewis 'came to religion by way of literature.' Dom Bede Griffiths, 'The Adventure of Faith' in Como, James T. (ed.). *C.S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table and Other Reminiscences* (London: Collins, 1980) 11-24: 15.

\(^{14}\) Undated letter to the Milton Society of America (L 444).

\(^{15}\) Letter to Arthur Greeves, 18/10/31 (CLI 977).

\(^{16}\) We will look more closely at what Lewis meant by this term in the next chapter.

\(^{17}\) 'Is Theology Poetry?', *The Socratic Digest*, No. 3 (1945) 25-35; reprinted EC 10-21: 15.

remain unrecognised by the rational mind). But it was sub-rational too and imagination was queen of that sub-rational realm. The dignity, the very necessity, which Lewis ascribed to imagination’s role in theological beliefs will emerge as the thesis progresses. (The way Lewis related these three strata will be the concern of the next chapter.) For now we will pause, having observed what is absent and what is present in the terrain we are about to traverse: the absence of a professional theologian and the presence of an inveterate imaginer with an existentially defined stance on the role and importance of imagination in theology.

No study of Lewis’s contribution to theology will get far if it overlooks these two facts. He is too often viewed as, first and foremost, an enthusiastic semi-professional theologian whose literary talents were merely fortuitous and supernvenient. Critics who approach Lewis in this way produce studies which mishandle all three main divisions of his corpus. To treat his apologetic works as pure theology over-burdens them. To treat his imaginative writings as theology-in-disguise is an even more serious solecism. To relegate his academic studies to the background is to overlook the very nature of the writer under consideration, for Lewis was ‘a man whose imagination and modes of thought were essentially medieval’ and to ignore his career in scholarship is to hamstring oneself as a critic of his other writings.

But to come at his Christology via his literary scholarship and with full respect for his imaginative faculty is to find a distinctive and important theological contribution. McGrath recognises that ‘one of the most original aspects of Lewis’s writings is his persistent and powerful appeal to the religious imagination’, and it is significant that those professional theologians who have made time to write or speak about Lewis in some depth—Rowan Williams, Paul Fiddes, Kallistos Ware, among others,—are those with a strong interest also in imaginative literature.

These judgements are to be highlighted at the beginning of this thesis for two reasons, one theological, the other literary. Theologically, in Lewis’s view, grace perfects nature, it does not

---

Sub-rational, not irrational. Although Lewis had little interest in Jung, and even less in Freud, there was room in his understanding of Christianity for the sub-rational and an acknowledgment of the importance of the unconscious. Since his fiction and even much of his poetry could also be regarded as, in some sense, apologetic, it is worth defining this category more closely. It means his non-fictional and non-professional works, principally MC, POP and M, and, secondarily, ROP, FL, LTM. AOM is best regarded as pure philosophy and a professional work (albeit produced nearly twenty years after Lewis ceased to teach philosophy at Oxford), not apologetics. Mueller strays into this trap. Mueller, Steven P. Not a Tame God: Christ in the Writings of C.S. Lewis (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002).

All his writings were necessarily imaginative, given his definition of the imagination, which we will examine in the next chapter, but ‘imaginative writings’ here means his fiction and poetry.

Kathryn Lindskoog’s The Lion of Judah in Never-Never Land: The Theology of C.S. Lewis Expressed in His Fantasies for Children (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973) is an example of this kind of approach.


Few of Lewis’s critics have troubled themselves to become as well acquainted with his academic writings as with his fiction and apologetics. Exceptions include Myers and Schakel. Lewis himself clearly saw his academic work as his primary vocation: e.g. ‘I’m busy at present finishing the heavy, academic work on 16th Century literature wh. has occupied me (it has been the top tune - all the other books were only its little twiddly bits) for the last 15 years’, letter to Vera Gebbert, 23/5/52 (Wade Center).

supersede it14. Lewis's imaginative predilection was neither usurped by his faith nor reduced to the status of mere tent-making, a second-best occupation for those times when rational theology ran dry. Rather his imagination was "baptised", as he put it, and given a continuing role.

And from the literary point of view, a work can only be read aright, according to Lewis's critical theory, if we read it "with the same spirit that its author writ"15. In reading Lewis, this means attending to his works (both fiction and apologetics)16 as addresses to, as well as products of, the imagination, for it was a main aim of his to encourage an "imaginative welcome"17 of Christian faith in his readers. By coming to their theological significance by means of attention to their literary qualities (allusive techniques, semantic resonances, metaphorical themes, generic and formal properties, et cetera) and their imaginative substance (the concrete images which underlie the literary qualities) we will better understand Lewis's writings and hence his particular value as a theologian. For, of course, he was a theologian of sorts, even if not a professional one: in fact, he was a poet-theologian of the first water18. And for this reason he deserves more serious consideration by contemporary theologians of the imagination than he has so far been afforded. Garrett Green insists that, in this post-modern world, "theology must become imaginative"19. Lewis, ahead of his time, was responding to that imperative half a century ago.

St Andrews University awarded him an honorary D.D. in 1946, the earliest of his five honorary doctorates. At the ceremony, Professor D.M. Baillie, Dean of the Faculty of Divinity, announced that Lewis had "succeeded in capturing the attention of many who will not readily listen to professional theologians"; he "has arranged a new kind of marriage between theological reflection and poetic imagination"20. This assessment - made, impressively, before the publication of much of Lewis's best work21 - may be accepted if the "marriage" of which he speaks is understood in the right way. It would be misleading to think of Lewis's "theological reflection" and his "poetic imagination" as two separate entities which he forcibly yoked together into one flesh. We should rather think of the unyoked Adam of Genesis 2. As that primal man contained within himself one key rib full of promise, so Lewis's poetic imagination contains within itself his most important and

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14 LTM 12. For more on this point, see Chapter Two below.
15 SBJ 146.
16 PPL 1, 64. Lewis takes this maxim from Alexander Pope's "An Essay in Criticism, Part II", lines 233-234.
17 His apologetics, almost as much as his fiction, need to be considered as imaginative works. Alec Vidler notes: "As a Christian apologist, Lewis was primarily an imaginative writer. In the midst of a culture dominated by science, technology and a secular outlook, he somehow managed to convey a sense of the reality of an invisible, eternal realm of being." Quoted in Kilby, Clyde S. The Christian World of C.S. Lewis (Abingdon: Marcham Manor Press, 1965) 4.
18 'Myth Became Fact', EC 142. Cf. 'The story of Christ demands from us, and repays, not only a religious and historical but also an imaginative response', M 138n.
19 Packer captures it well when he writes that Lewis was a theologian 'not indeed in the post-Enlightenment professional sense of an academic in a guild of peers where biblical and ecclesiastical problems, proposals, and enquiry for its own sake form the agenda... but a theologian in the more basic sense of a person who proclaims the opinions about God by which he or she seeks to live - in other words, a responsible Christian communicator'. J.I. Packer, 'Living truth for a dying world: the message of C.S. Lewis', in The J.I. Packer Collection, ed. Alister E. McGrath (Leicester: IVP, 1999) 272. It is in this role that Lewis has attained his status as, in Heron's view, 'the most widely read religious writer in English'. Heron, Alasdair I.C. A Century of Protestant Theology (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1980) 130.
22 M, SBJ, FL, ROP, TWHF and LTM were still to come; also, most importantly, the Narnia Chronicles.
original theological contribution. To excise the latter from the former may be done in an analytical dream, such as a doctoral thesis, but the analyst cannot wake to find it truth: the rib in reality lives only in situ. The critical analyses presented below are therefore offered not with the intention of extracting and creating from Lewis's imagination an independent theological 'message', a help meet for a poetry which would be insufficient if alone; rather they are designed to deepen future readings of that same poetry, to encourage, enrich and prolong imaginative resting in its bosom. For the marriage of imagination and theology in Lewis is 'a new kind of marriage' by virtue of being the oldest kind: the primal unity, rather than the achieved unity post partum. And that which is innately joined together this thesis does not intend to put asunder.

If this primal unity obtains even in his apologetic works, it is there a fortiori in his imaginative compositions. And since, as Kallistos Ware rightly observes, 'it is primarily in the imaginative writings that his theological vision can be found expressed with the greatest depth and originality'; these works will form the focus of this thesis. In particular, we plan to look at Lewis's best-known publications, the seven Chronicles of Narnia. These books have had a significant effect on several generations of readers since they were first published in the 1950s. John Hick notes how 'many today have had the scope of their theological imaginations enlarged by C. S. Lewis' allegory of Narnia with the numinous figure of Aslan, who is the divine Logos incarnate as a mighty lion. And Rowan Williams advises that 'More theological students ought to read [the septet] for a sense of what classical orthodox theology feels like from the inside.' We will argue that each book intentionally represents the Logos discarnate as well as incarnate and that Lewis had a very deliberate end in view as he sought to immerse his readers in the 'inside' of a theological experience.

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"In Chapter Four below we will argue that 'children's literature' is not a useful label for the Chronicles. However, they are certainly accessible to children. A question then arises as to whether they can seriously be regarded as deserving doctoral study. In Lewis's view, there is no reason why 'the children's story' should not contain skill and artistry of the highest order. He was of the opinion that 'real honest-to-God work, so far as the arts are concerned, now appears chiefly in low-brow art; in the film, the detective story, the children's story. These are often sound structures; seasoned wood, accurately dovetailed, the stresses all calculated; skill and labour successfully used to do what is intended': 'Good Work and Good Works', Good Work (previously known as The Catholic Art Quarterly) XXIII (Christmas 1959) 3-10; reprinted EC 378-383. In their use of language, children's stories may outrank the writings of politicians, journalists, psychologists and economists because in such stories 'the percentage of mere syntax masquerading as meaning' is usually low: 'Bluspels and Falansiferes: A Semantic Nightmare', R 133-158; reprinted SLE 251-265: 264. Lewis shared many of his opinions on children's literature with Tolkien who argued that the genre of the fairy story was only relegated to the nursery when it became unfashionable in literary circles and that juvenile taste in the genre is often artificially engendered by adults and does not in any case always arise, for a child's heart may be hard, though its body be soft: 'On Fairy-Stories' in Tolkien, J. R. R. The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays (London: HarperCollins, 1997) 109-161. MacIntyre's view is also worth citing: 'It is through hearing about wicked stepmothers, lost children, good but misguided kings... that children learn or mislearn what a child and what a parent is, what the cast of characters may be in the drama into which they have been born and what the ways of the world are': MacIntyre, Alasdair. After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (London: Duckworth, 1985) 216. As Plato points out in the Republic (Book II), 'the beginning is the biggest part of any work, and therefore it is of supreme importance, in that work which is the construction of the human person, that children should hear good fables and not bad.'


"Williams, Rowan. 'A Theologian in Narnia', address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 9/11/99; speaker's own notes (copy in this author's possession).

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CHAPTER TWO
Imagination, Reason and the Holy Spirit

Oh who will reconcile in me both maid and mother?

Lewis's conversion shed a new light on his self-understanding so that he became able to describe his own imagination as especially "theological". Before we turn to Lewis's writings for the purpose of scrutinising the bloom of that theological imagination, it will be well to draw a more detailed version of the theoretical picture that was merely sketched in the previous chapter. There we outlined the three levels involved in Lewis's experience of Christian faith: the sub-rational (imagination), the rational (reason) and the supra-rational (divine grace). Now we must more fully explore each of those strata and the relationships between them in order to discern the extent to which Lewis systematised his experience and established a theoretical model to govern his poetic practice.

As we proceed we will attempt, indirectly, to put Lewis into dialogue with contemporary discussions of theology, aesthetics and imagination. David Brown, Garrett Green and Paul Avis never mention Lewis in their writings, and Mary Warnock, who does, misunderstands him, so there is little ground for direct engagement. However, this is not to concede that Lewis is irrelevant to contemporary discussions. On the contrary, we would contend that Lewis is a prime example in the last sixty years of a writer who demonstrates theological imagination in practice; his combination of literary scholarship, theological learning (albeit unprofessional) and imaginative ability make him one of the most obvious post-war candidates for consideration in such discussions. His absence from this field of study is a remarkable lacuna and one which requires explanation.

It is probably in part his popularity which has prevented him from taking that place, for there is a widespread misconception in the academy that what is popular must therefore be superficial.

1 'Reason', CP 95, line 11.
2 '... so theological an imagination as mine': letter to Robert Penn Warren, 8/5/54 (private collection).
3 That is, such writings as appear in the bibliography of this thesis, which we take to be representative of their main concerns. Other British theologians such as Paul Fiddes, Kallistos Ware and Rowan Williams have kept their analyses of Lewis limited to short contributions to popular symposia and addresses to university societies. See Paul S. Fiddes, 'C.S. Lewis the Myth-Maker' in Walker, Andrew & Patrick, James (eds.). A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honour of C.S. Lewis (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990) 132-155; Kallistos Ware, 'God of the Fathers: C.S. Lewis and Eastern Christianity in Mills, David (ed.). The Pilgrim's Guide: C.S. Lewis and the Art of Witness (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 53-69; Rowan Williams, 'A Theologian in Narnia', address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 9/11/99; 'That Hideous Strength: A Reassessment', address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 5/10/88. John McIntyre mentions, but does not discuss, Lewis in his Faith, Theology and Imagination (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1987) 12f, 19.
4 '[H]e insisted, in considering the story of Christ's life, on an absolute distinction between fiction and fact, between myth and history . . . he was determined to overlook in the Gospels all those aspects of story which he himself understood so well in connection with the rest of literature.' Mary Warnock, 'Religious Imagination' in Mackey, James P. (ed.). Religious Imagination (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986) 142-157: 154. This cannot be squared with Lewis's practice or his own stated position: 'The heart of Christianity is a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, without ceasing to be myth, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history . . . A man who disbelieved the Christian story as fact but continually fed on it as myth would, perhaps, be more spiritually alive than one who assented and did not think much about it.' 'Myth Became Fact', World Dominion, Vol. XXII (September-October 1944) 267-270; reprinted EC 138-142: 141 (Lewis's italics). See Holyer, Robert. 'Imagination and Faith: A Response to Mary Warnock', Theology (May 1989) 181-187.
Lewis’s extraordinary canonisation by American Evangelicals (a portion of them somewhat anti-intellectual) may further reinforce the unlikelihood of British scholars taking him seriously: they will perhaps fear being tarred by association with that sometimes rather uncritical audience. This prejudice is compounded by the fact that Lewis’s popularity is largely won in genres such as children’s stories and science fiction which do not currently attract high cultural esteem. That Lewis’s theology is avowedly (even stubbornly) traditional may also stand against him: it is not generally thought to be in the old-fashioned mainstream that rivers expand into new and interesting places. Finally, there seems to exist a belief that Lewis-in-creative-mode was merely (or, at any rate, chiefly) an allegorist, and given that allegories may easily turn into intellectual, rather than imaginative, constructions, his chances of being regarded as a serious practitioner of the theological imagination are correspondingly reduced.

We aim to work in this thesis from the premise that a writer is to be judged by his writings, not by the identity of his readers, and that, although Lewis’s works are popular, this is no necessary reason for supposing them to be superficial. Indeed, we proceed on the assumption that he deliberately chose ‘low-brow’ genres in order to maximise the effect of his ‘high-brow’ intentions. We believe that Lewis’s theological conservatism ought to count in his favour, rather than being a reason for ignoring him, for where the content of a writer’s theology is traditional and known, it will be especially worth while observing the imaginative ways in which it is conceived and presented. And we aim to show that Lewis took allegory well beyond conceptual equivalences and pioneered a new imaginative strategy.

We therefore propose to connect Lewis with contemporary discussions at one remove. Although Lewis himself does not feature significantly in recent treatments of the theological imagination by

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8 For example, Hastings regards PR as setting forth ‘the true programme of his life’s work as a Christian apologist: the renewal of allegory as a vehicle of religious expression’ and is content to describe TWHF as an ‘allegory’: *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* ed. Adrian Hastings, Alistair Mason and Hugh Pyper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 385. ‘Allegory’ is not a term which can usefully be applied univocally to both PR and TWHF, except in the most etiolated sense, and was certainly never so used by Lewis. In fact, he was generally sparing in his use of the term and denied that even the Narnia Chronicles were allegorical; of all his works, only PR did he consider to belong to that category. Outside AOL, he said very little about the subject in his professional writings (his essay on Bunyan being the only notable exception) because he viewed the term as too slippery to be useful (see letter to Peter Milward, 10/12/56, L 461). Myth and romance were the genres he most frequently discussed (and practised), not allegory.

9 [Lewis] followed the time-honored tradition of expressing high thoughts in a lowly medium. As the New Testament was written in koine rather than classical Greek, as Jerome translated the Bible into Vulgar rather than classical Latin, as Dante and Chaucer chose to write in their native tongues instead of Latin, so Lewis chose to write science fiction and fantasy instead of the new forms of the novel being developed by artists of the high culture such as Joyce and Woolf. Myers, Doris. *C.S. Lewis in Context* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994) 217. Lewis was of the opinion that a good romance could appeal to an audience ‘where poetry will never come’ and that this fact was ‘not unimportant’: ‘On Stories’, *Essays Presented to Charles Williams* (London: Oxford University Press, 1947) 90-105; reprinted EC 491-504: 504. Cf. ‘High and Low Brows’, R 95-116; reprinted SLE 266-279.

10 In such a case the critic is not distracted by the double hit of new content and new form. Rather, he can more coolly assess the re-presentation of old ideas: the imagination on display will stand out the more clearly for being put to work on well-worn material. Not, of course, that form and content are actually separable. The new wineskin, if it is of high quality, miraculously makes the wine new too. And this accounts in large part for Lewis’s popularity: in his best work he refreshes the tradition through techniques of defamiliarisation even as he conserves it.
the writers mentioned above, one of his close friends, Austin Farrer, does: Brown and Avis - two of the leading voices in modern British discussions of the theological imagination - find time to advert approvingly to Farrer in their writings. He adopted an approach to theology and imagination which bears some notable similarities to Lewis’s, and given these similarities and the friendship which existed between the two men, it will be worth drawing out the parallels between their perspectives. By putting the poet-with-a-theological-impulse (Lewis) alongside the theologian-with-a-poetic-impulse (Farrer) we aim to relate Lewis, if not by blood then by marriage, to the contemporary scene. Our purpose is not to explore that relation, but to show at least that it exists, to suggest that it would repay closer attention in future studies, and to see what light a preliminary comparison between the two men sheds on Lewis’s theory and practice.

1. Austin Farrer

No attempt will be made to argue that Lewis consciously appropriated Farrer’s characteristic methodology, but given the admiration which he had for Farrer’s work, it is worth noting as a distinct probability that Farrer influenced Lewis’s theological cast of mind. This influence would have been one of reinforcement and legitimation of an already operative tendency, not a causal inspiration of something new; but the encouragement of an existing disposition, as the example of Lewis’s influence on Tolkien demonstrates, may nevertheless be extremely important. Farrer, we suggest, helped Lewis in this manner.

Lewis’s library, what remains of it at the Wade Center of Wheaton College, Illinois, contains four of Farrer’s works: The Glass of Vision, Lord I Believe, A Short Bible, and Saving Belief. The first of these, the published version of Farrer’s 1948 Bampton Lectures, bears many underlinings and marginal notations in Lewis’s hand, some of which we will have cause to refer to below. Lewis recommended this title and also Farrer’s A Rebirth of Images to a correspondent in 1962. He provided a blurb for Saving Belief (1964) and is himself referred to in its pages (see below, Chapter Six, section 3 i). It was not the first time he had helped to promote Farrer’s work: he wrote a

Austin Farrer (1904-1968) attended Balliol College, Oxford (1923-27), where he read Literae Humaniores. He trained for the priesthood at Cuddesdon (1928). After a curacy in Yorkshire, he returned to Oxford as Chaplain of St Edmund Hall (1931-35); Fellow and Chaplain of Trinity College (1935-1960); Warden of Keble College (1960-68). It is not known exactly when he and Lewis became acquainted (they overlapped in Oxford for 37 years, all told), but they certainly had met by the early 1940s when Farrer began to make appearances at the Socratic Club of which Lewis was President. Farrer’s name appears on the list of Socratic speakers sixteen times in the twelve years between its founding and Lewis’s departure for Cambridge in 1954. (Only Lewis’s name appears more often in that period.) Lewis dedicated ROP to Farrer and his wife, Kay. He corresponded with Kay on literary matters; she helped advise him on TWHF. Farrer witnessed Lewis’s secret civil marriage to Joy Gresham in 1956, conducted Joy Lewis’s funeral, read the lesson at Lewis’s funeral and gave the address at his memorial service.


‘But for the encouragement of C.S.L. I do not think that I should ever have completed or offered for publication The Lord of the Rings.’ Letter of Tolkien to Clyde S. Kilby, 18/12/65; Tolkien, J.R.R. The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, ed. Humphrey Carpenter with the assistance of Christopher Tolkien (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981) 366; cf. 68.

* There are no Farrer titles in the portion of Lewis’s library held at Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

preface for *A Faith of Our Own* (1960) in which he described its author as 'one of the most learned theologians alive'. He also thought highly of *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited* and wrote of Farrer's preface to his *Short Bible*: 'I don't know that I ever got so much from so few pages before: deepest problems disarmed with a turn of the wrist. If only real theologians like him had started doing *œuvres de vulgarisation* a little earlier, the world wd. have been spared C.S.L.'

His lament about the elitist tendencies of 'real theologians' is characteristic. As one such, Farrer, although he left his popularising work too late to spare the world 'C.S.L.', made up for it in his later years; indeed, it was sometimes said after Lewis's death that his apologist's mantle had fallen on Farrer's shoulders. Farrer had in general a high view of Lewis's achievements and Lewis's impact on him seems at least as probable as the one Farrer had on Lewis. It is the latter influence which is our concern, however, and Farrer's epistemology and methodology are of particular relevance to it. James Patrick writes: 'The central insight in Farrer's writings, and the one that related his thought most closely to that of Lewis . . . is his insistence that knowledge is a poetic unity involving reason and imagination, and in the case of knowledge of God, revelation . . . *The Glass of Vision* and *The Rebirth of Images* are in fact contributions toward a new methodology for the study of the Bible, one that begins with careful reading and an understanding of the nature of poetry.'

Patrick has here identified two aspects of Farrer's work - poetic unity in knowledge and poetic sensitivity in interpretation - which will usefully structure our discussion in this chapter. First, we will look at how Farrer and Lewis theorised the relationships between imagination, reason and divine illumination. Second, we will examine the ways in which they applied their theories in practical approaches to texts. Finally, as a postlude to this discussion, we will briefly introduce their ideas...

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* Letter to Kay Farrer, Whitsunday 1956 (Wade Center).
* Cf. 'If the real theologians had tackled this laborious work of translation about a hundred years ago, when they began to lose touch with the people (for whom Christ died), there would have been no place for me': 'Rejoinder to Dr Pittenger' (The Christian Century, Vol. LXXV (26/11158) 1359-61; reprinted TAH 110-117: 117.
* He described Lewis as 'the most successful theological apologist our days have seen': Farrer, Austin. *Faith and Speculation: An Essay in Philosophical Theology* (London: A. & C. Black, 1967) 156. He was of the view that Lewis's imaginative and rational powers were 'so fruitfully and so mutually engaged' and that it was 'his intellectual imagination' which made the strength of his religious writings; 'there lived in his writings a Christian universe that could be both thought and felt, in which he was at home and in which he made his reader at home': 'In His Image: in commemoration of C. S. Lewis' in Farrer, Austin. *The Brink of Mystery*, ed. Charles C. Conti (London: SPCK, 1976) 45-47: 46. Despite this mutual engagement, Farrer submits that Lewis's imaginative side was his stronger suit: 'his real power was not proof, it was depiction' (*Brink of Mystery* 46) and he wrote of *POP* that, though 'we think we are listening to an argument, in fact we are presented with a vision; and it is the vision that carries conviction': Gibb, op. cit. 37.
about one particular set of theological images: the pagan gods. It is Lewis's treatment of these images which will then occupy the remainder of the thesis.

2. Inspired imaginative reason in theory

i) Farrer's theory

Fundamental to Farrer's whole approach was his belief that 'a man cannot apprehend anything without an act of imaginative creation'\(^\text{14}\). Imagination is necessary for perception, not only of simple things like matchboxes, where we supply in our mind's eye the hidden sides, but also of human speech, where imagination supplies the meaning of the sentences, the attitude and intention of the speaker, and the indefinable quality of the person as a whole. Here 'the imaginative build-up is untraceably complex'\(^\text{15}\), but it is relatively reliable because we are men listening to men. But when we are listening to God, there is not the same reassurance. How do we know that our imaginations are not counterfeiting?

Farrer draws a parallel between poet and prophet. The poet constantly relates his imaginative creations to 'the deep nature of human existence', the 'realities', the 'stuff', the 'general quality of the life we live', so that his imaginative inventions illuminate its character and 'move under its control'\(^\text{16}\). The resulting inventions are therefore 'not fantasies'. Rather, the great poet 'works at his poetry, developing his images', adjusting them continually according to how well they explicate life as he lives it. Something resembling this happens in the process by which divine revelation emerges into time and space as prophetic vision: 'though it takes shape in the human imagination, [it] may do so under a similar objective control'\(^\text{17}\). That control is 'the special action of a self-revealing God'. Special, as opposed to general. A poet such as Shelley 'uses certain methods to set his imagination acting; and this gives him imaginative scope to act': his imagination is generally sustained, even though he might deny it, by divine power. A scriptural writer such as St John 'uses similar methods; and this gives the Holy Ghost scope to move his imagination': his faithful and obedient imagination is not only sustained, but especially fired and directed, by divine power. For 'belief in inspiration is a metaphysical belief; it is the belief that the Creator everywhere underlies the creature, with the added faith that at certain points he acts in, as, and through the creature's mind.'\(^\text{18}\) Farrer writes:

> God is no more outside me than within: I am his creation just as much as . . . the physical world is. He has the secret key of entry into all his creatures; he can conjoin the action of any of them with his will in such fashion as to reveal


\(^{16}\) Ibid. 42.

\(^{17}\) Ibid. 42-43.

\(^{18}\) The Glass of Vision 53.
himself specially through them. God speaks without and within; he reveals himself both through the situation with which he presents the recipients of revelation, and through the imagination, in terms of which he leads them to see and hear the voices and the sights surrounding them."

Farrer considers Jeremiah for a moment as a poet and asks what constrains his use of poetical images. Jeremiah's imagination is constrained, he answers, by 'the particular self-fulfilling will of God, perceptible in the external events of history and nature which God controls, perceptible also in a direct impact upon Jeremiah's inspired mind". This is true of all revelation which 'as we receive it is a function of two things equally - partly a function of the divinely controlled event, and partly a function of the parable in terms of which we personalize, or theologize, the event". The 'parable' to which Farrer refers here appears to mean the symbolic framework within which we set the event: do we see the event as a manifestation of the symbol 'king', 'judge', 'redeemer', 'loving parent' or what? As with Old Testament prophecy, so with the central events of Christian theology, the death and resurrection of Jesus: they 'did not dictate the fresh way in which the kingdom of God was seen: it had to be imagined . . . it is in some manner the invention of the human mind". The historical facts may be taken as fixed; 'it is the symbolism investing them that will move and grow". And this symbolism, if it is to be revelatory, must 'impose itself', under the pressure of the God who 'wishes to speak to us'. The symbol will arrive 'as a symbol, not as an allegory. The seer sees the imaged object; it comes as something charged with divine significance. What significance, and how much, he does not at first know. He may read several allegories off it, and still not exhaust it.""

Farrer contends that man cannot conceive the ineffable except in images and that these images must be divinely given if he is to know a supernatural divine act. The images peculiar to Christianity began to be given by Jesus as he appropriated to himself and simultaneously transformed the archetypal images of Israel (king, Adam, temple, sacrificial lamb, Word), and was continued by the Spirit of Christ moving the minds of the apostles. 'The Apostolic minds which developed and understood the images of faith performed a supernatural act: but supernatural acts ... are continuous with natural functions, of which they are, so to speak, the upward prolongations. The boundary between the two need be neither objectively evident nor subjectively felt. The apostle would find himself to be performing a sort of activity well-known to the Rabbinic Jew, the activity of seeking fresh insights by the comparison and fusion of sacred images. Only now the images cluster round the central figures of Christ's self-revelation, and the insights sought from them are insights into Christ and his saving work." These images are not all of equal importance, but may be ranked according to how well they illuminate one another. Thus, Farrer suggests, the

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*a" Inspiration: Poetical and Divine' 44.
*b The Glass of Vision 126.
*c "Inspiration: Poetical and Divine' 45.
*d Ibid. 43.
*e Ibid. 45.
*f Ibid. 46.
*g The Glass of Vision 109.

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author of Revelation 'reduces' the symbol of Judgment to that of Advent; it is not thereby abolished, but it is both relativized and, in some degree, criticized and interpreted.

We may fairly summarise Farrer’s understanding of the knowledge of God as a threefold process. First, there are the images, images given by the scriptures or by the prophet’s experience or, in the case of the apostles, by the words and deeds of Christ; but these images need to be comprehended, not merely apprehended. The second part of the process, comprehension, comes about as the apprehender of the image thinks within it, seeks out its significance, moves about within that image world, compares it with other images. The movement is not lawless or self-indulgent, it is controlled by reason as the imaginer rationally relates his imagining to other things. Various constraints - natural theology, public memory of Christ’s words and deeds, the relative importance of principal and secondary images, the empirical constraint of seeing how well new fusions illuminate existence (both the subjective experience of the imaginer and the external events of history and nature) - all these factors rein in, direct and rationalise imaginative efforts at comprehension. The images themselves also provide a constraint of sorts, for ‘we cannot by-pass the images’; the scriptural author is not at liberty to understand the images in any way he chooses, as if they were arbitrary allegories. And the third part of the process is the pressure of God. This has, by definition, already been present in the first and second parts of the process; human apprehension and comprehension need not - indeed, should not - be considered immiscible with divine activity. Rather, human activity is to be understood as ‘diaphanous’, letting the divine show through; for ‘we all participate in supernatural act’ and ‘the creature and the Creator are both enacting the creature’s life’. Lewis made these underlinings in his copy of The Glass of Vision, and it is to Lewis’s theory of imagination, and its relation to reason and inspiration, that we now turn.

ii) Lewis’s theory

Griffiths has contended that ‘one of the principal problems of [Lewis’s] life was ‘how to reconcile his extraordinarily powerful intellect’ with ‘his no-less powerful imagination’’. It would be more accurate to say ‘of Lewis’s *early* life’, for the problem seems to have been resolved in its essence (though of course practical application of the solution continued to be problematic) at around the same time that Lewis became a Christian in 1931. Indeed, the resolution of the problem and the conversion were intimately connected, as we will attempt to show.

Farrer’s three-fold process is paralleled in Lewis’s theory of the theological imagination. In the Preamble above we argued the priority of imagination in Lewis’s life and writings; it also had priority in his theory. As for Farrer, so with Lewis, imagination is fundamental and the first part of the process of the knowledge of God, logically considered. For Lewis the imagination is deep and
low, it touches the guts, the dark, bloody, radical region which felt the import of things even though it could not judge their true purport. This chthonic capacity Lewis regarded, epistemologically speaking, as ‘the prius of truth’\(^\text{a}\). In the most serious attempt he made to address questions of definition, the essay ‘Bluspels and Flalansferes’\(^\text{b}\), he wrote that imagination, stirring blindly below, was ‘the organ of meaning’\(^\text{c}\) and that meaning was ‘the antecedent condition of both truth and falsehood’\(^\text{d}\). Here we may cross-refer to that moment in Lewis’s conversion when he understood the Christ-story as ‘the most important and full of meaning’, like the kind of Pagan myth which was ‘profound and suggestive of meanings beyond [his] grasp even though [he] could not say in cold prose ‘what it meant’\(^\text{e}\). Apprehension of meaningfulness was the first step in his conversion and became the first step in his theory of what we will call ‘inspired imaginative reason’.

In Lewis’s view, imagination is the faculty which judges whether a thing means or not. If a thing does not mean, it is nonsensical. If it does mean, it can then be presented to the higher court of reason - the second stage of the process - for the status of its meaning to be judged. Reason (‘the natural organ of truth’\(^\text{f}\)) enables one to distinguish between things that mean falsely and things that mean truly, between erroneous meaning and correct meaning\(^\text{g}\). Meaning appears to mean the

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\(^\text{a}\) Letter to Owen Barfield, 27/5/28 (CLI 762).

\(^\text{b}\) ‘Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare’, R 133-158; reprinted SLE 251-265. This essay is the only place where Lewis at any length and with obvious seriousness discusses this term. He elects not to enter into a discussion with, say, Coleridge, about imagination. Indeed, he seems not to have had a high opinion of Coleridge’s thoughts on the matter. In his diary he reports his decision to ‘work up the whole doctrine of Imagination in Coleridge’ (19/1/27, AMR 432), but it is not clear how far he got with this resolution and his general attitude to Coleridge seems to have been somewhat negative (see AMR 128; SL 25). We find him scorning Coleridge’s treatment (or non-treatment) of imagination in the Biographia (letter to his brother, 18/4/27, CLI 658f) and noting - it seems with regret - his inversion of the medieval terms (DI 88, 157, 162) and his turning of Common Sense into ‘Primary Imagination’ (DI 165). Lewis’s copy of Aids to Reflection in the Wade Center is fairly heavily marked (the key word ‘tautology’ is underlined, for example), but written marginalia is minimal and there is no private index in the end-leaves as there often is in those books with which Lewis most carefully engaged. Lewis read Richards’s Coleridge on Imagination (1934); his copy is in the Wade (cf. AOL 306). He was also presumably familiar with some of Barfield’s ideas on the same subject, although he did not live to see the publication of his friend’s book, What Coleridge Thought (1971). For more on this rather fruitless line of enquiry, see the essay - written largely from Barfield’s perspective - by Francis J. Morris and Ronald C. Wendling, ‘Coleridge and ‘The Great Divide’ Between C.S. Lewis and Owen Barfield’, Studies in the Literary Imagination Vol. XXII, No. 2, Fall 1989 (Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA) 149-159; also Owen Barfield’s ‘Either: Or: Coleridge, Lewis and Romantic Theology’ in Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis, ed. G.B. Tennyson (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989) 45-66.

The tradition of thought out of which Lewis is working in his own definition of imagination would appear to be the one which he summarises in DI. There imagination is one of the five ‘Inward Wits’ of the Sensitive Soul (DI 161f) and is broadly defined by reference to Langland, Berners and Chaucer as the faculty of ‘having in mind’, ‘taking into account’, ‘getting ideas into one’s head’. It seems to be this general understanding which underlies Lewis’s definition of imagination as ‘the organ of meaning’.

For more on Lewis’s approach to imagination, see letter to Dorothy L. Sayers, 14/12/55 (Wade Center) and to Mr Masson, 3/6/56 (Wade Center).

\(^\text{c}\) Ibid., SLE 265.

\(^\text{d}\) Letter to Arthur Greeves, 18/10/31 (CLI 977).

\(^\text{e}\) ‘Bluspels and Flalansferes’, SLE 265.

\(^\text{f}\) ‘Reason can do this because it is much more than the faculty of bald ratiocination; rather, it is that ‘Practical Reason’ (see AOM 29) which was accepted by ‘nearly all moralists before the eighteenth century’ (DI 158). It is difficult to say exactly how much of the detail of that pre-Eighteenth century understanding of Reason Lewis adopted in his own thinking, but there is a general harmony between the idea of the tripartite ‘Rational Soul’ as outlined descriptively in DI and the model of man which he presents argumentatively in AOM, ‘Bluspels and Flalansferes’, MC, ‘On Ethics’ and elsewhere. The ‘head, chest and belly’ anthropology which structures his case in AOM (cf. MC 16), for instance, broadly reflects the categories of Rational, Sensitive and Vegetable Soul described in DI 152-165. Reason, the defining part of the Rational Soul, consists of intellectus (the ability to see self-evident truth) and ratio (the ability to prove truth which is not self-evident). In this two-fold capacity, Reason obviously has a moral element (it is ‘the organ of morality’, DI 158) because certain self-evident truths are moral axioms (cf. AOM 23, 28). That this understanding of Reason still lingers in our concept of morality is shown, Lewis believes, by the fact that, when we would recall a man to right conduct, we sometimes say, ‘Be reasonable’ (M 39; cf. DI 161).
relation between the physical and the psychic or psychological, 'the psycho-physical parallelism (or more) which characterises the universe'. A true meaning would be a complete, unimpaired psycho-physical relationship. And if we refer again to Lewis’s conversion, we see that the Christ-story, which was so full of meaning for Lewis, gained total acquittal at the bar of his reason on this score:

The story of Christ is simply a true myth: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that it really happened... 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."

Pagan myths, however, were untrustworthy, for they had meaning, but only diffuse, unfocussed truth; and without the controlling and clarifying effects of reason, imaginative efforts at apprehending God were always apt to lose themselves and turn rotten". In The Pilgrim's Regress it is because their imaginative 'pictures' are not supplemented by the truthful 'Rules' of the Shepherds that the Pagans ‘become corrupt in their imaginations". Likewise, it is because its resulting play of imagination is undisciplined that awe at the universe's size can be taken as an argument against God; this is ‘matter spiritualized’ in the wrong sense, the psycho-physical parallelism mishandled". Lewis is almost Feuerbachian here. As Feuerbach considered imagination to be the engine of religion and ground of its falsity, so Lewis would have said that it stoked the engine of religion and was a potential ground for its falsity. Lewis distinguishes between 'imaginary' (bad) and 'imaginative'

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"Bluspels and Flalansferes", SLE 265.

"Letter to Arthur Greeves, 18/10/31 (CLI 977). The connection between Lewis's conversion and the theory outlined in "Bluspels and Flalansferes" becomes clearer if we factor into the equation PR, Lewis’s early allegorical account of his conversion. 'Bluspels' differentiates between two kinds of metaphor: the pupillary and the magistral. This distinction can be seen in embryo in John's discussion with the voice ‘from behind him’ in PR 9:5, when he is told that his baptism (his 'dive') has admitted him into 'My mythology. The words of Wisdom are also myth and metaphor: but since they do not know themselves for what they are, in them the hidden myth is master, where it should be servant: and it is but of man's inventing. But this is My inventing, this is the veil under which I have chosen to appear even from the first until now' (PR 217). Human wisdom is here deemed inadequate because its metaphors are not recognised as pupillary and subordinate to the divine Mythology (the Christ-event); they 'do not know themselves for what they are'. In other words, they are flalansferes, formerly pupillary metaphors which have gotten above their station and imagined themselves to be magistral metaphors or bluspels ('the hidden [human) myth is master, where it should be servant'). Cf. Bevan, Edwin. Symbolism and Belief (London: Allen & Unwin, 1938) 256ff.

"Imagination is good and necessary, but not sufficient, hence the phrase 'only imagination' is always meant pejoratively in Lewis (see AMR 203; VDT 94; SC 181; cf. Per 164). When it works without reason we are, as in a dream, 'at the mercy of... imagination' (‘Edmund Spenser, 1552-99’, Major British Writers, Vol. I, ed. G.B. Harrison (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1954) 91-103; reprinted SMRL 121-145: 133) and at risk of performing mere 'psychological gymnastics' (LTM 63). This independent imagination is Lewis's target when he sets up oppositions between 'faith and reason on one side and emotion and imagination on the other' (MC 120); between 'reason' and 'nerves and imagination' (Per 21); between 'obedience' and 'imagination' (FL 128; cf. letter of 6/5/55, LTC 53); between realities and 'imaginative constructions' (AGO 55). It is through 'the fatal serialism of the modern imagination' (AOM 48) that evolution as a general principle, rather than as a biological theorem, becomes so compelling, but 'reason cannot here agree with imagination' (‘The Funeral of a Great Myth’, EC 29). It is because Williams's Arthur is a mere aesthete that 'imagination is the medium through which his egoism corrupts him' (AT 162). When the young Lewis makes statements which he says are 'of imagination all compact' (glancing here at A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, i, 8) he means he is lying (letter of 20/2/17, CLI 280). It is the organ of meaning understood in this way that lies behind the suspicion or ridiculing of imagination by Trumpkin (PC 74), the Green Witch (SC 151), Shasta (HIB 138), and Uncle Andrew (MN 117).

"PR 195.

"To puny man, the great nebula in Andromeda owes in a sense its greatness': 'Dogma and the Universe', The Guardian (19 & 26/3/43); reprinted EC 118-126: 121. See below, Chapter Twelve, section 3 iv).
Free-roaming, autonomous imagination was likely to manufacture imaginary meanings; disciplined imagination could find imaginative meanings. Reason does the disciplining.

Reason, for Lewis, was not the organ of truth but 'the natural organ of truth', although this did not mean that it was purely human. (How Lewis came to this conclusion, and how he attempted to symbolise reason will be discussed in the next chapter.) It was nevertheless natural and fallen and could not rise to the supernatural in its own strength. Also, reason depends on what we might call the ground floor (imagination) and even to the basement (sensation) for its raw materials.

Considered alone, then, reason is nothing special: 'gnawing, peasant reason', as the young Lewis calls it. It is helpless unless supplied by imagination (and sensation); and even thus supplied it cannot reach into the heavens. To his friend Harwood, Lewis wrote in 1926: 'No one is more convinced than I that reason is utterly inadequate to the richness and spirituality of real things: indeed this is itself a deliverance of reason.' And he never resiled from this position, as many of his later writings, most notably *Till We Have Faces*, demonstrate. Beversluis's study of Lewis's 'search for rational religion' tends to overlook the indispensable role Lewis ascribed to imagination in the formation of belief, the equally indispensable role he found for divinely-imparted faith in the retention of that belief, and the broad, pre-Eighteenth Century understanding of reason with which he worked. Lewis, though a self-confessed 'rationalist', was a great deal more than a mere believer in the power of 'Enlightenment' ratiocination. His so-called 'rational religion' needs significant qualification, much more than Beversluis is prepared to give it.

How then is man to know God? According to Lewis's scheme, man may carry tools from the basement of sensation to the ground floor of imagination; he may even run upstairs with them to the landing of reason and look out the window. But to get any higher than human reason, what must he do? Abandon all this preparatio evangelica and wait for a divine helicopter to let down a rope? Is the only theology available the 'negative theology' of the modern 'German Protestant' kind, of which Lewis - with his deep-rooted belief in Natural Law - disapproved? 'I am inclined,'

See, e.g., letter to Eliza Butler, 25/9/40 (CLI 445).

Lewis practised his theory of disciplining his imagination from young adulthood onwards. E.g., see his resolution not to let 'things I really don't believe in and vague possibilities haunt my imagination', AMR 439.

'Bluspels and Flalansferses', SLE 265.

'Where thought is strictly rational it must be, in some odd sense, not ours, but cosmic or super-cosmic. It must be something not shut up inside our heads but already 'out there' - in the universe or behind the universe... a rationality with which the universe has always been saturated': 'De Futilitate', address to Magdalen College during the Second World War; reprinted EC 669-681: 676.

'Though Reason is divine, human reasoners are not': 'Religion: Reality or Substitute?', *World Dominion*, Vol. XIX (September-October 1941) 277-281; revised and reprinted EC 131-137: 136.


'The Philosopher', line 44 (SIB, poem xvi); reprinted CP 186-187.

Letter to Cecil Harwood, 28/10/26 (CLI 670).


'Bluspels and Flalansferses', SLE 265.


See DI 70. It is not known how much of Karl Barth's work Lewis read (he was not sure himself, see letter to Corbin Scott Carnell, 13/10/58, Wade Center), but his references to it are invariably unfriendly. He coined 'Barthianism' as a loose term to cover 'a flattening out of all things into common insignificance before the inscrutable Creator', EL 449; 453. Cf. PR 18, 'Why I Am Not a Pacifist', EC 281-293: 292; letter to his brother, 18/2/40 (CLI 350-352).
he wrote, ‘to distrust that species of respect for the spiritual order which bases itself on contempt
for the natural’.

Here we recur to his underlining in *The Glass of Vision*: ‘we all participate in supernatural act’; ‘the
creature and the Creator are both enacting the creature’s life’. Because Lewis, like Farrer, believed
that this was true he was also prepared to acknowledge that imagination is not always plain wrong
with respect to questions of truth. On the contrary, Lewis finds ‘a kind of truth or rightness in the
imagination’ because of the fundamental psycho-physical parallelism (or more) which he believed
undergirds the universe. This parallelism (or more) between the physical (e.g. breath) and the
psychic (e.g. soul) has not been thrown completely out of kilter by the fall, and therefore
imagination may still gain a groping awareness of it. The creative Word of God sustains the
‘natural virtues’ among which we may include the good use of fallen imagination, no less than the
good use of fallen reason; and God is the Father of lights. The divine light enlightens all human
minds, not just those ‘which already believe in God’, so that certain examples of ‘imaginative
perception’ can be argued to be real approaches, however rudimentary, to the ‘idea of God’ -
approaches that operate ‘beyond our own resources’. It is this sort of imagination which Lewis
told Eliot he believed in as ‘a truth-bearing faculty’.

But the faculty is still limited. Imagination, by its own nature, could only, at its best, reflect truth
about God, and reflection is not actuality. How could one turn from ectype to archetype, from the
face shown in the glass of vision to the face itself? Of course, one could not possibly achieve such a
turning completely in this life, for the constraints of space and time mean that we can only at
present see as in a glass darkly. But Lewis was not content resignedly to wait ‘till we have faces’: he
thought it was possible to spy brief and fragmentary glimpses of those faces even on this side of the
grave. This could happen not through imagination alone, nor through reason alone; nor even
through a combination of the two alone; nor yet through a recognition of God’s creative and

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62. **AOL 267.** Cf. letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 23/4/51 (L 408); also ‘Some Thoughts’, *The First Decade: Ten Years’ Work
of the Medical Missionaries of Mary* (Dublin: At the Sign of the Three Candles, 1948); reprinted EC 732-734. A common
Christian formula about the state of the redeemed life is that it is ‘in but not of’ the world. Lewis would have preferred to
say that the redeemed life is ‘of and not of’ the world. Each natural human condition is essentially good by virtue of its
creation by a good God, and where it has gone bad may be redeemed; but in both states, the natural is subordinate to the
supernatural, for ‘flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God’ (1 Cor, 15:50; cf. Fl 124).

63. E.g. ‘There is no question of a God ‘up there’ or ‘out there’; rather, the present operation of God ‘in here’, as the ground
of my own being, and God ‘in there’, as the ground of the matter that surrounds me, and God embracing and uniting both
in the daily miracle of finite consciousness’, LTM 81.

64. CF. ‘Bluspels and Flalansferes’, SLE 265.

65. See letter to Brother George Every, 12/10/40 (CLII 448). It is Christ, Lewis specifies, not the Holy Spirit, who underlies
these natural virtues.

66. ‘I do believe that God is the Father of lights - natural lights as well as spiritual lights (James 1:17)’. Interview with the
Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, published as ‘I was Decided Upon’ and ‘Heaven, Earth and Outer Space’ in
Bede Griffiths, 26/5/43 (CLII 576); also Lewis’s assessment of Richard Hooker, perhaps his favourite theologian, who
thought that ‘all kinds of knowledge, all good arts, sciences, and disciplines come from the Father of lights and are ‘as so
many sparkles resembling the bright fountain from which they rise’”, EL 460.

67. Letter to his brother, 24/10/31 (CLII 7).

68. Letter to T.S. Eliot, 2/6/31 (Bodleian Library).

69. ‘I do not think the resemblance between the Christian and the merely imaginative experience is accidental. I think that
all things, in their way, reflect heavenly truth, the imagination not least. “Reflect” is the important word. This lower life
of the imagination is not [i.e. not necessarily and by its own nature: God can cause it to be] a beginning of nor a step
towards, the higher life of the spirit, merely an image’, SBJ 135-136.
sustaining Word which underlies these two (for that Word had been obscured by the effects of the Fall). What was needed was the redeeming Word. Christ’s incarnation had been the beach-head of that redeeming process and in its train could be seen certain ‘miracles of the new creation’ (as Lewis calls them in Miracles), foreshadowings of the full eschatological release when imperfections would be finally sloughed off.

In order to find out how Lewis thought these foreshadowings could relate to imagination and reason, we must go a long way round. Since Lewis limited ‘Bluspels and Flalansfers’ to a discussion of the natural realm we have no academic treatment from his pen of the connection between imagination and reason on the one hand with the supernatural on the other. We must therefore attempt to deduce his theoretical position on this subject from his other writings. One work which may be most usefully considered in this regard is his poem, ‘Reason’?

Set on the soul's acropolis the reason stands
A virgin, arm'd, commerçing with celestial light,
And he who sins against her has defiled his own
Virginity"; no cleansing makes his garment white;
So clear is reason. But how dark, imagining,
Warm, dark, obscure and infinite, daughter of Night:
Dark is her brow, the beauty of her eyes with sleep
Is loaded, and her pains are long, and her delight.
Tempt not Athene. Wound not in her fertile pains
Demeter, nor rebel against her mother-right.
Oh who will reconcile in me both maid and mother,
Who make in me a concord of the depth and height?
Who make imagination's dim exploring touch
Ever report the same as intellectual sight?
Then could I truly say, and not deceive,
Then wholly, say, that I BELIEVE.

The most in-depth study of this poem is the one by Schakel who thinks it likely that ‘Reason’ was written in the late 1920s, ‘after or near Lewis’s acceptance of Theism but before his conversion to Christianity”7. He comes to this conclusion because reason and imagination are ‘strongly opposed’ in the poem, and reason is ‘regarded as preferable to or more reliable’ than imagination. Schakel thinks that this reflects Lewis’s position on the eve of his conversion: ‘the barrier to his acceptance of Christianity was imaginative acceptance of the mythical elements, not - at that point, anyway - difficulty in accepting its doctrines intellectually.’

There is, indeed, a strong opposition between reason and imagination in the poem, but, we would contend, no clear preference for the former over the latter (or, for that matter, for the latter over

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7 CP 95.
9 Schakel, Peter J. Reason and Imagination in C.S. Lewis: A Study of ‘Till We Have Faces’ (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans (1984) 181. Schakel perplexingly states that ‘Lewis nowhere defines imagination explicitly’ (183) even though he quotes Lewis’s definition of imagination as the organ of meaning (197). He confines his discussion of ‘Bluspels and Flalansfers’ to a short footnote. His treatment of the subject is more balanced and thorough in Schakel, Peter J. Imagination and the Arts in C.S. Lewis (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002).
the former). The picture is balanced: Athene is not to be tempted and Demeter is not to be wounded; ‘both deities’ - as Farrer noted in his commentary on this poem, - ‘are to be duly honoured’13. This balance is woven into the form of the poem itself; the rhyme scheme is significant in this respect and reflects the content. Until the final couplet all the even-numbered lines rhyme: light, white, Night, delight, mother-right, height, sight. The odd-numbered lines do not rhyme: stands, own, imagining, sleep, pains, mother, touch. Formally, Lewis thus gives us another version of the opposition which is the subject of the poem: rigorous and definite reason in opposition to the multi-form and inconstant imagination, - A, B, C, B, D, B, E, B, F, B, G, B, H, B. But in the final couplet the rhyme-scheme changes to chime on a sound which has so far not appeared: deceive / believe.14

The poem should probably be dated a little later than Schakel suggests: just before or soon after Lewis’s Christian conversion. Indeed, it would be no great surprise to discover that ‘Reason’ was written for inclusion in The Pilgrim’s Regress, but left out of the final draft. The picture of reason as an armed virgin is the same as the one we find in The Regress (81-82 et seq.); the capitals in the last line are similar to the use of upper-case lines in ‘I have come back with victory got’ (2451); and the question, ‘Oh who will reconcile in me both maid and mother?’ is similar to the question on John’s lips in his meeting with History (197). John’s question and its answer will help us understand ‘Reason’ properly. John asks History how he and Vertue can ever live happily together and is told:

‘It is only a third that can reconcile you.’

‘Who is that?’

‘The same who reconciled the Shepherds and the Pagans. But you must go to Mother Kirk to find him.’15

Who is this ‘third’, this ‘him’? Christ? We may get an answer if we refer back to the earlier stage of the conversation between John and History when the latter says:

‘The pictures [of the Pagans] alone are dangerous, and the Rules [of the Shepherds] alone are dangerous. That is why the best thing of all is to find Mother Kirk at the very beginning, and to live from infancy with a third thing which is neither the Rules nor the pictures and which was brought into the country by the Landlord’s Son.’16

10 Given this union, Barfield thinks the poem ‘badly named’ and that it would be better titled ‘Reason and Imagination’; see Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis, ed. G.B. Tennyson (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989) 117. Barfield overlooks the possibility that the ‘Reason’ in the title is intended differently from the ‘reason’ in the body of the poem. The eponymous Reason can be taken to include both reason and imagination, just as Rational soul includes Sensitive soul (DI 153), and therefore includes imagination, one of Sensitive soul’s five inward wits. Cf. ‘In the Republic, the well-nurtured youth is one ‘who would see most clearly whatever was amiss in ill-made works of man or ill-grown works of nature, and with a just distaste would blame and hate the ugly even from his earliest years and would give delighted praise to beauty, receiving it into his soul and being nourished by it, so that he becomes a man of gentle heart. All this before he is of an age to reason; so that when Reason at length comes to him, then, bred as he has been, he will hold out his hands in welcome and recognize her because of the affinity he bears to her’ (AOM 15). In other words, the early imaginative judgements of the cuor gentil are reasonable, even though not the products of ratio.
11 PR 197.
12 Ibid. 193.
This ‘third thing’ is therefore not Christ (‘the Landlord’s Son’), but something ‘brought into the country’ by him. And we see - but do not see - this third thing having its effect later in the story. Once John has crossed the Canyon, he is told by a voice ‘from behind him’ that his ‘senses’ and his ‘imagination’ were made for this end: ‘that you might see My face and live’. And soon after this we learn that ‘during the whole of this part of their journey Reason rode with the company, talking to them at will and not visiting them any longer by sudden starts, nor vanishing suddenly’.

In other words, reason and imagination have been united following the baptismal dive of John and Vertue, and the evidence of this union is sight of a face.

The word ‘baptism’, of course, does not appear in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, but this is clearly what Lewis is representing in the joint ‘header’ which John and Vertue together take as they dive into the pool (216). The water and the Spirit have been entered; a true ‘psycho-physical parallelism’ (or sacrament) has been enjoyed. From Book 9, Chapter 5 until the end of the allegory, we must assume that all the events occur ‘in the Spirit’: it is the Spirit’s voice which speaks ‘from behind’.

John and Vertue are not shown, as it were, dangling on the end of a winchman’s rope, plucked out of nature into an entirely supernatural realm of revelation; rather they find themselves reconstituted and redirected by the Spirit from above, from below, from within and from all around, in ways which include ‘the upward prolongations’ of some of their natural dispositions. The natural *preparatio evangelica* is not contemptuously dismissed for being inadequate, but given a sincere welcome in which it is simultaneously encouraged and sublimated, for although ‘nature hath need of grace’, yet also ‘grace hath use of nature’. Sublimation is not the same as supercession. The natural eye is at once retained and transcended. It does not see the Spirit’s face with its merely natural power (John and Vertue do not turn round to behold the face of the One speaking ‘from behind’): nevertheless, they ‘see My face and live’. They see it with their whole being, natural eye included, but refocussed, for regeneration transforms every part of a man, as we will discuss in more detail in Chapter Three.

Refraining back to the poem, ‘Reason’, we can now make better sense of its question: ‘Oh who will reconcile in me both maid and mother?’ This is best understood, we would contend, not as a genuine, but as a Socratic, question. The poet knows the right answer (even if - as is possible, depending on the date of composition, - he had not yet experienced it in real life): but he wants the reader to work it out without being told. The answer is the same as the one supplied in the words of the angel Gabriel: ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you’ (Luke 1:35). In the same way that Mary, ‘a maid though a mother’, united in her own person virginity and mother-right by virtue of her *Ecce ancilla*, so, Lewis implies, one must accept the Holy Spirit in order for reason and imagination to be united. When he asks who will reconcile Athene and Demeter he is invoking, as well as enquiring. That the identity of the one

* An allusion to Isaiah 30:21.
* PR 217-8.
* EL 460. This balance, as struck by Richard Hooker, we take to be representative of Lewis’s own position.
* PR 232. The ‘maid/mother’ distinction here in PR is that between the systematic North and the sensual South, not precisely that between reason and imagination. Reason and imagination map nicely onto the North and the South respectively, as do Vertue and John, but Lewis himself does not make that connection in PR. However, the passage in question (PR 232) shows Lewis using the images of maid and mother with explicit reference to Mary, which suggests that a similar reading of those images be made in respect of the poem, ‘Reason’. 

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invoked is left implicit does not mean that it is unimportant. On the contrary, ‘what the reader is made to do for himself has a particular importance in literature’; suggestion, not statement, is the essence of good writing; and silence can be eloquent of God’s glory.

Lewis’s implicit presentation of himself as Mary is a recurrent feature of his theology. Mastrolia comments that ‘while the content of his works is not mariological, his perception of Christian discipleship is strongly Marian.’ ‘We are all feminine’ in relation to God, in Lewis’s view, and ‘female’ receptivity is ‘our highest activity’. Hence the importance of female protagonists in his fiction and the frequency of female imagery in his understanding of the life of faith.

By asking who will reconcile his imagination and his reason, Lewis is speaking out of both those faculties and a third, namely his will. This will is powerless to mediate between the other two and its recognition of its own impotence is an extremely important milestone in spiritual development, according to Lewis’s presentations of pilgrimage. Lewis had no particular interest in Luther, but certainly seems to have agreed with him about the bondage of the will: it is a recurrent feature of his depictions of conversion. As the will realises its own weakness and emptiness it becomes ready to be strengthened and filled by the Holy Spirit.

Rather than Lewis wishing to preserve - as Barfield bizarrely contends - the virginity (perhaps it would be better to say, the sterility) of imagination, he prefers to portray imagination as one half (the fertile half) of a Virgin Mother figure who can come to know God through patient acceptance of the ‘Power of the Most High’. This is not the same as dissolving his reason in fantasy (pejorative sense), though that remains a danger to which he must be alert. Nor is the achievement that of King Cophetua or Henry Higgins, as if reason got imagination to wash behind its ears and sit up straight. Rather the achievement is the realisation that reason and imagination can become

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"Imagery in the Last Eleven Cantos of Dante’s Comedy", paper read to the Oxford Dante Society, 9/11/48; reprinted SMRL 78:93: 81.

SBJ 63-64.

See letter to Warfield M. Firor, 17/8/49 (CLII 971).


THS 316.

POP 39.

E.g. Jane Studdock is the main character of THS; Lucy Pevensie is the most important character in the Narniad; Orual in TWHF is the most fully drawn character anywhere in his fiction. For female imagery in his poetry see ‘On a Theme from Nicolas of Cusa’; ‘Posturing’; ‘Evensong’; ‘Epigrams and Epitaphs 15’; and the poem beginning ‘Because of endless pride’, PR 233.

Rilian in SC, Eustace in VDT, and the Lizard Man in GD, are examples; but the most relevant for this discussion is Orual’s transformation in TWHF. Insofar as TWHF can be allegorised, Ungit seems to represent imagination (‘the very heart, centre, ground, roots of a man; dark and strong and costly as blood’) and the Fox to represent reason (‘thin and clear’). These two are combined and reconstituted in Orual’s vision of the god. For further discussion see my ‘Escape to Wallaby Wood: Lewis’s Depictions of Conversion’ and Jon Balsbaugh, ‘The Pagan and the Post-Christian: Lewis’s Understanding of Diversity Outside the Faith’ in Menuge, Angus J.L. (ed.). C.S. Lewis, Lightbearer in the Shadowlands: The Evangelistic Vision of C.S. Lewis (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997) 143-167 and 191-210 respectively.

Barfield thinks that Lewis wanted ‘to protect and insulate imagination, so that it could continue to live its own pure and chaste life’: ‘Lewis, Truth and Imagination’, Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis 90-103: 98. While this judgement may accurately reflect Lewis’s position in the middle to late 1920s (see, e.g., AMR 449; cf. Carpenter op. cit. 37) it is a peculiarly inapt way of characterising Lewis’s settled opinion. From at least the time of the composition of ‘Reason’ onwards, Lewis conceived of imagination not as a virgin, living a pure and chaste life, but as a naturally fertile, almost promiscuous, mother-figure, ready to bear children to any idea straying past her door. It is not imagination, but reason, which is thought of as virginal, both in ‘Reason’ and FR.
mutually, if asymmetrically, informing, in the power of that Spirit which re-directs them both. Although imagination is the lowest of these three levels and the one most naturally inclined to deceive, it is nevertheless indispensable to the two higher levels. Images provide reason and the divinely-converted will with the very stuff of conscious life: 'I doubt if any act of will or thought or emotion occurs in me without them.'

Griffiths is therefore quite right when he concludes that Lewis 'was able to reconcile his imagination and his reason in Christian faith'. In Lewis's taxis, as Cuneo puts it, 'reason and imagination are not fully adequate, even in unison', but what is needed is 'Divine Love . . . Divine Presence'. This Presence arrives, not as an alien revelation, but as the new life (the novitas) of the surrendered human will which presides over reason and imagination equally, though in an ordered way. Lewis liked to picture human nature as three concentric rings, with will as the innermost, reason as the middle and imagination as the outermost. And it is this inner ring, the will, that is the point at which the Creator's enactment of the creature's life can be consciously welcomed and encouraged (to the extent that fallen self-will effectively dies) or else refused and inhibited. Farrer observed this emphasis in Lewis, how 'the claims for divine will can be felt in an exposure of self-will'. Once the self-will is exposed and left to wither in its own fully-recognized impotence, the Holy Spirit can resurrect it in His own image and, along with it, its imaginative and rational powers. Or, as Edwards puts it: 'In Lewis we find a profound integration: an imagination married to reason and transformed by the revelation of the person of Christ'.

This triple-decker scheme of imagination, reason and Spirit-reborn will bears certain similarities to Farrer's three-fold system as outlined above, though Lewis lays more emphasis than Farrer on divine reconstitution of the will. But it is this third level about which both writers say least, relative to the other two levels, and inevitably so, because it is the most mysterious part of the process. In Lewis's case, there is a particular reticence to write explicitly about the pressure of the divine Spirit; and this is why his theology can be grasped only by reading him with full literary attentiveness. He admits having been lured 'into the world of the Spirit' in the same letter in which he confesses faith in Christ for the first time, but thereafter he writes strikingly little about the Third Person of the Trinity in any direct way. However, as Payne observes: 'Lewis has said much more about the Holy Spirit, and from a higher perspective - though his terminology of the Third Person, like that

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* LTM 87.
* SL 37. Screwtape advises Wormwood to evacuate his patient's will and intellect of virtues, locating them entirely in his fantasy (imagination): 'No amount of piety in his imagination and affections will harm us if we can keep it out of his will' (SL 70). The Un-man adopts the equal and opposite strategy in Per when he attempts to drive vices into the Green Lady's will by first infecting her imagination. He tempts the Green Lady to make a story about living on the Fixed Land. She tries, but confesses, 'I do not know how to make it about Malcldil' (Per 102); to walk out of His will is to enter a place without 'meaning' (106). As this temptation scene progresses, the narrator observes that, 'if her will was uncorrupted, half her imagination was already filled with bright, poisonous shapes' (122); there were 'some stains perhaps in her imagination' (133).
* Austin Farrer, 'The Christian Apologist' in Gibb, op. cit. 38.
* Letter to Arthur Greeves, 1/10/31 (CLI 974). He partially retracts this confession in the letter of 18/10/31 (CLI 977).
of the New Testament and the early Church Fathers, is marvelously implicit - than many who write explicitly about Him." Some of the reasons for his diffidence will be explored as this thesis progresses. Our immediate task, however, is to explore how Farrer and Lewis put their theories of inspired imaginative reason into practice as, respectively, hermeneutist and critic.

3. Inspired imaginative reason in practice

i) Farrer's hermeneutical praxis

John Hick notes that Farrer's favoured method of 'doing theology' was to dwell on (and in) the Biblical images and see how they link up: 'his writings disclose the mind of a poet". This hermeneutical methodology is largely ichneutic: Farrer attempts to track the route taken by the imagination of the prophet or apostle. But it is also partly a creative and imaginative process, necessarily so, since "a man cannot apprehend anything without an act of imaginative creation".

Farrer aims to show that 'the sort of criticism of most use for getting to the bottom of the New Testament is often more like the criticism we apply to poetry than we might incline to expect". For instance, the debate over the ending of Mark's Gospel 'is a literary debate': we must try and discern 'the true poetic pattern of the book". He then proceeds to make the sort of argument about this pattern which he thinks germane, even if it is not conclusive, an argument that 'belongs to the genre of literary criticism". He writes his own poem to suggest the poetical inevitability of Mark as well as tracing the links which may have informed the Evangelist's theological imagination. Farrer suggests connections between the fine linen shroud (Mark 15:46) and the fine linen garment left behind by the man in Gethsemane (14:51); between Joseph of Arimathea (15:45) and Joseph the Patriarch who was stripped both by his brothers and by Potiphar's wife; between the consternation of Joseph's brothers when they found him alive and the fear of the women at the tomb of Jesus (16:8). He comments: "The further we go into the question, the more clearly we see that St. Mark's words are shaped by a play of images and allusions of the subtle and elusive kind which belongs to the imagination rather than to rational construction." These images, of course, are secondary; the primary ones are the Son of Man, the sacrificial lamb, the enthronement of the messiah. However, 'through the secondary images the force of the primary images is felt. The passion of Christ will be more powerfully experienced through St. Mark's poem than through the


The Glass of Vision 114.

Ibid.

Ibid. 138.

Ibid. 139.

Ibid. 145f. The opposition apparently established here between 'imagination' and 'rational construction' is confusing, given Farrer's belief that imagination was essential to apprehension. Presumably he means by 'rational construction', a construction which is made up of as few concrete images as possible.
bare consideration of the plain idea of it. The Christ of the passion speaks to us through the very words: it is the words we must taste and meditate."

The words convey the images, and ‘faith discerns not the images, but what the images signify’. And yet, we cannot discern that significance ‘except through the images’. We cannot by-pass the images to seize an imageless truth. ‘Does this mean that our minds are simply given over to the images, bound hand and foot? Can we in any way criticize the images?’ Farrer answers his own question positively. Yes, we can criticize the images, partly and generally by reference to natural theology which provides rationally developed analogies of God (it ‘provides a canon of interpretation which stands outside the particular matter of revealed truth’), and partly and particularly within the field of revealed truth by a process of assessment and ranking (‘the principal images provide a canon to the lesser images’). The scriptural authors, if we immerse ourselves in their manner of thinking, will help guide this process for we will see how they do the same thing themselves (e.g., St John’s reducing of the symbol of Judgement to that of Advent). His Apocalypse ‘is the one great poem which the first Christian age produced, it is a single and living unity from end to end, and it contains a whole world of spiritual imagery to be entered into and possessed’. For this reason, Farrer warned the readers of his commentary on Revelation that they would have to read it from beginning to end and not dip into it here and there. As Hefling is right to emphasise, Farrer believed that ‘the meaning is in the details, and it emerges only in the progressively unfolding pattern of the whole book’.

The above account is a crude summary of a nuanced and sinuous set of arguments. We do not propose to evaluate the method which Farrer propounds; nor do we intend to draw out the interesting affinities between his ineluctable text and the principles of structuralism and its philosophical successors. We would only emphasise the importance Farrer attaches to close scrutiny of the concrete images by means of which the Biblical writers communicate. In this respect, he shares a common perspective with Lewis’s own preferred method of understanding texts.

ii) Lewis’s critical praxis

Although Lewis did a fair amount of ad hoc Biblical interpretation, and indeed wrote a book-length study of the Psalms, we do not propose to analyse his own practice of hermeneutics. Most of what could be said under that heading may be derived from an analysis of his inspired imaginative reason at work in general literary criticism. In these writings, it must be conceded, there seems to be little ground for introducing the direct action of the Holy Spirit, for Lewis never rests his literary critical

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judgements on Pneumatomological bases or even on the Christological bases of creation and sustainment. Nevertheless, he occasionally lifts the curtain to provide a glimpse of his theological hinterland. For instance, he parallels reading and worship in An Experiment in Criticism (141), and in A Preface to ‘Paradise Lost’ he acknowledges that his principal disagreement with Leavis is not about Milton’s poetry ‘but about the nature of man, or even of the nature of joy itself’ (134).

Barfield observes that what Lewis thought about everything was ‘secretly present’ in what he wrote about anything16; and we would suggest, with Christensen17, that a deliberate removal of the question of inspiration from our analysis of Lewis’s literary criticism would be misplaced18. Lewis keeps quiet about theological matters in his professional work not because he thought them irrelevant to it, but because he was not a professional theologian. Although he did not explicitly introduce theological categories into his critical practice, that practice is nevertheless pertinent to our enquiry into his inspired imaginative reason.

In the same way that Farrer ranged about within the image-world of the scriptural authors, so Lewis, as a critic, immersed himself in the images of the poets whom he studied. A good human poet, though different from the specially inspired authors of scripture, could still be receptive to the products of general revelation, common grace and the communis sensus, which was as the voice of God Himself19. Consequently, a good poet’s images were not to be treated as if they were interchangeable counters; rather they come charged with certain inherent meanings which must be respected. If anyone doubts this, let him imagine The Romance of the Rose rewritten as The Romance of the Onion and see if it can be done without loss20. Likewise, try replacing the shepherds and swains of the pastoral tradition with policemen and tram conductors21. There are certain responses to images which are required by the nature of those images. Real responses cannot be arbitrary or autonomous, but have to be patient and attentive, both to the images themselves and to the tradition of interpretation of such images. In this way, the meanings of the images will not be imposed but rather perceived. Perception, by definition, is never entirely passive, but needs to approach passivity to begin with, because the critic is first waiting for his orders, then listening to them, before finally acting on them in his descriptive or evaluative work. The goal of the whole process is to take whatever the text has to give and to do so by serious engagement with its poetic means22. The good reader, the πεπαιδευμένος23, does not want to use literature, but to receive

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17 ‘[H]is theory of the function of literature and the role of literary criticism . . . largely determine his approach to biblical literature.’ Christensen, Michael J. C.S. Lewis on Scripture (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1979) 27.
18 Cf. ‘If every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of Lights then all true and edifying writings, whether in Scripture or not, must be in some sense inspired’, letter to Clyde Kilby, 7/5/59 (Wade Center).
19 See Lewis’s definition of common sense, SIW 149. Elsewhere he remarks that a good poet seeks to find ‘divine meanings’ in his materials: letter to Sister Penelope, 20/2/43 (L 371).
20 ‘De Audiendis Poetis’, SMRL 17.
21 AOL 352-353.
22 The means are continuingly important, even in taking what an allegory has to give. See the discussion of allegory in Chapter Three below.
23 FH 116f.
it"; he wants to appreciate it as something made (poeima) and not only as something said (logos).

In Lewis’s opinion a great poet cannot be a shallow man: he must have something to say and something worth saying. But we must not suppose that his art is designed simply for the sake of this logos. The logos is ‘the “spirit” (using that word in a quasi-chemical sense)’ of his art. To formulate that pervasive spirit as a philosophy and regard the work as primarily a vehicle for that philosophy is ‘an outrage to the thing the poet has made for us”. Dramatists and novelists and poets are not to be treated as if they were theologians or philosophers or ethicists. Critics who pay excessive attention to what they perceive to be the author’s ‘point’ neglect the qualities which belong to their works as inventions and designs. The poeima is often largely ignored or else acknowledged only in order to be exchanged for a pot of message. Here we see a determination similar to Farrer’s, to concentrate on the text itself and its total pattern, rather than trying to get behind the text to some imageless reality which preceded it or issues from it. Of course, one can over-concentrate on the image; and images which become too static and solid actually inhibit proper imagining. But equally, one can under-concentrate on the image in the mistaken belief that what it signifies can be accessed and identically understood by some other means. This is not the case, in Lewis’s view. Although ‘imagining is something other than having mental images”, our only avenue to that ‘something other’ is through the images: ‘you will not get it on any other terms”’. Images only signify something beyond themselves by first being themselves, and only the reader who properly sees the image sees its meaning. For this reason we must never be impatient with the images or hold a dialectical pistol to the poet’s head, demanding that he speak without images. Rather we must trust the poet and meet his images half way. ‘Credo ut intelligam (it is time some theological expression came in) is here the only attitude.”

Having surveyed Farrer’s and Lewis’s general understanding of the hermeneutical and critical practice of inspired imaginative reason, we now turn to their thoughts about one particular set of images: pagan gods.

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1. "EIC 19, 83.
2. Ibid. 82, 132; cf. AOL 137; ‘Shelley, Dryden and Mr. Eliot’, R 1-34, reprinted SLE 187-208:190. We propose to adopt this critical distinction between logos and poeima in the study which follows. There are obviously many questions that one could ask of the distinction, and Lewis himself had reservations about its utility (e.g., "EIC 89f). Nevertheless, it is useful, and will be deployed for the tasks of analysis and exegesis which we will attempt in Chapters Five to Eleven.
3. We use poet to denote the maker of any form of literary art, choosing it for this purpose both for historical reasons (because of the foundational nature of poetry to drama and prose fiction) and etymological ones (the poet makes the poeima and it is useful to be reminded constantly of the artefactual nature of the thing under discussion).
4. EIC 82.
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. 266.
9. Ibid. 261.
4. Images of the divine

i) Farrer on the gods

In ‘Can Myth Be Fact?’ (1945) Farrer pursues a line of enquiry dear to Lewis by drawing a parallel between the gods of classical paganism and the God of his believed religion. Farrer notes that, just as the Olympian gods (it is Jupiter alone in the parallel passage in *The Glass of Vision*119) came down incognito to pay surprise calls on the householders of Lycia and were driven away by all but Baucis and Philemon, whom they rewarded, while punishing their inhospitable neighbours, so the Lord God in Genesis 18 comes down to earth, mysteriously manifest in three travellers, and is received by Abraham and Sarah who are rewarded with fertility, whereas the wicked men of Sodom, who attempt outrage against their heavenly guests, are overthrown with fire and brimstone.

Like Lewis119, Farrer is not troubled by the similarities here between the pagan Jupiter and the Hebrew Yahweh. The resemblance ought to be present, given that ‘the Creator everywhere underlies the creature’119, for God works through men’s myths as well as through His own true myth. But the scriptural record can be seen to encompass and relativise the stories of the pagan gods. This relativisation is particularly evident at the other end of the Bible, in the Apocalypse, that work in which Farrer was deeply steeped. There God is shown to have authority over the whole pantheon of pagan deities, as represented by ‘the planets, or planetary gods’119. In Revelation (1:16, 20; 2:1) Christ is shown holding ‘in his grasp the days of the seven planets’119. The planets are, of course, ‘Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn’119, for ‘it is after these seven that the weekdays are named’119. ‘Christ embraces them in the span of his hand.’119 Thus St John works over the image provided in the prophecy of Zechariah (4:2, 10), other images found in Isaiah and Daniel, and simultaneously incorporates and reorientates pagan images of divinity. The vision of Christ ‘holding the seven planets in his right hand,’119 thus becomes a vision of consummation both of the Old Testament and of paganism.

The gods who, in the myth of Baucis and Philemon, were parallel to the God of Genesis have, in the Revelation of John, been made subservient to Him. But they were in any case suffering a diminution in late classical pagan culture where they had become progressively secularized and humanized: ‘gradually the poets cease to write about the gods as real persons who govern or

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119 *The Glass of Vision* 108.
119a Cf. ‘God is supposed to have had a “Son,” just as if God were a mythological deity like Jupiter’, M 72.
119b *The Glass of Vision* 53.
119d ‘Inspiration: Poetical and Divine’ 47.
119e Farrer, Austin. *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964) 68. The Sun (or Sol) is the god of Sunday; the Moon (or Luna) of Monday (cf. French *Lundi*); Mars of Tuesday (Norse *Tyr* or *Tiw* = Mars; cf. French *Mardi*); Mercury of Wednesday (Norse *Wodin* = Mercury; cf. French *Mercredi*); Jupiter of Thursday (Norse *Thor* = Jupiter; cf. French *Jeudi*); Venus of Friday (Norse *Frigg* = Venus; cf. French *Vendredi*) and Saturn of Saturday.
119f ‘Inspiration: Poetical and Divine’ 47.
119g *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* 68.
119h ‘Inspiration: Poetical and Divine’ 47.
intervene, and must be served or propitiated: they become names for the aspects of human destiny', until, eventually, ‘Aphrodite is no longer anything but the passion of love itself’. Farrer traces their fate further:

Renaissance poets clung to the figures of the classical gods, which, though theologically unreal, were real poetically, since they expressed the essences which were still the subject of poetry. Now in our day, perhaps, the Olympian gods who suffered a theological death sixteen hundred years ago, are undergoing poetical death, their last dissolution. This may be a fact of higher importance than appears. Whether the poets have now got any essences to write about I would not venture to suggest.

He need have looked only as far as his own friend, Lewis, to find an example of a contemporary writer in whose work these dying gods were being revived.

ii) Lewis on the gods

Lewis had a keen and lifelong interest in the pagan gods. Some of his earliest stories and poems were written out of his imaginative involvement with them (see Chapters Six and Eleven below). Indeed, as a boy he had such respect for the classical gods that they reacted detrimentally on his inherited faith; he abandoned his youthful belief in Christianity ‘largely under the influence of classical education’ and ‘often wondered that it never crossed the minds of my masters that their assumption of the complete falsity of ancient religion must (in the mind of any intelligent boy) reflect back upon modern religion too. To this experience I owe my firm conviction that the only possible basis for Christian apologetics is a proper respect for Paganism’. And this conviction was not simply an apologetic pose, designed to make himself appear broad-minded; it was his genuine view, expressed in private as well as in public, and in the immediate aftermath of his conversion as much as in his Christian maturity. He writes that Phaedrus and ‘the procession of the gods round the sky’ has to him a spontaneous appeal greater than that of Christianity. He confesses to having an imaginative preference not only for Norse, but also for Irish and Greek mythologies, over the poetry of his believed religion. His interest in - indeed, his love for - pagan deities was profound and sincere and enduring, not merely a preacher’s or pedagogue’s device.

And of course, it was not just a classical education which Lewis received. He was also thoroughly acquainted with the literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and knew from the inside out those Renaissance poets who ‘clung’, as Farrer put it, to the Olympian gods. Lewis was well aware

118 The Glass of Vision 118.
119 Ibid.
120 Letter to the Revd Henry Welton, 18/9/36 (Wade Center).
121 Letter to Arthur Greeves, 8/11/31 (CLII 12); cf. letter of 6/12/31 (CLII 24).
that, for a poet such as Spenser, 'Divine Wisdom spoke not only on the Mount of Olives, but also on Parnassus'\textsuperscript{144}. He coined the term 'transferred classicism' for those poets who imagined their Christianity under classical forms, where 'God is, in some degree, disguised as a mere god' and the reader enjoys seeing 'how well Christianity could produce the councils, catalogues, Mercuries, and battlepieces of ancient epic.'\textsuperscript{145}

As a literary historian, Lewis wanted to show 'that the decline of the gods, from deity to hypostasis and from hypostasis to decoration', was not a history of sheer loss, 'for decoration may let romance in'\textsuperscript{146}. He argues in \textit{The Allegory of Love} that, although the gods 'died into allegory', they rose again into a world of 'romantic imagining', a 'world of myth and fancy', for 'gods, like other creatures, must die to live'\textsuperscript{147}. And as an imaginative writer, he causes the gods to enjoy a similar resurrection in his own poetry and fiction.

Farrer, without knowing it, may have helped prod Lewis along this path. In Lewis's copy of \textit{The Glass of Vision} (1948) is an interesting underlining. Farrer writes that the same Christ who holds the seven planets in his hand in Revelation is also depicted there as a Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the ‘seven spirits of God; they are the Holy Ghost, manifested as sevenfold vision and sevenfold strength’\textsuperscript{148}. In Chapters Four to Eleven we will argue that Lewis collapsed the seven planets and the seven spirits of God together in the Chronicles of Narnia, turning each planet's characteristics into Christological imagery. But first, in Chapter Three, we will examine the earlier appearances of the planets in his imagination and the symbolic significance he attached to them.

\textsuperscript{144} SIL 14.
\textsuperscript{146} AOL 75.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid. 66-83.
\textsuperscript{148} \textit{The Glass of Vision} 48-49. The traditional 'seven gifts of the Holy Spirit' derive from Isaiah 11:2: 'And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.' We are to understand 'the spirit of the LORD' as the first and foundational gift, the giver Himself; it may be imagined as the central stem of the seven-branched candelabrum (cf. Exod. 25:31; 37:18; Heb. 9:2; Rev. 1:12) from which arise the six other gifts in three pairs.
CHAPTER THREE

The Planets

The characters of the planets, as conceived by medieval astrology, seem to me to have a permanent value as spiritual symbols.

Having examined Lewis's theory of inspired imaginative reason, and having glanced at the categories of poiema and logos which inform his critical praxis, we now turn to look at his use of the pagan gods in creative practice as a poet. A complete survey is, of course, beyond our range. We must limit ourselves to the seven gods who, from classical times, were connected with the seven traditional planets. We would suggest that these seven deities, principally in their medieval form, but partly in their classical form, together serve as the central provider of that stuff which Lewis's imaginative works are made on.

The Discarded Image, Lewis's introduction to the medieval mindset, thrice invites its readers to take a walk under the sky at night. Looking up at the heavens, Lewis argues, is a very different experience now from what it was in the Middle Ages. Now we sense that we are looking out into a trackless vacuity, pitch-black and dead-cold. Then we would have felt as if we were looking into a vast, lighted concavity. In the nearest part of the sky our eyes would see - or, rather, see through - the transparent sphere in which the Moon revolves, then the larger sphere of Mercury, then the still larger one of Venus, then those of the Sun, of Mars, of Jupiter and of Saturn, all increasing in size and rapidity of rotation. Beyond Saturn's sphere we would see the sphere of the fixed stars, the Stellatum, and beyond that, the Primum Mobile, the sphere which conveys movement to all the other, lower spheres. God Himself, enthroned above the Primum Mobile in the Empyrean, is the Unmoved Mover. That is, He moves the Primum Mobile "by being loved, not by loving; by being the supremely desirable object". It is in this sense that we should understand Dante's line: "The Love that moves the sun and the other stars".

To Lewis, this ceaseless dance of singing spheres about the home of God represented "the revelry of insatiable love":

2 The nine planets of modern astronomy include five of the traditional seven (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn), exclude the Sun and the Moon and add Earth, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto.
4 DI 98, 112, 118. Cf. 'Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages', originally given as two lectures at the Zoological Laboratory, Cambridge, July 1956; reprinted SMRL 41-63. In these lectures he asked his audience to conduct an 'experiment on one's imagination' by walking alone on a starry night for half an hour 'resolutely assuming that the pre-Copernican astronomy is true. Look up at the sky with that assumption in your mind. The real difference between living in that universe and living in ours will then, I predict, begin to dawn on you', SMRL 47.
5 'Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages', SMRL 51.
6 'L'amor che move il sole e' l'ultre stelle', Paradiso, XXXIII, 145 (the very final line of the Divine Comedy). Cf. 'De Audiendis Poetis', SMRL 7; 'Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages, SMRL 51.
We are watching the activity of creatures whose experience we can only lamely compare to that of one in the act of drinking, his thirst delighted yet not quenched. For 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 . . . [R]un your mind up heaven by heaven to Him who is really the centre, to your senses the circumference, of all; the quarry whom all these uniring huntsmen pursue, the candle to whom all these moths move yet are not burned.

The picture is nothing if not religious.7

Although aware of a possible theological problem with the picture, Lewis makes no effort to hide his delight in this model of the universe. He remarks that ‘the human imagination has seldom had before it an object so sublimely ordered as the medieval cosmos’. This cosmos was ‘tingling with anthropomorphic life, dancing, ceremonial, a festival not a machine’.11 The ‘tingling’ quality is especially worth noting, for ‘tingul’ was the Anglo-Saxon word for star, and almost invariably in Lewis’s works comes loaded with astrological freight.11

But this delight was not confined to his intellectual life as a literary historian; he confessed to a much more personal involvement too. He told Green that he liked ‘the whole planetary idea as a mythology’.11 And in Surprised by Joy he reports that, at the age of ten, ‘the idea of other planets exercised upon me then a peculiar, heady attraction’, a coarse curiosity quite different from his romantic interest in ‘joy’. He adds that ‘my own planetary romances have been not so much the gratification of that fierce curiosity as its exorcism. The exorcism worked by reconciling it with, or subjecting it to, the other, the more elusive, and genuinely imaginative impulse.’11 The ‘planetary romances’ which he refers to here are, presumably, Out of the Silent Planet (1938) in which the

7 DI 119.
8 * There is a striking difference between this Model where God is much less the lover than the beloved and man is a marginal creature, and the Christian picture where the fall of man and the incarnation of God as man for man’s redemption is central”, DI 120. However, there is no absolute contradiction because the love of the spheres for God exhibits the perfect natural order of the uncorrupted translunary realm, while God’s searching love for man represents the action of Grace directed towards fallen, sublunary creatures (see DI 113f). Cf POP 40.
9 DI 121; cf. 216.
10 EL 4. Cf. PPL 75.
11 See letter to his father, 28/10/22 (CLI 602) where Lewis writes that Anglo-Saxon ‘gives the impression of parodied English badly spelled. Thus . . . TINGUL for a star . . . think of ‘Twinkle, twinkle little star’. Cf. ‘Heaven, tingling with a fulness of life’ (Per 151); Ransom’s whole frame is set ‘tingling’ when the Oyarsa speaks (Per 181); there is a ‘tingling light’ under Ransom’s door (THS 234); translunary beauty is like a ‘tingling spear’ in the poem ‘An Expostulation: Against Too Many Writers of Science Fiction’ (The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction 16, No. 6 (June 1959), page 47, line 16; reprinted CP 72); ‘the cold, tingling, almost unbreathable, region of the aerial spirits’: ‘A Note on Comus’, The Review of English Studies, VIII, No. 30 (1932) 170-176; reprinted SMRL 175-181: 180. We should be alive to the astrological connotations of the word even in passages which do have not an explicit astrological connection: e.g. Dymer’s body ‘tingled’ as he awoke from joyless conventionality (Dymer, Canto I, 9, line 2; reprinted NP 9); Lewis accepts the ‘feathery, impalpable, tingling invitation’ to joy in ‘Hedonics’ (Time and Tide, Vol. XXVI, 16/6/45, reprinted EC 685-688: 687); Lewis’s ears ‘tingled’ under a frosty sky on the evening his imagination was baptised (SBJ 145); ‘the tingling smell of the Silver Sea’ (VDT 183).
12 Letter to Roger Lancelyn Green, 28/12/38 (CLI 236).
13 SBJ 34. Other evidence for his pre-Christian enthusiasm for astrology is to be found in the fact that his interest in Scott’s novel Guy Manwering was piqued simply because its subtitle was ‘The Astrologer’: see letter to Arthur Greeves, 25/10/16 (CLI 240). Early examples of astrology in his poetry include ‘My love’s looking is long dimness / And stars’ influence’ (‘The Nameless Isle’, line 652f, NP122) and ‘between two clouds appeared one star. / Then his mood changed’ (Dymer, IV, viii; NP 36).
14 We say ‘presumably’ because it is possible, as this thesis will show, that Lewis included the Narnia Chronicles in this description.

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hero, Ransom, goes to Mars; Perelandra (1943) in which he goes to Venus; and That Hideous Strength (1945) in which he stays on earth but acts as a bridge across which planetary intelligences pass. In this trilogy the planets are given new names, as follows: Sulva (Moon), Viritrilbia (Mercury), Perelandra (Venus), Arbol (Sun), Malacandra (Mars), Glund or Glundandra (Jupiter), and Lurga (Saturn). Ransom marvels at the sight which confronts him in outer space: 'the stars, thick as daisies on an uncut lawn, reigned perpetually with no cloud, no moon, no sunrise, to dispute their sway. There were planets of unbelievable majesty, and constellations undreamed of: there were celestial sapphires, rubies, emeralds and pin-pricks of burning gold'.

We see then that Lewis, both as an academic and as an imaginative writer, had a delighted fascination for the subject of medieval (Ptolemaic) cosmology. Our purpose in this chapter is to outline some of the reasons underlying his engagement with that subject and lay the ground for the argument which will occupy the remainder of the thesis.

1. The Planets as Spiritual Symbols

We start in the year 1935 when Lewis published an article on medieval alliterative poetry which concludes with a specimen of his own work in this mode, a poem 122-lines long, entitled simply 'The Planets'. Don King's study of Lewis's poetry describes 'The Planets' as 'something of a tour de force', but sees it as a formal model of the alliterative technique and nothing more. Lewis himself considered the content to be at least as important as the style, as can be seen from his introductory paragraph:
In order to avoid misunderstanding I must say that the subject of the following poem was not chosen under the influence of any antiquarian fancy that a medieval metre demanded medieval matter, but because the characters of the planets, as conceived by medieval astrology, seem to me to have a permanent value as spiritual symbols - to provide a Phänomenologie des Geistes which is specially worth while in our own generation.

Lewis here makes three high claims on the behalf of the medieval planets. First, that they are 'spiritual symbols'. Second, that they are spiritual symbols of 'permanent value'. Third, that their value is 'specially worth while' at the time of his writing. His reason for regarding them as timely for his own generation will be explored in Chapters Five and Eleven. We do not have space to question whether he is right to view them as permanently valuable. Our objective in this chapter is to examine what he means by describing them as 'spiritual symbols'. We will analyse both terms, taking them in reverse order.

i) Lewis's definition of 'symbol'

Lewis equated 'symbolism' roughly with 'sacramentalism' and distinguished both from 'allegory'. In allegory, the allegorist takes something immaterial (love, for instance) and provides for it a material representation (in the form of a god called Amor disporting himself in a beautiful garden), while in symbolism, the symbolist works the other way round:

If our passions, being immaterial, can be copied by material inventions, then it is possible that our material world in its turn is a copy of an invisible world. As the god Amor and his figurative garden are to the actual passions of men, so perhaps we ourselves and our 'real' world are to something else. The attempt to read that something else through its sensible imitations, to see the archetype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism or sacramentalism.

This distinction between allegory and symbolism appears to be essentially the same as that distinction which Lewis elsewhere made between 'magistral metaphor' and 'pupillary metaphor'.

The allegorist is master; he knows the data - his own passions - and he consciously chooses to talk

A term borrowed from Hegel. According to Pyles, 'Lewis wrote, as it were, in the shadow of Hegel', accepting the shape of the problem over immanence and transcendence as it was forged in his school, but making sure his solution was distinguishable from monism. See Pyles, Franklin Arthur. 'The Influence of the British Neo-Hegelians on the Christian Apology of C.S. Lewis' (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1978) 103. Hegel locates the incarnation in mankind, part of his idealist emphasis on the universal. Lewis acknowledged that his own philosophical position consisted of 'watered Hegelianism' (SBJ 178) shortly before his Christian conversion.


Cf. '[David Lindsay's] Tormance is a region of the spirit. He is the first writer to discover what 'other planets' are really good for in fiction. No merely physical strangeness or merely spatial distance will realise the idea of otherness which is what we are always trying to grasp in a story about voyaging through space: you must go into another dimension. To construct plausible and moving 'other worlds' you must draw on the only real 'other world' we know, that of the spirit': 'On Stories', Essays Presented to Charles Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947) 90-105; reprinted EC 491-504: 498.

But we will observe, with Watson, that in DI, 'in spite of the title, Lewis's message was ultimately one of permanence rather than flux. The gods of the Ancients ... live in the modern mind as images of eternal potency. They did not vanish with Galileo or Newton.' Watson, George. Never Ones for Theory? England and the War of Ideas (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2000) 87.

AOL 45.

'Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare', R 133-158; reprinted SLE 251-265.
about them under the form of bodies which are 'confessedly less real', the fiction of the god and the garden. The symbolist is pupil: he inspects the data - the world with its visible gardens and invisible passions - in order 'to find that which is more real'\textsuperscript{14}, the realm of archetypal Forms\textsuperscript{15} from which the data derive and in which they may participate. The symbolist uses his data heuristically: they are indispensable to the meaning he arrives at\textsuperscript{16}. But the allegorist may at any time strip off his rhetorical vesture and 'show the true sense'\textsuperscript{17}. Symbolism, then, is 'a mode of thought', determining what may be expressed, while allegory is 'a mode of expression'\textsuperscript{18}, undetermined by what has been thought.

Lewis's own imaginative works are often regarded as allegorical, and here his reputation as a critic who helped rehabilitate serious study of allegory precedes him to his own detriment. This is the man who said 'good allegory (next to the style of Johnson) is the best way of reviving to our imaginations the grim or delightful truths which platitude conceals'\textsuperscript{19}. This is the scholar who, according to Bennett, did much to reawaken scholarly interest in allegory and whose The Allegory of Love might have been equally well called The Love of Allegory\textsuperscript{20}.

All of which is true, but taken without qualification it drives out an unprejudiced approach to his imaginative works. When Gardner contends that Lewis was able to recover for the ordinary reader the power to read allegory 'because he was a born allegorist himself'\textsuperscript{21} she is guilty of a logical leap. Though he was a great critic of allegory, it need not be because he was an allegorist himself. Indeed, to what extent was he an allegorist? A born allegorist who published over a dozen works of fiction would presumably write more than a single allegory, but only one of his works, The Pilgrim's Regress, was an allegory in Lewis's eyes. And how much did he love allegory, as Bennett suggests he did? Milward argues that Lewis 'came to view both the form of allegory and allegorical interpretation with misgivings, if not distaste, in his later, postwar writings'\textsuperscript{22}. This is probably to overstate the matter, but it is certainly true that Lewis was never an uncritical admirer of the genre, even as he rehabilitated it. In fact, he gives voice to his doubts about allegory earlier than Milward recognises, from at least as early as 1936, the date of publication of The Allegory of Love. There he acknowledged that it was natural to prefer symbolism to allegory (46), and that allegory could easily turn into a 'disease of literature'\textsuperscript{23} if the equivalences were 'purely conceptual' and did not 'satisfy

\textsuperscript{17} AOL 45. Cf. letter to Peter Milward, 22/9/56 (L 458).
\textsuperscript{18} We do not have space to examine the Platonic or Neoplatonic sources of this idea and the extent to which they may be at odds with Judaic and Christian thought. For a sketchy treatment of this subject, see Walker, Andrew. 'Scripture, revelation and Platonism in C.S. Lewis', Scottish Journal of Theology 55 (1), 2002: 19-35.
\textsuperscript{19} In the case of the Christian symbolist, working in the way described in the previous chapter, this imaginative search is guided by reason and the Spirit.
\textsuperscript{20} AOL 48.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. 288.
\textsuperscript{25} Milward, Peter. A Challenge to C.S. Lewis (London: Associated University Presses, 1995) 15. See letter to Peter Milward, 22/9/56 (Wade Center).
\textsuperscript{26} AOL 269.
imagination as well'. And elsewhere he lamented the fact that, since Spenser's time, allegory has often been little more than 'a literary toy'.

So what was it about Spenser and other allegorists which meant they were able to make allegory into great literature? How did they satisfy imagination as well as the intellect? The answer seems to be: by ensuring that their allegorical images were not chemically pure, but rather allowing an admixture of symbolism into the images, making it difficult for the reader to treat them as ciphers that automatically required, or were easily susceptible of, decoding. The more that allegory admitted symbolism in this way, so as to inhibit the felt need for decryption, the warier the allegorist (or the critic) had to be of thinking that he could distinguish kernel from husk, vehicle from tenor, or that 'the true sense' was superior to or easily separable from the rhetorical sense. In the best kind of allegory the image arrived at by the allegorising 'Master' working downwards was, though not identical with, at least very similar to, the one which might have been arrived at by a symbolising 'Pupil' working up. The allegorist's image, though allegorically formed, has a symbolic charge and is found to be practically all but indispensable. Thus, Humiliation really is like Bunyan's green valley, the green valley is not merely a convenient token of Humiliation; Spenser's Truth and Grace are like Una, not vice versa. For, controverting Croce, Lewis maintained:

Allegory is not a puzzle... [W]e must not sit down to examine [The Faerie Queene] detail by detail for clues to its meaning as if we were trying to work out a cipher. That is the very worst thing we can do. We must surrender ourselves with childlike attention to the mood of the story.

This approach to allegory allows for far more 'symbolism' in allegorical compositions than might be expected; enough for us to talk about 'allegorical symbols', as distinct from mere 'allegorical images'. By 'allegorical symbol' we mean a good example of allegorising, in which imagination is deeply engaged and the vehicle and tenor are fruitfully related. By 'allegorical image' we mean an
indifferent or positively weak piece of allegorising, where little or nothing of imaginative substance is added to the pre-existing abstract thought by its expression in the concrete image.

At the beginning of his career in imaginative prose, Lewis was, on balance, more interested in magistral (that is, allegorical) descent upon a symbol than in pupillary (symbolising) ascent to it; by the end of his career, it was the other way round. To aid understanding here about 'ascent' and 'descent', we may usefully conceptualise Lewis's understanding of symbol as the goddess Janus, lying horizontal. The face which Janus turns up to the descending Master is what we might call 'allegorical symbol' and the face she turns down upon the ascending Pupil is what we might call 'symbolic symbol'. In the twenty-three years between Lewis's first and last published works of fiction, there is a gradual move away from magistral towards pupillary methods of engaging Janus: the goal remains the same, but the preferred direction of approach alters. The Pilgrim's Regress (1933) is an 'allegorical apology', while Till We Have Faces (1956) is a 'myth retold'. These two works may be taken respectively to represent the most magistral and most pupillary approaches in his corpus, with the Ransom Trilogy, The Great Divorce and the Chronicles of Narnia falling somewhere in between. Intelligent response to imagery in Lewis's works depends on knowing in which work it appears. Indeed, one needs constantly to adjust one's critical antennae, even within a given work. This is especially true of the Narnia Chronicles, which are the most mixed type.

Lewis is best understood then, not as an allegorist, but, like his mentor MacDonald, as a 'symbolist', even though, especially early on, his symbols were often allegorically arrived at. But whether in the form of 'allegorical symbols' or 'symbolic symbols', it is symbols that he is fascinated with, in particular those 'spiritual' ones, the seven planets. As 'the work of Jung and Freud, and the practice of many modern poets and prose writers, has taught us . . . symbols are the natural speech of the soul, a language older and more universal than words'.

ii) Lewis's definition of 'spirit'

Having come to a working definition of 'symbol' as a goddess with two faces, we now turn to clarify what Lewis meant by 'spirit' and 'spiritual'. In an appendix to Miracles, Lewis distinguishes five senses of these words. Two of them (the chemical and the medical senses) need not detain us.

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* The subtitle of PR is 'An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism'.
* The subtitle of TWHF is 'A myth retold'.
* AOL 232.
* For instance, the presentation in PR of John's 'moral self' as a separate character called Vertue is clearly allegorical, but it is conceived with imaginative skill, so that, when Vertue insists on doing his thirty miles a day, when he throws rocks at John, and when he temporarily disappears altogether, it becomes increasingly hard to suppose that Lewis could have said the same things at all (or, at any rate, so well) in straight prose. This is what we mean by an 'allegorical symbol'.
* 'Edmund Spenser, 1552-99', SMRL 137.
* M 173-177. For more on the meanings of these words, see letters to Joy Davidman, 22/12/53 (Wade Center) and Eliza Butler, 12/9/40 (CLII 442).
The other three are:

Sense 1: the opposite of 'bodily' or 'material', including emotions, passions, memory and imagination. This immaterial but wholly natural dimension of man may, Lewis thinks, be usefully termed 'soul'. It can be good or bad.

Sense 2: the rational element in man. Lewis considers reason to be 'relatively supernatural'. That is, reason is not rigidly interlocked with all other events in space and time, but has a certain independence from them. However, it is still a created faculty, and can be either good or bad. Lewis regards the words 'spirit' and 'spiritual' as useful terms for this second sense.

Sense 3: the life which is imparted to man when he surrenders in Christ to the divine grace of the Father. This new life or novitas is absolutely supernatural to man's created being, and is always and only good. It is not a faculty separate from the other parts of man, but a redirection of his whole self, body, soul and spirit.

When Lewis in 1935 described the seven planets as 'spiritual symbols', he seems to have meant 'spiritual' in two, and possibly all three, of these senses. At any rate, the planets as he presents them in the poem which follows that description appear to symbolise all three meanings, although Sense 3 is weak. Sense 1 is communicated most explicitly. Nearly every line of 'The Planets' has to do with emotions or passions of one kind or another (the changeableness of Luna, the sexuality of Venus, the jocundity of Jupiter, et cetera), and 'soul' itself is directly named in lines 19 and 49 ('soul's darkness', 'soul in secret'). Senses 2 and 3 are less obviously identifiable.

That Sense 2 should not be immediately identifiable is striking, for, in Lewis's definitions of 'spirit', he applies the term most closely to this second meaning. The adjective he prefers for Sense 1 is 'psychological'; the adjective he prefers for Sense 3 is 'regenerate'. But for Sense 2, rationality, he says 'we might keep the words "spirit" and "spiritual"'. 'The Planets' does seem to refer to Sense 2 at line 44, where Sol's arrow glances through 'mortal mind', parting mists; but apart from that, there would appear to be very little about rationality in the poem. This is strange, given that the poem is meant to depict 'spiritual symbols'. Perhaps Lewis had not, at the date of the publication of 'The Planets', 1935, decided to apply 'spiritual' most particularly to rationality. Or perhaps we are meant to understand the whole poem, rather than individual lines or images within it, as an attempt to symbolise rationality. In order to explain how this might be so, we must turn back to an earlier, and much overlooked, work in Lewis's corpus, "The Man Born Blind".

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*M 176.

** First published in The Dark Tower and Other Stories, ed. Walter Hooper (London: Collins, 1977); reprinted EC 783-786. The title is an allusion to Christ's healing of the sightless man at the pool of Siloam (John 9:1-40). There is an extant draft of the story, entitled 'Light' (Bodleian Library: MS. Facs. c. 158).
2. Symbolising Spirit (Sense 2)

'The Man Born Blind' is a short story which Lewis wrote during the 'Great War', the long philosophical dispute which he had from around 1924 to 1931 with his friend, Owen Barfield. No attempt will be made to sketch the 'Great War'; that has already been done by the hand of Lionel Adey. Adey, however, omits discussion of 'The Man Born Blind', a serious gap in his study. We know its relevance to the subject on the testimony of Barfield himself who wrote that 'the story has always remained closely associated in my mind with the Lewis of the so-called “Great War”'.

The story is the earliest piece of prose fiction we have from the adult Lewis and the only one that antedates his conversion to Christianity. It is brief (less than two thousand words in length) and tells the tale of how the eponymous protagonist, whose name is Robin, regains his sight after surgery. When the bandages have been removed from his eyes, Robin expects to be able to see the marvellous thing that he has heard about all his life, - light. No one can show it to him. He begs his wife to tell him where it is, but she cannot explain to his satisfaction: her attempts to do so only confuse him further. First she seems to equate light with everything visible, then only with the bulb hanging from the ceiling, then only with what comes from the bulb. In despair at these contradictions, Robin leaves the house and walks up to the lip of the local quarry where the rising sun is burning through the morning mist. There he finds an artist who, pointing at the swirling vapour, tells Robin that he is trying to catch the light. The next moment the artist is alone on the quarry edge. Robin has taken a dive into the bright fog and has fallen, apparently, to his death.

From the poëma point of view, the story is unimpressive: the prose style jerks, the characterisations are paper-thin, the climax is too sudden. But these defects are irrelevant since, as John Fitzpatrick observes 'Lewis was concerned with the argument of his story'. One way to understand that argument is by reference to Surprised by Joy, where Lewis gives a history of his intellectual development in the 1920s, including what he believed he had learnt from Barfield during the 'Great War'.

One of the things Barfield convinced him of was 'that the positions we had hitherto held left no room for any satisfactory theory of knowledge'. Their positions had been those of realists, by

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Adey, Lionel. C.S. Lewis' 'Great War' with Owen Barfield (Wighton: Ink Books, 2002).


For further background, see Hooper's account in DT 9-11.

Cf. 'Our Daily Bread' with its 'leap into the gulf of light', SIB, poem xxxii, line 18; reprinted CP 213; also 'Dungeon Grates' with its 'sudden beam of larger light' within which 'All things are seen aright / Amid the blinding pillar of its gold', SIB, poem xv, line 25; reprinted CP 184-185. These poems predate Lewis's theistic and Christian conversions. The image is Christianised in 'On a Theme from Nicolas of Cusa' in which the soul is depicted partaking of goodness or truth, - she 'mirror-like, digests their ray / By turning luminous as they': originally published as 'On Another Theme from Nicolas of Cusa', The Times Literary Supplement (21/1/55) 43; revised and reprinted CP 84. See also the poems dealt with below, Chapter Seven, section 2.


SBJ 167.
which Lewis means those who view ‘as rock-bottom reality the universe revealed by the senses’.

Yet at the same time they maintained that abstract thought, if obedient to logical rules, gave indisputable ‘truth’ and the possibility of ‘valid’ moral judgement. Barfield, who had advanced beyond realism some time before his friend, taught Lewis that if thought were purely a subjective event, these claims for abstract thought would have to be abandoned. Lewis was not willing - indeed not able - to abandon them. Their abandonment would lead, he thought, to behaviourism in logic, ethics and aesthetics; and behaviourism was to Lewis flatly ‘unbelievable’, a physical impossibility. He now saw that a realist philosophy which admitted only sensory perception would be effectively solipsistic, but that if solipsism were true it could not know itself to be true. Therefore something more fundamental, more ‘rock-bottom’, than the ability to derive information through the senses must exist. Lewis had wanted Nature to be quite independent of his observation; something other, indifferent, self-existing. ‘But now, it seemed to me, I had to give that up. Unless I were to accept an unbelievable alternative, I must admit that mind was no late-come epiphenomenon; that the whole universe was, in the last resort, mental; that our logic was participation in a cosmic Logos’.

Lewis was moving towards idealism. To be more precise, he was realising that his present position already entailed idealism.

Fitzpatrick and Barfield have provided conflicting interpretations of ‘The Man Born Blind’, neither of which pays adequate attention to the story itself. If we examine the story on its own merits we will find that it is a cautionary tale about pursuing to its end the logic of realism. We have to place Robin’s questioning intelligence against the imperceptiveness of his ‘stupid’ wife and the ‘savagery’ of the painter. Within the story, Robin is quite clearly the most enquiring character, alive to the contradictions and insufficiencies of the conventional talk about light. We sympathise with him. His end is tragic and avoidable, not the merited punishment of a foolish philosopher. The delusory philosophy in the tale is not Robin’s, as Fitzpatrick argues, but that of the wife and the painter. They have had their sight since birth, yet they cannot explain to a formerly blind man that light is not something you see but something you see by. To adopt terms from a later work by Lewis, their world is ‘all fact and no meaning’.

Robin’s desire for knowledge is admirable, but it is fatally hamstrung by his ignorance of the act of knowing. His tragic end is a demonstration of Lewis’s new-found agreement with Barfield, an

Ibid.


Fitzpatrick argues that the tale is about Lewis’s reluctance to abandon realism. ‘The story exists precisely to show the absurdity of Robin’s quest for the ideal. He comes to grief at the end on account of his single-mindedness on this point. From this outcome it would appear that the fable was meant as young Lewis’s warning to the idealist Barfield about the dangers of pursuing any absolute ideal.’ Fitzpatrick, op. cit. 4.

Barfield takes the story as an explanation of Lewis’s oft-repeated point that ‘contradictories cannot both be true’. The central image of the story is an example of that ‘crucial, perhaps archetypal, instance of contradictories’ which is provided by the distinction between light and seeing. Light is not something you see, but something you see by. Lewis held that what is true of physical seeing is true of any kind of perception or thinking. It followed that we can never directly perceive the immaterial (spirit). Any suggestion that the contrary is proved by experience must be based on self-deception. It is this conviction which Lewis embodied in imagined and fictional form in ‘The Man Born Blind’. ‘Owen Barfield’s response to John Fitzpatrick’s essay on “The Man Born Blind”’, CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society, Vol. 14, No. 8 (June 1983) 5.

agreement that realism 'left no room for any satisfactory theory of knowledge'": Robin must learn, as Lewis had recently learnt, to participate in a cosmic logos - here symbolized by invisible but ubiquitous light - rather than fixing only on its products in 'Contemplative', as opposed to 'Enjoyment', consciousness.

Barfield rightly associates the story with Lewis's acceptance of the categorical distinction between 'Contemplation' and 'Enjoyment', and here we must digress for a moment to underscore the association. Lewis first encountered this conceptual distinction in 1924 when he read Samuel Alexander's *Space, Time and Deity* and he was later to describe it as 'an indispensable tool of thought"; Hooper does not claim too much when he describes Alexander's book as being 'of overwhelming importance to Lewis". He applied what we might call 'the Alexander technique' to almost every department of life" and thought it so useful that he eventually wrote his own essay on the subject, 'Meditation in a Toolshed' in which he recast 'Contemplation' and 'Enjoyment' as follows:

I was standing today in the dark toolshed. The sun was shining outside and through the crack at the top of the door there came a sunbeam. From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place. Everything else was almost pitch-black. I was seeing the beam, not seeing things by it.

Then I moved, so that the beam fell on my eyes. Instantly the whole previous picture vanished. I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving on the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, ninety-odd million miles away, the sun. Looking along the beam, and looking at the beam are very different experiences."

Lewis uses this image of 'looking along an invisible beam' in order to represent rational thought as a kind of immersion in an imperceptible medium which relates the human mind to the universe at large. The cerebral physiologist who says that thought is 'only' tiny physical movements of grey matter must be wrong, for how could he think that thought truly except by participating in the medium which the logic of his statement denies? 'The inside vision of rational thinking must be truer than the outside vision which sees only movements of the grey matter; for if the outside vision were the correct one all thought (including this thought itself) would be valueless, and this is
self-contradictory. This argument against realism represented one of the principal philosophical consequences of ‘the Great War’ in Lewis’s thinking. That thought was a participation in a cosmic logos became for Lewis the linch-pin of his case for idealism, which in turn supported his belief in theism, which in turn supported his belief in Christianity. Some twenty years or so after writing ‘The Man Born Blind’, Lewis would be making fundamentally the same point in his most serious work of Christian apologetics, Miracles (1947), where he attacks ‘the self-contradiction of the Naturalist’ and contends that ‘supernatural Reason enters my natural being not like a weapon - more like a beam of light which illuminates’.

Barfield is right to associate ‘The Man Born Blind’ with Alexander’s distinction, but he is mistaken when he thinks that the story is about an attempt to Contemplate the Enjoyed. Though it might seem presumptuous to question the judgement of Lewis’s close friend, there are two good reasons for doing so. One is that Barfield’s comments come almost sixty years after the events in question. The second is that, during those sixty years, he had repeatedly come across Lewis, both in fiction and non-fiction, making the point that the Enjoyed cannot be Contemplated, and what could be more natural than to assume that this short story was the first in that line? Barfield thinks that Robin’s mistake resides in his determination to Contemplate the immaterial when it was Lewis’s belief that ‘we can never directly perceive the immaterial (spirit)’.

This was indeed Lewis’s belief and, clearly, Barfield is right in one sense. We, as readers, can observe only too well that Robin is trying to Contemplate what he is already Enjoying. But Barfield’s interpretation overlooks the characterisation of Robin as a seeker after truth and the unflattering characterisation of his wife and the painter. Though all three characters lack insight, Robin is at least troubled by the fact. He is not content to have his sights locked on external visibiliae: the sun, the mantelpiece, the table, the bulb, the colours, the trees, the cars, the vapour, - all the sensible objects which his realist wife and the realist painter keep pointing to. Of inner illumination he comprehends nothing, but only because no one is able to teach it to him. Therefore, light remains for Robin a ‘material’, as opposed to an ‘immaterial’, category; a datum of sight (knowledge), rather than a medium of seeing (knowing). Labouring under the misapprehension that light is only an independent entity, an observable alterity, he cannot conceptualise any participatory relationship between himself and it. His mistake is not that he wants directly to Contemplate the spirit, as Barfield assumes, but that he cannot conceptualise the existence of spirit in the first place. His world is all Contemplation; in it Enjoyment has no meaning.

* Ibid. EC 609.
* These words provided Lewis with the title of Chapter III of the original edition of Miracles. In the second edition (1960) he revised them to ‘The Cardinal Difficulty of Naturalism’. For more on this see Chapter Twelve below.
* M 36.
* E.g., in his waitings and watchings for ‘joy’, Lewis had been attempting to ‘contemplate the enjoyed’ (SBJ 175); Psyche turning the lamp on her husband in TWHF makes the same error. See also Lewis’s interpretation of Orpheus turning round to look at Eurydice in ‘Myth Became Fact’, EC 141. Cf. ‘We cannot see light, though by light we can see things’, FL 115.
No meaning, that is, as a noetic category. He is fully aware of his need of Enjoyment at the experiential level, which is why he is so dissatisfied with the explanations he is given and why, finally, he jumps into the fog. Robin's tragedy resides in this very determination: to Enjoy his Contemplation, when Enjoyment must be a means of Contemplation. For Robin there are no means, only ends; aware of that insufficiency he tries to turn ends into means. He tries, as it were, to surge forward out of his eyes into the visible object. He is an incorrigible realist.

Lewis had learnt the lesson that Robin's tragic end was invented to illustrate. He turned his back on realism and became an idealist, believing that his knowing was an immersion in what Barfield might have called the largior aether. ‘Where thought is strictly rational it must be, in some odd sense, not ours, but cosmic or super-cosmic. It must be something not shut up inside our heads but already 'out there' - in the universe or behind the universe... a rationality with which the universe has always been saturated.’ Not that this logos with which the universe is saturated is God; no, this is itself a created logos irradiating created matter. However, it was but a small step to theism. Indeed, Lewis confesses in Surprised by Joy that he cannot now understand how he ever regarded his idealism as ‘something quite distinct from Theism’. Rather, ‘idealism turned out, when you took it seriously, to be disguised Theism’. Idealism, as Patrick observes, ‘had given Lewis the vision of a world alive with reason and with God’. His final position on thought was similar to Farrer’s position on consciousness in general. Farrer wrote: ‘Our relation to our Creator is real enough, but what arises on the basis of it is not a particular state or act of our conscious existence, but our whole conscious existence.’

Returning to 'The Planets', we can now understand how that poem might also be intended to symbolise Spirit (Sense 2). For it is not only Sol who sends out 'beams' (line 48), who wields a 'sword of light' (41), or who directs an 'arrow' through 'mortal mind' (43-44). All the planets in their turn dominate the human minds that come under their influence. Luna does it with her 'rays' (9); Mercury with his 'gaze' (16); Venus with her 'breath' (30); Mars with his 'mastery' (76); Jupiter with his 'ray' (88) and his 'radiance' (81) and his 'music' (82); Saturn with his 'eye' (115). Solar beams are only the most obvious of the astrological influences directed upon Earth and if human beings can look along sunbeams without being aware of them, how much more will they look along the beams of the other six planets without being conscious of doing so? It is from this perspective that we may be intended to identify spiritual symbolism (Sense 2) in 'The Planets', with each planet symbolising not only a particular psychology - i.e. Spirit (Sense 1) - but also the rationality which particular psychologies have access to. This is not to suggest that Lewis believed...
there to be seven kinds of rationality, for he clearly thought Reason was one and indivisible, a 'virgin'. But this virgin Reason, within the symbolic taxonomy of the medieval planets, could be seen to be 'reconciled' with seven different kinds of psychology; reconciled, that is, by the transvaluing presence of the Spirit (Sense 3).

3. Symbolizing Spirit (Sense 3)

Spirit (Sense 3) is hinted at in 'The Planets', but little more than that. In order for the planetary influences to symbolise novitas, there must also be a symbolising of 'the old Adam', the unregenerate life, so that we can distinguish the one from the other. In a few places, the poem does supply this distinction. For instance, Jupiter brings about 'guilt forgiven' (line 90), he makes 'men like the gods' (93) and imputes 'righteous power' (98). Also, the illumination provided by Sol might be understood as a regeneration of the mind as much as a rational clarification of it; Sol's 'paradisal palm' (50) would support such an interpretation. And in addition, the poem mentions Christ's crucifixion in the sphere of Mars (76-78), 'blessing' in the sphere of Saturn (118), and 'Heaven's hermitage' (122) as the destination beyond Saturn. All of these images or allusions might be taken to suggest new life brought about through planetary influence, the seven gods representing the seven aspects of divine power which Farrer wrote of in his poem 'Veni, Creator Spiritus': 'Thou Finger stretched from heaven's throne / Whose touch is sevenfold benison.'

However, this reading is somewhat unsatisfactory because Luna, Mercury and Venus seem to confer no 'new life' of this kind at all, and partly because the images of new life in connection with Mars and Saturn are tenuously expressed. Only with Sol and Jupiter can we relatively easily find images of novitas, and even here the symbolising of Spirit (Sense 3) - if that is what it is, - is patchy.

It might be pointed out that Lewis uses the planets to symbolise the Holy Spirit in Chapter 15 of That Hideous Strength when Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter descend upon Ransom and his company, and that, arguing backwards, it might therefore seem not unreasonable to suppose he had been doing something similar, albeit in a less thorough-going way, in 'The Planets'. Carnell, for instance, states that 'the Holy Ghost descends on St. Anne's'†; and Wolfe thinks that the descent of the gods 'is intended to echo Pentecost'†.  

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* Carnell, Corbin Scott. Bright Shadow of Reality: C.S. Lewis and the Feeling Intellect (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974) 98.
If by 'echo' Wolfe means no more than 'loosely resemble', he would be correct, for Lewis is obviously alluding to the descent of the Holy Spirit recorded in Acts 2\(^{13}\). However, Carnell is wrong to suppose that the descending gods definitely represent God the Spirit. Lewis makes it clear that the planetary intelligences are 'created powers' (THS 289) which must not be worshipped\(^{14}\). They are rather, as Fiddes points out, 'an extension on to the cosmic scale of the biblical idea of 'the sons of God' who are assigned by Yahweh as guardian angels to the nations on earth\(^{15}\). The passage in which they descend is an example of Lewis the prose stylist working at the utmost height of his powers\(^{16}\), but the subjects of his pen are not themselves of utmost significance. We cannot therefore work back to 'The Planets' from That Hideous Strength and argue that the former is a dry-run for the latter or that the latter is a full-dress version of the former. In fact, neither work fully symbolises the Holy Spirit and His regenerating life by means of the planets. Both give hints in that direction, but both fail to present a fully satisfying depiction of the Spirit (Sense 3) with respect to all seven planets.

And this should not surprise us, for the Holy Spirit and the novitas He brings are exceptionally difficult to symbolise. As Lewis wrote:

\(^{13}\) There are three main ways in which this loose resemblance is suggested: 1) by setting the descent of the gods in a retelling of the Babel myth, for the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost which enables men 'from every nation under heaven' (Acts 2:5) to understand the disciples, is traditionally understood as an undoing of the Babel curse (Gen. 11:6-9); 2) by suggesting that the inhabitants at St Anne's are drunk (THS 321; cf. Acts 2:13-15); 3) by use of wind imagery throughout the book and, in particular, on the night of the descent: early on, Jane walks past 'the old windmill' (33), an image of something in need of breath; the wind is 'rising' (194) and Camilla exclaims, 'How it's blowing! They [the Planets] might come to him [Ransom] tonight' (195); they do indeed descend on a 'Wet and Windy Night' (the title of Chapter 12), for 'the wind had risen' (253), there is 'wind and starlight' (254); 'wind' (271), a 'Bay of Biscay gale' (320); cf. Acts 2:2, 'the rush of a mighty wind'. Lewis may have been influenced to think of Pentecost in connection with the planets as a result of reading Herbert's 'Whitsunday'. In this poem the sweet Dove of the Spirit is said once to have kept open house at Whitsun so that 'th'earth did like a heav'n appeare' and 'The staries were coming down to know / If they might mend their wages, and serve here'. Lewis made this underlining in his copy of Herbert in the Wade Center: 'The Temple and A Priest to the Temple' (London: Dent, undated) 54-55.

\(^{14}\) Ransom forbids Merlin from kneeling to the planets (THS 320) with the words, 'See thou do it not!', an allusion to Rev. 19:10, 22:9. The planets are at least as distinct from God as are angels and Ransom himself. Ransom charges Dimble to speak to Merlin 'in the name of God and all angels and in the power of the planets' (THS 228) and the narrator speaks of 'God, the planets, and the Pendragon' (THS 229). Cf. letter to Victor M. Hamm 11/8/45 (CLII 666).


\(^{16}\) Dorothy L. Sayers complimented Lewis on the passage, saying that 'the arrival of the gods is grand'; letter to Lewis of 3/12/45 (The Letters of Dorothy L. Sayers, Vol. Three, 1944-1950: A Noble Daring, chosen and edited by Barbara Reynolds (Cambridge: The Dorothy L. Sayers Society, 1988) 177). Lewis replied: 'I am so glad you like the descent of the gods' (6/12/45, CLII 682), a confession which was more than mere politeness, for Chapter 15, as Patterson recognises, is centrally important to the novel's (and the trilogy's) whole purpose: in the abridged version of THS, 'The Tortured Planet, ' Lewis excised a number of mythological motifs, but this pivotal chapter he left substantially intact, for it presents the full mythological structure of the trilogy' (Patterson, Nancy-Lou. 'The Host of Heaven: Astrological and Other Images of Divinity in the Fantasies of C.S. Lewis, Part I', Mythlore 25 (Autumn 1980): 19-29; 29). In addition, she opines that the passage 'is one of Lewis's most breathtaking and audacious achievements, and these richly sensual images adorn the structure of his narrative with a splendour worthy of their medieval prototypes'. Likewise, Downing calls the passage 'a brilliant prose poem' (Downing, David C. Planets in Peril, A Critical Study of C.S. Lewis's Ransom Trilogy (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992) 78). Despite a general consensus on the excellence of the style in this chapter, voices have been raised in objection to its theological implications. Wolfe, for instance, thinks that it represents less a moment of grace than a kind of 'possession' in which the characters 'behave more like puppets than apostles': see Gregory Wolfe, 'Essential Speech: Language and Myth in the Ransom Trilogy', in Schakel, Peter J. & Huttar, Charles A. (eds.). Word and Story in C.S. Lewis (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991) 58-75: 75. Haldane, alluding to Shakespeare's Measure for Measure (III, i, 9), disapproves of 'Mr. Lewis's saints who are "Servile to all the skye influencess"': Haldane, J.B.S. 'Auld Hornie, F.R.S.', The Modern Quarterly (Autumn 1946) 32-40: 38. It is true that the characters who are downstairs in the kitchen of St Anne's during the descent of the gods do seem to be somewhat 'possessed'. However, upstairs, Ransom specifically warns Merlin against servility when he reminds him that the planetary intelligences 'are our fellow servants' (THS 320).
In one sense there is nothing more in a regenerate man than in an unregenerate man, just as there is nothing more in a man who is walking in the right direction than in one who is walking in the wrong direction. In another sense, however, it might be said that the regenerate man is totally different from the unregenerate, for the regenerate life, the Christ that is formed in him, transforms every part of him: in it his spirit [Sense 2], soul [Sense 1] and body will all be reborn."

Spirit (Sense 3) thus means both nothing and everything. How is such a paradoxical situation to be symbolised?

One might answer, in the case of a ‘regenerate’ author, by the author examining his own ‘new life’ and seeing what sorts of symbols it suggests to him. But Lewis was extremely wary of anyone who claimed to be able to make the Holy Ghost an object of conscious Contemplation. He suspected that, ‘save by God’s direct miracle, spiritual experience can never abide introspection. If even our emotions will not do so . . . much less will the operations of the Holy Ghost. The attempt to discover by introspective analysis our own spiritual condition is to me a horrible thing which reveals, at best, not the secrets of God’s spirit and ours, but their transpositions in intellect, emotion and imagination, and which at worst may be the quickest road to presumption or despair.’

The impossibility of inspecting one’s spiritual life (Sense 3) arises from the simple fact that one cannot step outside it, for ‘He is above me and within me and below me and all about me’; ‘He is inside you as well as outside’; ‘He is always both within us and over against us’. There is an inescapable participatory aspect to man’s relationship with God and ‘looking along the beam’ of that participation means inevitably that the beam is invisible. Lewis applied the Alexander technique as much to Spirit (Sense 3) as to Spirit (Sense 2): ‘In the Christian life you are not usually looking at Him [the Holy Spirit] . . . you have to think of the third Person as something inside

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M 176. Cf. ‘Before I became a Christian I do not think I fully realized that one’s life, after conversion, would inevitably consist in doing most of the same things one had been doing before: one hopes, in a new spirit, but still the same things’; ‘None Other Gods: Culture in War Time’, sermon preached at the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Oxford, 22/12/39; reprinted as ‘Learning in War-time’, EC 579-586: 581. See also Jane’s conversion in THS, in which things ‘were not visibly changed. But they were changed’ (THS 318).

* ‘Transposition’, EC 274. Cf. Lewis’s summary of Hooker’s point in The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity (III, viii, 15): ‘Highest of all in us are the supernatural operations of the Holy Ghost, but we shall be ill advised to try to identify them by introspection’, EL 460f. See also letters to Cecil Harwood, 287/10/26 (CLI 670); Edward Dell, 4/2/49 (CLII 914); ‘Sonia Graham’, 15/5/52 (L 421).

* LTM 23.

* MC 129.

* LTM 71.

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you, or behind you." Like rationality, the Holy Spirit cannot be Contemplated but has to be Enjoyed\(^9\).

The difference between symbolising Spirit (Sense 2) and Spirit (Sense 3) is that the latter is more complicated. The poet has to symbolise not only the Christian ‘looking along the beam’ of the Spirit, but he has to do so in a way which also somehow symbolises the old life, so that we can tell by contrast what is the novitas. In one and the same symbol, he has to show the regenerate kind of vision and its opposite, the unregenerate man with his back to the light, looking along the beam of his own shadow. Where is such a symbol to be found?

The complexity of Spirit (Sense 3) presumably accounts for why Lewis makes the startling statement that ‘there can be no plausible images of . . . the Spirit'\(^*\). This is startling because there are certain images of the Third Person which are sanctioned by scripture and tradition, notably dove, breath and fire. Lewis is naturally aware of these, and uses them himself when wanting to evoke something of the Holy Spirit’s presence\(^9\).

But these moments are when Lewis is content as it were to atomise the Spirit and symbolise His transpositions into sensible awareness. Properly understood, however, the Spirit is just as present when un-sensed as when He is sensed; and His insensible presence is the more usual experience of the

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\(^{*}\) Lewis's contention that Lewis 'always emphasized the chasm between Creator and creature, rather than anything in the nature of participation' is far from accurate. See Barfield, Owen. *Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis*, ed. G.B. Tennyson (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989) 111; cf. 11; 65; 78, 133. His tendency to focus on Lewis's presentation of God's transcendence arises, we suspect, in part because of the nature of the disagreement between him and Lewis about anthroposophy. As Adey defines it, 'Anthroposophical training reunites the human ego, 'of the same nature and essence as the divine', with the external world from which it has become separated, a cosmos no less spiritual than material': Adey, Lionel. C.S. Lewis' 'Great War' with Owen Barfield (Wigton: Ink Books, 2002) 20. For Lewis, this did not allow for a full doctrine of creation ex nihilo; he wrote to Daphne Harwood (another Anthroposophist): 'I don't think the conception of creaturiteness is part of your philosophy at all' (letter of 6/3/42, CLI1 512). Given this disagreement it is to be expected that Barfield would have been especially sensitive to any statement Lewis made, either in personal conversation or in his published works, regarding the 'chasm' between Creator and creature. And it is true that, in his works of apologetics Lewis did sometimes emphasise transcendence, claiming to do so for the deliberate strategic purpose of counteracting pantheism (see his 'Rejoinder to Dr Pittenger', *The Christian Century*, Vol. LXXV (26/1158) 1359-61; reprinted TAH 110-117: 114). But at other times his concern was to counteract deism (LTM 76) and to emphasise the potential for participation: see, e.g., ‘The thing that matters is being actually drawn into that three-personal life . . . being pulled into God, by God, while remaining [oneself]’, MC 139. Barfield finds an emphasis upon divine transcendence and the supposed mutual exclusion of God and man even in Lewis's fiction. For example, he contrasts the solidity of the heaven depicted in *The Great Divorce* with 'Dante's imagination in the Paradiso of a world of spirits able to interpenetrate one another in the manner of distinct but indivisible beams of light' (*Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis*, 88). Barfield would have got a different answer if his point of contrast had been *Perelandra* where there is plenty of 'intertwining', 'mutual embracing', 'intersecting', 'interanimating', 'interweaving' (Per 202b), or if he had discerned the planetary symbolism underlying the Narnia Chronicles. Lewis thought he had good reasons, in private conversation with Barfield, to emphasise transcendence rather than immanence, but these reasons do not extend to his understanding of man's general relation to God, nor to his understanding of his own personal relation (see Chapter Twelve below, section 7, v). It is ironic that Barfield should hold this opinion given that his own *Poetic Diction, A Study in Meaning*, with its theory of 'participant knowledge' (37), was extremely influential on Lewis (see SBJ 161).

\(^{*}\) *LTM* 85.

\(^{*}\) E.g. 'birds at my window' (PR 250); 'birds were everywhere' (THS 382); 'there were birds singing' (HHB 141); 'a rustling, a relaxing began' ('The Turn of the Tide', CP 64, line 50); 'all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling' ('The Weight of Glory', sermon preached at the University Church, St Mary the Virgin, Oxford, first published in *Theology*, XLIII (November 1941) 263-274; reprinted EC 96-106: 104); 'the rustling noise of the leaves was almost like words' (PC 103); 'hurtless flames ran up and down his sword' (PR 243); 'they thought it would burn their bones' (THS 323); 'the Burning One' (GD 92).
Christian, in Lewis’s view. Be that as it may, it is in any case ‘the actual presence, not the sensation of the presence, of the Holy Ghost which begets Christ in us. The sense of the presence is a super-added gift for which we give thanks when it comes, and that’s all about it.’

This picture is further complicated by the fact that the Holy Spirit is not present in the ‘regenerate’ individual alone; rather ‘He speaks also through Scripture, the Church, Christian friends, books etc’. Because of this, ‘We may ignore, but can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito’. Considered on this large scale, how is a writer to symbolise a universal, insensible spiritual presence? The difficulty of such representation explains why Lewis remarks that ‘the Holy Ghost is not matter for epic poetry’; and His absences from Paradise Lost, for example, are not noticed until they are pointed out. In lyric poetry, however, which may try to encapsulate discrete moments of spiritual intensity where Enjoyment is raised temporarily to Contemplative consciousness, the Spirit may be usefully depicted. But to symbolise Him in ‘the big picture’ is a much harder task for the poet to accomplish.

In the big picture, the novitas is not confined to moments of special intensity, but to all moments, special and ordinary, individual and universal: theosis, the sharing in the divine life, means sharing them all. This was Lewis’s settled view and therefore, although Kort may be right in one sense to say that Lewis’s work is ‘without strong doctrines of . . . the Holy Spirit’ (for it is true that he writes very little about the Spirit doctrinally in his apologetics) we must not assume that the Spirit’s apparent symbolic absence from his work is the same as a real absence or that it betokens a lack of interest in Pneumatology. Lewis had his own very strongly held doctrine about the difficulty, indeed the impropriety, of Contemplative awareness of the presence of novitas, and an equally strong doctrine of the presence of the Spirit flooding and transvaluing every part of a Christian’s life. In other words, his doctrine of the Spirit (Sense 3) was that He could and should be Enjoyed, and as fully as possible. The possibility of full Enjoyment was great because, in his view (and MacDonald’s), ‘that which is best [God] gives most plentifully, as is reason with Him. Hence the quiet fullness of ordinary nature; hence the Spirit to them that ask it.’ If novitas is symbolised in Lewis’s fiction we should expect it to be communicated in ways which are consistent with its nature: that is, we should expect it to be plentiful, indeed universal, but not usually Contemplatable.

In Chapters Five to Eleven we will be arguing that, building on his efforts in ‘The Planets’ and ‘The Descent of the Gods’, Lewis deploys the seven planets in his Narnia Chronicles to symbolise ‘the quiet fullness’ of the Spirit (Sense 3) through Enjoyment consciousness. In Chapter Twelve we will further contend that Lewis originally conceived the series as a way of symbolising Spirit (Sense 2)

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*The gift of the Holy Spirit . . . can’t usually be - perhaps not ever - experienced as a sensation or emotion*: letter to ‘Mrs Sonia Graham’, 15/5/52 (L 421).

*Letter to Mary Willis Shelburne, 20/2/55 (LAL 37).

*Letter to ‘Miss Helen Hadow’, 20/6/52 (L 423).

*LTM 77.

*PPL 87.

*E.g. ‘The Phoenix’, CP 135.


*GMD 128, used in the epigraph to AOL, Chapter VII, ‘The Faerie Queene’.

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by the same means. Before we come on to those questions, we must first look at the smaller issue of how in the seven Chronicles Lewis depicts the planets themselves in a Contemplatable fashion.

4. Contemplating the planets in the Chronicles of Narnia

Jupiter is the only one of the seven traditional planets to be directly named in the Chronicles; it is seen, apparently in 'our' universe, as Digory and Polly are being whirled between worlds in The Magician's Nephew144. But within the subcreated world of Narnia itself, we are given to understand that the heavenly bodies are different; they are 'the bright Narnian stars'147, 'nearer than stars in our world'148, which include 'the Ship, the Hammer and the Leopard'147 and various other 'constellations'148. The Narnian North-Star is 'brighter than our Pole Star' and is called 'the Spear-Head'148: Jill, who knows 'her Narnian stars perfectly'118, can guide by it. The Narnian Moon 'is larger than ours'111; it is called 'Zardeenah' in Calormen112 and appears in every Chronicle except The Magician's Nephew. The Narnian Sun, which appears in all seven books, is 'younger' than ours111: 'fireflowers' grow on its mountains114 and 'fire-berries' in its valleys111; birds fly from these valleys and the sun itself can be sailed right up to at the eastern edge of Narnia. There is a Narnian 'morning star', but its name is Aravir, not Venus: it appears in several of the stories116. Even the dying world of Charn seems to have an equivalent of the morning star117.

As well as being nearer, brighter, larger and younger, the Narnian stars differ from ours by being a kind of people, 'the great lords of the upper sky'118 who 'tread the great dance'118. We meet two of them by name in The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' (Coriakin and Ramandu). These stars sing at their creation in 'cold, tingling, silvery voices': 'One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leapt out - single stars, constellations, and planets, brighter and bigger than any in our world.'110 They are all 'called home' by Aslan at the end of The Last Battle111.
In addition to all this Narnian 'astronomy', there is a considerable amount of 'astrology' in the series. In *Prince Caspian* Dr Cornelius interprets the conjunction of 'two noble planets, Tarva and Alambil'; and later in that book, Glenstorm, 'a prophet and star-gazer', tells Caspian that the heavens augur well for an attack on Miraz. In *The Last Battle*, Roonwit informs Tirian that there are 'disastrous conjunctions of the planets' and that 'the stars never lie'. In *The Horse and His Boy*, Rabash believes that things come about by 'the alteration of the stars'. In *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*; Lucy thanks 'her stars', a practice which the Monopods apparently share. In *The Silver Chair* two centaurs tell Jill and Eustace about 'the influences of the planets'.

This brief overview of the explicit astronomical and astrological elements in the Chronicles does not require analysis. Our purpose is merely to note that Lewis holds up for our Contemplation a world in which the fretted roof of the firmament has both importance and significance. But where is the Enjoyment? Where is the sense of participation in these 'spiritual symbols'? Como notes that Narnia invites a medieval 'mode of perception', a 'belief-in', not just 'belief-that'; and he gives as an example the challenge Ramandu issues to Eustace's 'belief that' a star is merely a huge ball of flaming gas: 'Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is but only what it is made of.' Eustace needs to 'believe in' the stars as well. But that is just one brief moment in one story. Where is *connaiatre* on the larger scale?

Perhaps it is not there. After all, Milton - one of Lewis's poetic heroes - did not think it necessary to communicate Enjoyment in his great large-scale work. According to Lewis, in *Paradise Lost* 'we are not invited (as Alexander would have said) to enjoy the spiritual life, but to contemplate the whole pattern within which the spiritual life arises'. However, in Dante - Lewis's favourite poet - we find a different *modus operandi*. In the *Commedia* we share the pilgrim's perspective and enjoy 'a poetical expression of religious experience'. Which model did Lewis imitate in the Chronicles? It is time to outline the main argument apropos Lewis's use of the planets in his most famous work.

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II PC 47.
III Ibid. 71f.
IV LB 20.
V HHB 98.
VI VDT 12; cf. 108.
VII SC 198.
IX VDT 159.
X PPL 132.
XI Ibid. 133.
CHAPTER FOUR

The Silent Planets?

As is proper in romance, the inner meaning is carefully hidden

The Narniad, as it has been called, is generally recognised as Lewis’s most enduring and popular contribution to English letters. The mainstream response views the series also as successful theologically. For instance, Walsh comments: ‘In these books where his imagination has full scope he presents the Christian faith in a more eloquent and probing way than ever his more straightforward books of apologetics could.’ Griffiths agrees: ‘To my mind the Narnia stories reveal Lewis’s personal religion more profoundly than any of his more theological works.” And Williams’s opinion will bear repeating: ‘more theological students ought to read [the septet] for a sense of what classical orthodox theology feels like from the inside - a unique achievement at that level, as well as all the other levels on which we as general readers read it and love it.”

Williams’s comment deserves to be highlighted because it identifies an aspect of the Narniad - the importance of the feeling evoked by each story, - which relatively few critics have discussed in depth’. Their reluctance to do so is understandable, given the difficulty of writing usefully about something so seemingly nebulous as a story’s atmosphere. An atmosphere is not one of the dramatis personae of a story, but something silent and epiphenomenal. Even if it is consciously ‘heard’ by the reader or critic, it is hard to interpret. But Lewis openly declared himself to be

1 Letter to Arthur Greeves, 18/7/16 (CLI 216).
3 E.g. ‘Considering The Chronicles of Narnia as dispassionately as possible, it seems safe to say that C.S. Lewis has earned by them a place among the greatest writers of children’s books and - surprising as it would have seemed to him - he will probably be remembered for them more than for anything else he wrote’: Green, Roger Lancelyn & Hooper, Walter. C.S. Lewis: A Biography, revised & expanded edition (London: HarperCollins, 2002) 328. ‘This man, who wrote the most glittering religious apologetics of his time, and who was a major literary historian, may well have created his most lasting work in seven fairy tales nominally for children’: Walsh, Chad. The Literary Legacy of C.S. Lewis (London: Sheldon Press, 1979) 157. ‘[The Chronicles] must be judged the most sustained achievement in fantasy for children by a twentieth century author’: Carpenter, Humphrey & Prichard, Mari (eds.). The Oxford Companion to Children’s Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 19887) 370. Hall and Coles, comparing lists of children’s favourite authors compiled in 1971 and 1994, note that ‘C.S. Lewis maintains a remarkably consistent place over the two decades.’ They also note that, in the 1994 survey, Lewis was named ‘more or less equally’ by boys and girls and ‘roughly equally’ across the three age groups of the survey (10-, 12-, and 14-year olds). See Hall, Christine & Coles, Martin. Children’s Reading Choices (London: Routledge, 1999) 45-46.
6 Williams, Rowan. ‘A Theologian in Narnia’, address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 9/11/99; speaker’s own notes (copy in this author’s possession).

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concerned with the atmosphere" of the adventures in Narnia and regarded atmosphere as the chief quality of romance in general. In order to understand the Chronicles then, we must pay attention to the silent atmosphere arising in each story. Lewis thought that silence, though sometimes punitive (as with 'the silent planet' of his first Ransom book), could also sometimes be eloquent of God's glory. In the medieval cosmos the planets are silent and sounding at the same time: their music is not heard on earth because it is always heard. It is this sort of atmosphere, a silence pregnant with meaning, which provides the angle from which the Chronicles are best approached. Before we outline our own argument as to how Lewis goes about taking his readers inside such an atmosphere, we should mention three approaches to the series which we are not going to adopt.

1. Allegory?

The Chronicles are not allegories. While Lewis was not averse to writing allegory and was probably the most vocal defender in the twentieth century of the legitimacy of the genre, he denies that his Narnia stories are allegories. An allegory he understood as the deliberate concretising of the abstract: for instance, the representation of reward as a woman (Langland's Lady Meed) or of hopelessness as a giant (Bunyan's Giant Despair). Narnia contains two allegorical figures constructed on this model and two only: Father Time and Father Christmas, neither of them major characters in the stories in which they appear and neither of them Lewis's invention. The character of Aslan is conceived on what Lewis called a 'suppositional', rather than an allegorical, basis, and the similarities between him and the original on whom he is modelled operate allusively and suggestively, rather than by means of tightly drawn and thoroughly developed correspondences.

2. Children's books?

The Chronicles are not 'children's books'. Of course, they are, and were intended to be, accessible to children, but they are not restricted to that readership. Lewis wrote 'for children' only in the sense that he excluded what he thought they would not like or understand, 'not in the sense of

* See, e.g., SIL, Chapter VIII, 'Faceless Knights'.
" The title of OSP refers not to Mars, Ransom's destination, but Earth or 'Thulcandra', his starting-point; see OSP 77, 140. Earth is thulc ('silent') and does not join in the music of the spheres because her presiding intelligence (Oyarsa) is 'the Bent One'.
" Letter to Warfield Firor, 17/8/49 (CLII 971).
" [The music of the spheres] is the only sound which has never for one split second ceased in any part of the universe; with this positive we have no negative to contrast. Presumably if (per impossibile) it ever did stop, then with terror and dismay, with a dislocation of our whole auditory life, we should feel that the bottom had dropped out of our lives. But it never does. The music which is too familiar to be heard enfolds us day and night and in all ages', 'Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages', originally given as two lectures at the Zoological Laboratory, Cambridge, July 1956; reprinted SMRL 41-63: 52.
E. g., letter to Mrs Hook, 29/12/58 (L 475f).
Father Christmas appears in LWW 98-101; Father Time in LB 142-149 (he is also shown asleep in SC 128).
If Aslan represented the immaterial Deity, he would be an allegorical figure. In reality however he is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, 'What might Christ become like if there 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?' This is not allegory at all ... This ... works out a supposition*, letter to Mrs Hook, 29/12/58 (L 475-476). Cf. letter to Sophia Storr, 24/12/59 (L 486).
writing what I intended to be below adult attention". If the books should turn out to be of interest only to the young, he argues, they would be failures, for, with the exception of books of information, 'no book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally (and often far more) worth reading at the age of fifty". But little is revealed of a story by the fact that it appeals to a literary taste which appears early in life. To describe such tales as 'children's' is therefore misleading and unhelpful and the term will not be adopted in the remainder of this thesis.

3. Hasty and heterogeneous?

The commonest reading of the Narniaid is approving but qualified in one particular way. While acknowledging Lewis's success in creating an attractive secondary world and his ability to catch his readers' imaginations with a mixture of interesting character, exciting event, and intimations of the numinous, critics repeatedly charge the books with one particular fault: mishmash.

'Criticism originates with Tolkien who objected to the variety of traditions upon which Lewis drew for his cast of characters: Nesbitian children from England, fauns from Roman mythology, a Snow Queen from Hans Andersen, Father Christmas from popularised hagiography. To Tolkien, this mixing of lines was not an acceptable heterogeneity, but a monstrous hybrid. Sayer reports that Tolkien 'strongly detested [Lewis's] assembling figures from various mythologies'. He also


See EIC 70-73 for Lewis's most considered defence of this genre.

Neither will two terms which Lewis was prepared to use in connection with the Chronicles, but which we consider unsuited: 'fairy tales' (see, e.g., "Sometimes Fairy Stories May Say Best What's to be Said", EC 526-528) and 'Märchen' (see, e.g., letter of 23/9/63, quoted in Duriez, Colin. J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis: The Story of Their Friendship (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2003) 135).

Apropos the former, in D1 122-138 Lewis acknowledges that the word fairy has been tarnished by pantomime and bad children's books with worse illustrations and he would have known that MacDonald had complained in his essay 'The Fantastic Imagination' that the word 'fairytale' is often used regardless of the fact that the tale may have nothing to do with any sort of fairy. Such tales include the Narnia Chronicles: Lewis's text (and Baynes's illustrations) contain longaevi (fauns, satyrs, dryads, hamadryads, silvans, naiads, et cetera) but no fairies of the diminutive, pretty, gauze-winged kind. Lewis apparently thought that the fairy tale proprement dit was just useful enough as a term to be permitted a continuing life and was perhaps hopeful that Tolkien's essay 'On Fairy-Stories' - to which he often refers as authoritative - would help rehabilitate it. In our view, that rehabilitation has not occurred.

Apropos the latter, the main feature of Märchen, in Lewis's eyes, seems to have been the transition between the ordinariness of the woodcutters and cottages at the outset of the tale and the extraordinariness of the faery characters to whom the story proceeds (cf. THS 7). But this pattern of transition applies to only five of the seven Narnia books (all except HHB and LB). Furthermore, if the tales of the brothers Grimm are taken as the bench-mark of Märchen, none of the Narnia Chronicles fits easily alongside. Lewis's books are much longer, more complex; and of course, each book contributes to a series, so that, considered in toto, the Narniaid has few of the characteristics of true Märchen.

An alternative term, 'Romance', is apt in various ways, albeit liable to lead to confusion with 'love story'. In noting the romance qualities of the Chronicles we are following other critics, such as Schakel, who calls them 'romance-like', and Myers, who notes their 'romance/interlace' structure and deep resonances in Spenser. That Lewis himself did not apparently use the term may have been a tactical device to avoid attracting the fire of critics of romance whom he believed were not content with the death of its reputation, but wanted its corpse 'mutilated and mocked' (EL 330). It may also have been to avoid further tedious explanation; for just as 'fairy-tale' denotes a tale in which fairies do not necessarily appear, and 'children's story' denotes a story which need not appeal only to children, so 'romance' denotes a fiction in which love-affairs do not have to occur. Lewis needed a sevenfold definition of 'romantic' to explain what he was attempting in PR and presumably did not wish to entangle himself in such explanations regarding the Narniaid. Nevertheless, despite its insufficiencies, we believe 'romance' to be more useful than any other term.
thought they were carelessly and superficially written." Given Tolkien's own painstaking methods of composition - likened by Lewis to the work-rate of a 'coral insect' - critics have found it easy to set up the two friends in stark opposition to each other. Adey is typical: 'As novelists, the perfectionist Tolkien and the boyishly eager Lewis represent opposed extremes.' With every passing study the opposition becomes starker and invariably to the detriment of extremes.\footnote{Adey, Lionel. \\*C\& Lewis: Writer, Dreamer \& Mentor\* (Grand Rapids, M: Eerdmans, 1998) 192.} With every passing study the opposition becomes starker and invariably to the detriment of Lewis. For instance, Wilson (who follows and intensifies Carpenter's) regards Tolkien's world as 'finished' and 'complete', with 'never an intrusive moment'. The Narnia books, on the other hand, are a 'jumble'; a 'hodge-podge'; they 'are full of inconsistencies, and by his standards are not even particularly well written. He frequently repeats epithets.\footnote{Wilson, \*AN C& Lewis, A Biography\* (London: Collins, 1990) 225-226.} Wilson does not give examples of these inconsistencies or reveal which epithets he has in mind; does not explain why repetition, a common enough artistic device, should be a sign of bad writing; and does not show awareness of Lewis's view that the recurrence of a single word can be an 'undoubtedly necessary' element in establishing the tone of a passage. (We shall identify some such recurrent, tone-setting words in Chapters Five to Eleven.) Finally, Wilson fails to reflect on the improbability of the situation he describes. Is it at all likely that tales so rapidly fadged up should have achieved the status of classics in their genre? How is it that such carelessly concocted stories should have been read and enjoyed by even one generation of readers, let alone three or four?

One has to conclude that Wilson has allowed Tolkien's reflex dislike of the first book to set the agenda and has not considered Lewis's works with his own eyes\footnote{Sayer, op. cit. 189.}. It must be emphasized that Tolkien's literary tastes were quite extraordinarily narrow (he read little in English literature after Chaucer\footnote{Letter to Miss Douglas, 31/12/47 (Bodleian Library). Cf letter to Sister Penelope, 12/1/50 (L 399) where he describes Tolkien as a 'great but dilatory and unmethodical man'.}); and his motives for disapproving of Lewis's work were perhaps not entirely disinterested\footnote{Adey, Lion. \*S. \& C. Lewis: Writer, Dreamer \& Mentor\* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman, 1998) 192.} There is no need to share his premises when critiquing the Narniad.

Second, the evidence of Lewis's lengthy and careful composition needs to be acknowledged. \*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe\* may be traced to a story begun in 1939 and to pictorial images which had been in Lewis's mind since 1914; it was written in earnest, apparently, in 1948, and published in 1950. In other words it could be said to have been in gestation for 36 years. It is not known how many drafts he wrote because Lewis usually threw away his roughs. However, early work on \*The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'\* and \*The Magician's Nephew\* has survived which shows

\footnote{The alleged hastiness and indiscriminacy remain unsupported by examples.}
that the composition process for these two books was far from facile and instantaneous\(^9\). As late as 1953, when five of the seven books had been written, he could still say that the Chronicles were taking ‘all my imagination’\(^8\). He paid close attention to Pauline Baynes’s illustrations\(^7\).

And third, it must be asked: why compare Tolkien and Lewis at all? Even if the Chronicles had been composed during the heyday of their friendship (in fact, they were not written till the late 1940s and early 1950s, by which time the relationship had begun to cool) it would still be necessary to bear in mind that they were unique individuals and not conjoined twins competing for the same vital literary organs. The two men must be allowed to attempt different things in different ways, and each deserves to be assessed on his own peculiar merits, irrespective of the other’s opinion and the other’s tendency towards slower or faster habits of working. Lewis is not Tolkien quickened any more than Tolkien is Lewis prolonged.

Having outlined three approaches to the books which we will not be sharing, we now turn to a positive line of enquiry.

4. Atmosphere

We begin by repairing to that recurrent feature of Lewis’s critical writings, his interest in what may be called ‘atmosphere’. ‘Atmosphere’ is a somewhat inadequate word to describe what it was that Lewis was concerned with, but then he once complained how his critical interests ‘have no vocabulary’\(^11\). Historical criticism and character criticism had, in his view, by long practice perfected their own terminology, aided by the fact that their concerns were those which people were accustomed to handling in the everyday business of life. ‘But the things I want to talk about have no vocabulary and criticism has for centuries kept almost complete silence on them’\(^12\). He mentions certain pioneering studies in the field - Caroline Spurgeon’s *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us* and Maud Bodkin’s *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* - and also names Wilson Knight and Owen Barfield among those scholars who are attending to the same sort of critical terrain. But Lewis brings no critical terminology out of their works, nor does he forge any permanent terms of his own.

He used a variety of words to try to capture his meaning. They include: ‘the *ipseitas*, the peculiar unity of effect produced by a special balancing and patterning of thoughts and classes of thoughts’\(^13\);

\(^9\) Letter to Anthony Boucher, 5/2/53 (private collection).
\(^11\) Ibid.
Again and again, in defending works of romance, Lewis argues that it is the quality or tone of the whole story which is its main attraction. The invented world of romance is conceived with this kind of richness because romancers feel the real world itself to be 'cryptic, significant, full of voices and 'the mystery of life'\textsuperscript{41}. Lovers of romances go back and back to such stories in the same way that we go 'back to a fruit for its taste; to an air for . . . what? for itself; to a region for its whole atmosphere - to Donegal for its Donegality and London for its Londonness. It is notoriously difficult to put these tastes into words\textsuperscript{42}. We find this interest in such 'tastes' in many places in Lewis's writings and he does not restrict the quality to being an attribute of romance. A Shakespearean tragedy could possess this quality as much as the Faerie Queene: it is 'the vast, empty vision\textsuperscript{43}' of Hamlet which is its chief accomplishment, in his view, - the sense that 'a certain spiritual region\textsuperscript{44}' has somehow been captured by the use of such images as 'night, ghosts, a castle, a lobby where a man can walk four hours together, a willow-fringed brook and a sad lady drowned, a graveyard and a terrible cliff above the sea, and amidst all these a pale man in black clothes\textsuperscript{45}'. It is within the mesh of these images that the mysterious epiphenomenal flavour of Hamlet is caught and exhibited. Likewise, in Voyage to Arcturus, the planet Tormance is so described that it amounts to an encapsulation of 'a region of the spirit\textsuperscript{46}'. It is as though the net of the story - the events, the characters, the descriptions - has temporarily ensnared a 'bird\textsuperscript{47}'. And for the duration of the read, this bird's plumage may be 'enjoyed\textsuperscript{48}'.

\textsuperscript{41} 'On Stories', EC 503.
\textsuperscript{42} 'Christianity and Literature', R 181-197; reprinted EC 411-420: 415.
\textsuperscript{44} SJB 160, 168.
\textsuperscript{45} M 69.
\textsuperscript{46} 'Abeccdarium Philosophicum', The Oxford Magazine, LII (30/11/33) 298. It does not appear in CP.
\textsuperscript{47} E.g., 'we always should attend, not to the objects mentioned in the passage but to its quality and atmosphere, its immediate flavour, so to speak, upon imagination's palate', AOL 276. Cf. letter to Janet Spens, 8/1/34 (CLII 154).
This ‘enjoyment’ may be understood not only in the normal sense, but also in the Alexander sense. If we attempt to Contemplate the emptiness of Hamlet or what Lewis calls the ‘redskinnery’ of The Last of the Mohicans, we will find the quality going dead and cold in our hands, because we will have stopped ‘living the story’. For this ‘atmosphere’ is not one of the ‘abstractions of literary history’, but a description of ‘concrete imagination’ in practice, the full tasting of a work of art on imagination’s palate. And it is for this reason that ‘atmosphere’ is so difficult to put into words, for really, in any given work of art, it is that whole work, not any desiccated critical account of it, which is the thing Lewis is trying to conceptualise. If the atmosphere could have been communicated in any briefer way than the whole work, presumably the artist would have done so. But since he has not, we must be content to accept that every part of the story is necessary for the effect on our literary taste-buds. We must attempt to be inclusive and not discriminate between what we imagine to be the ‘important’ and ‘unimportant’ aspects of the work. ‘A child is always thinking about those details in a story which a grown-up regards as indifferent. If when you first told the tale your hero was warned by three little men appearing on the left of the road, and when you tell it again you introduce one little man on the right of the road, the child protests. And the child is right. You think it makes no difference because you are not living the story at all. If you were, you would know better. Motifs, machines, and the like are abstractions of literary history and therefore interchangeable: but concrete imagination knows nothing of them.”¹¹

And since this ‘atmosphere’ has to be Enjoyed rather than Contemplated, it is, in a sense, invisible. When, in his ‘Meditation in a Toolshed’, Lewis ‘looked along the beam’ he ‘saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam’. The same thing happens with ‘atmosphere’, which may be why - in addition to all the terms mentioned above - Lewis coined the term ‘kappa element’ to denote it. ‘Kappa’ is the initial letter of the Greek κρυπτὸν, ‘hidden’. ‘The Kappa Element in Romance” was the title of the paper he gave as an address to the Martlets, the literary society of University College, Oxford, in 1940, and which formed the basis of his later essay ‘On Stories’, where he writes about ‘atmosphere’ at greatest length. Although he drops the term ‘kappa’ from ‘On Stories’, the hidden thing itself is still his main concern. Indeed, it was an idea which had accompanied him throughout most of his life. In a letter to Arthur Greeves of 1916, discussing Lewis’s own ‘Quest of Bleheris’, he had written: ‘I fear you will like the main gist of the story even less when you grasp it - if you ever do, for as is proper in romance, the inner meaning is carefully hidden.”¹² The inner meaning of each Narnia Chronicle is also, we will argue, carefully hidden, a quality or atmosphere designed to communicate a region of the spirit.

¹¹ ‘Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem?’, SLE 104-5.
¹³ Letter of 18/7/16 (CLI 216); my italics. For other examples of Lewis’s early interest in this subject, see letters to Arthur Greeves of 16/5/16 where he comments on the Gawain poet’s ‘power of getting up atmosphere’ (CLII 180) and 11/7/16 where he writes about ‘the magic of words’ which ‘fill the matter by expressing things that can’t be directly told’ (CLII 210).
5. A fully worked-out idea

Many critics have attempted to unify the Narnia Chronicles under a head, working on the assumption that the books’ apparent stew-like qualities must be merely a manifestation of a deeper homogeneity. These critics have not found it sufficient to say, as Mueller does, that ‘Lewis wrote with deliberate complexity and richness’ and leave it at that. They have looked for ways to demonstrate the series’ underlying simplicity or thematic unity.

Myers, for instance, argues that the septet ‘may be best understood as a miniature Faerie Queene’. She does not claim that her reading is ‘definitive’, which is just as well, given that she elsewhere connects them to what she calls the stages of Anglican commitment. Pietrusz suggests an analysis similar to Myers’ second reading, but makes different identifications.

King and Hulan have both made the case for reading the Narniad as a commentary on the seven deadly sins, but can only agree on where to assign gluttony (The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe) and sloth (The Silver Chair).

Trupia relates the first three published tales to love, faith and hope (in that order) and the last four to the cardinal virtues.

Christopher concentrates on the Chronicles’ supposed indebtedness to Tolkien.

Montgomery claims that ‘The theme [unifying the Chronicles into ‘an integrated single conception’] is that basic of all themes, Redemption through Christ.’

Schakel sees ‘a special imaginative relationship between [Mere Christianity] and the images and stories of Narnia’.

Huttar finds value in “the description of the Chronicles of Narnia as “a sort of Bible”. He thinks the term ‘is accurate enough as a label of the genre: a loose collection of varied material structured
to highlight the climactic events of world history, beginning, middle and end"**.

Wilson, despite his own assessment of the books as jumbled and full of inconsistencies, thinks that faerie land itself provides the series with ‘unity”**.

Manzalaoui invites us to ‘note now the basic governing pattern of every one of the Narnia stories - closeness of the supernatural, the divine, to the mundane, the everyday, the humdrum.’**

Spufford has it both ways by suggesting that ‘the Narnia books are unmistakably unified by Lewis’s common delight in all the heterogeneous stuff he knocked it up from.”**

This thesis will certainly not be making any attempt to disprove the theories listed above. It would, in any case, be impossible to disprove some of them, so unspecific are they. It is sufficient to point out that none of them has been advanced in a fully serious way nor has any one of them commanded general acceptance or even the support of a substantial minority of critics.

One is tempted to conclude that the search for a unifying thread is the search for the rainbow’s end. Perhaps there simply is no governing idea. Lewis wrote, in a letter to a schoolboy called Laurence Krieg, that he did not have the whole series mapped out in his mind when he began the first**. Maybe they are therefore just random.

Yet he never admitted they were random, and one does not need a deep acquaintance with the contours of Lewis’s mind to know that randomness is not a characteristic feature of it. And, indeed, occasionally he gave reason to suppose that there was an underlying plan.

For instance, he leaves the impression that their Christological aspects provide the key to their unity. In a letter to a young girl named Anne Jenkins he writes: ‘the whole Narnian story is about Christ”**. A Christocentric reading has a good deal to recommend it for Aslan, the Christ-figure, is the only character who appears in all seven books. But in the précis of the series which Lewis provides for Anne we are reminded that Aslan, in fact, has definitively Christological roles to play in only three of the seven stories:

*The Magician’s Nephew* tells the Creation and how evil entered Narnia. *The Lion etc the Crucifixion and Resurrection.*

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** ‘When I wrote The Lion, I did not know I was going to write any more. Then I wrote P. Caspian as a sequel and still didn’t think there would be any more, and when I had done The Voyage I felt quite sure it would be the last. But I found I was wrong', letter to Laurence Krieg, 23/4/57 (LTC 68).
** Letter to Anne Jenkins, 5/3/61 (Bodleian Library). Cf. Shasta’s comment about Aslan: ‘he seems to be at the back of all the stories’ (HHB 174).
**Prince Caspian** restoration of the true religion after a corruption.

**The Horse and His Boy** the calling and conversion of a heathen.

**The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'** the spiritual life (especially in Reepicheep).

**The Silver Chair** the continued war against the powers of darkness.

**The Last Battle** the coming of the Antichrist (the Ape). The end of the world and the Last Judgement.

Aslan is creator in the Narnian Genesis (*The Magician’s Nephew*); redeemer in the Narnian Gospel account (*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*); and judge in its version of the apocalypse (*The Last Battle*). But these books make up less than half the sequence. What Christocentric explanation can account for Aslan’s roles in the remaining four books? One might reasonably expect parallels to the annunciation, the nativity, the boyhood and the ascension of Christ; his sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost might even receive a treatment. That would be the natural way of proceeding if Lewis was intending to produce a Christological series. Instead, Aslan in these other four books represents no particular Christological office or stage of Christ’s incarnation or the *missio dei*. His appearances are very various and irregular: he is mistaken for two lions in *The Horse and His Boy*; Lucy can magically make him visible in *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'_; he enters the story among dancing trees in *Prince Caspian_; and in *The Silver Chair* he does not appear bodily within Narnia at all, but is confined to his own high country above the clouds. There seems to be no rhyme or reason, Christologically speaking, for these stories.

Perhaps we should simply bite our critical tongues and accept this trilogy-plus-quartet analysis. Walsh is content to do so. He identifies the three ‘Biblical’ books and categorises the other four as taking place within ‘Act IV’ of the Narnian drama (in spite of the fact that the events of *The Horse and His Boy* actually take place within the time-frame of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*).

Aslan’s role in these books, Walsh argues, is ‘relatively marginal’13. But it is not marginal. In every one of these four books Aslan is mentioned earlier than in either *The Lion* or *The Magician’s Nephew*; his first appearance and his first words occur earlier in these four books than in either *The Lion* or *The Last Battle*; and his overall involvement in these four stories is at least as substantial as in the trio of books dealing with ‘grand, cosmic deeds’. And if *heilsgeschichte* is meant to be our interpretative grid, why is there no indication that Aslan’s mode of appearance in *The Lion* - where he is ‘incarnate’ - is any different from his appearances elsewhere (which are technically Christophanies)? Should we not expect his appearances in ‘Act IV’ to relate to Church history in some way? Should we not expect his appearances in ‘Act IV’ at least to betray a family likeness? But Aslan’s roles in these stories show no uniform features nor any discernible link to historical or prophesied events between Christ’s ascension and second coming. Rather than presenting his theory as ‘3 + 4’, Walsh ought to admit it is ‘3 + 1 + 1 + 1’.

In short, we have to conclude that, if the whole series is ‘about Christ’, it is so in a way which neither scriptural source material nor the major events of salvation history can make sense of.

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14 Ibid.
We find ourselves in this cul-de-sac as a result of attaching too much significance to Lewis’s letter to Anne. The summaries given there are so brief and general as to be of little explanatory use. For instance, to say that The ‘Dawn Treader’ is concerned with ‘the spiritual life’ does little to distinguish it from the other six books. This letter is best understood as an example of Lewis’s avuncular and pastoral interest in one small child (one among hundreds to whom he wrote over the years); it is not a serious piece of literary self-disclosure. For Lewis, everything was ‘about Christ’ in some sense, even Hitler\textsuperscript{3}. Anne is being given a broad and breezy welcome to the series, not a key to its secret workings.

This is not to imply that Aslan is not the most important character in the books, nor to deny that Lewis had serious Christological purposes in mind; we will address those purposes particularly in Chapter Twelve below. But we must get away from thinking only or primarily in Biblical or doctrinal categories in our attempts to find the books’ unity. We must attend more to their poeima and less to their apparent logos; we need to read them in that spirit with which their author ‘writ’, who was more interested in poetic atmosphere than any other literary dimension, and so ‘surrender ourselves with childlike attention to the mood of the story’\textsuperscript{74}.

Alongside his letter to Anne, we must place Lewis’s comments to Charles Wrong in which he hinted at another governing theme, apparently connected not with Christology but with numerology. Wrong records that Lewis ‘happened to have had an idea that he wanted to try out, and by now, having worked it out to the full, he did not plan to write any more’\textsuperscript{75}. Wrong reports Lewis as adding, ‘I had to write three volumes, of course, or seven, or nine. Those are the magic numbers.’\textsuperscript{76}

This evidence is highly intriguing. If Lewis felt he ‘had to write’ at least three books (in order to make a magic number), what did he mean when he told Laurence Krieg that, at the outset, he did not know that he was going to write more than one book? And if Lewis’s idea had been worked out ‘to the full’ after seven books, why did he mention to Wrong the number nine?

One suspects that Lewis was deflecting Wrong from asking questions about this ‘idea’ which originally issued in a single story but which, upon further reflection, required seven books for its completion. Nowhere else is he recorded speaking about the books in these terms. In one place he suggests that their aetiology was purely pictorial, before adding ‘you must not believe all that authors tell you about how they wrote their books’\textsuperscript{77}; and he repeatedly daffed away questions about

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\textsuperscript{3} See LTM 75.

\textsuperscript{4} ‘Edmund Spenser, 1552-99’, SMRL 137.


\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{7} ‘It All Began With a Picture . . . ’, Radio Times, Junior Section, CXLVIII (15/7/60); reprinted EC 529. He goes on to say: ‘This is not because they mean to tell lies. It is because a man writing a story is too excited about the story itself to sit back and notice how he is doing it.’ At the back of Lewis’s mind may have been Spenser’s letter to Ralegh about the Faerie Queene which, in Lewis’s view, was ‘most misleading’ (SIL 137) and ‘demonstrably untrue’ (SIL 140). An apparent inconsistency in Lewis’s account of the conception of the Narniad has to do with the oneiric origin of Aslan. In public, writing for children, he associates the arrival of Aslan in his imagination with ‘dreams of lions’ (‘It All Began With a Picture . . . ’, EC 529); in private, writing to an adult, he calls them ‘nightmares’, letter to Charles Brady, 16/11/56 (Wade Center).
the length of the series with some light comment about not wishing to tire his readers". But what was this idea that made seven neither too many nor too few for its full outworking? We know that the number seven, to this medievalist, was 'numinous'*. And seven is certainly a very prominent number within the Chronicles as well*. We will show that Lewis wrote seven books because seven is the number of the medieval planets.

6. The argument**

Lewis was not a professional writer of romances any more than he was a professional theologian. His career was in medieval and renaissance literature, and it is to this academic literary background that we must look for a proper understanding of his imaginative works.

The central argument of this thesis is that:

a) each of the Narnia Chronicles is primarily to be considered as poeima, rather than as logos;
b) each Chronicle is a poeima designed to instantiate a particular atmosphere*** or donegality***;
c) the seven donegalities correspond to the seven planets as follows:

- The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe - Jupiter
- Prince Caspian - Mars
- The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' - Sol
- The Silver Chair - Luna
- The Horse and His Boy - Mercury
- The Magician's Nephew - Venus
- The Last Battle - Saturn

d) Lewis's intention is to get his readers to Enjoy these donegalities, not to Contemplate them;
e) in each book Aslan is to be understood as the incarnation of the presiding planet's spirit.

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* Letter to Joan, 7/5/54 (LTC 43); cf. letter to Pauline Baynes, 24/5/56 (Bodleian Library).
** DI 185.
*** E.g. 'seven noble lords' (PC 57), 'seven brothers' (PC 69, 70), 'Seven Isles' (PC 99); 'seven friends' (VDT 20), 'Seven Isles' (VDT 21, 134), 'seven lords' (VDT 40, 96, 159, 180), 'seven years' (VDT 134, 150, 152); 'Seven Isles' (SC 54), 'seven days' (SC 57), 'seven days' (HBB 60, 66), 'Seven Isles' (HBB 158), 'seventh' day (HBB 174); 'seven hundred nobles' (MN 57), 'seven feet tall' (MN 61), 'seven hours' (MN 126); 'seven people' (LB 46, 47), 'seven friends' (LB 46), 'party of seven' (LB 48), 'seventh in descent' (LB 51), 'us seven' (LB 89), 'seven figures' (LB 109), 'seven Kings and Queens' (LB 126), 'seventh son' (LB 153).
**** A brief account of this argument appeared in my article, 'Planet Narnia', The Times Literary Supplement (25/4/03) 15. The article prompted two letters in the following week's edition of the TLS, from the Dantist, Barbara Reynolds, and from the novelist, Philip Pullman, who has attracted considerable public notice as a vociferous opponent of Lewis. Reynolds generiously labelled the article 'brilliant' while Pullman remarked, more circumspectly, that it made 'an interesting case': see The Times Literary Supplement (2/5/03) 17.
***** 'In a certain sense, I have never exactly 'made' a story. With me the process is much more like bird-watching than like either talking or building. I see pictures. Some of these pictures have a common flavour, almost a common smell, which groups them together': 'On Three Ways of Writing for Children', Library Association. Proceedings, Papers and Summaries of Discussions at the Bournemouth Conference on 29 April to 2 May 1952 (London: Library Association, 1952) 22-28; reprinted EC 505-514: 513.
****** See Chapter Five, section 6 below for an explanation of the choice of 'donegality' to denote this specific kind of atmosphere.
We believe that these five points can be established beyond reasonable doubt. Chapters Five to Eleven will attempt this, each chapter being constructed in the following tripartite manner:

- ichneusis (tracing the history of the relevant planetary image in Lewis’s writings);
- analysis (loosening up the poiema of the relevant Chronicle to show its planetary foundation);
- exegesis (reading out the theological logos from the planetary poiema).

In Chapter Twelve we will consider what may have motivated Lewis to write in this way and indicate certain consequences that our argument has for future readings of these books.

The reading has such evident explanatory power that it will be presented as definitive, not as a subjective and optional theory. As such it instantly raises two questions, which can begin to be addressed even before we commence the argument proper. First, if the planets are the key to the series, why did Lewis never tell anyone that this was his governing idea? Second, why has it taken over fifty years for anyone to spot it?

7. Why keep silence?

We do not know for sure that Lewis never told anyone of the planetary theme which undergirds the Narnia Chronicles, but it seems almost certain. Of those surviving people who might conceivably have been told - Pauline Baynes, George Sayer, Walter Hooper - none recalls any mention of it ever having been made. If Lewis did happen to reveal it to his wife, his brother, or a close friend, such as Owen Barfield or Arthur Greeves or Austin Farrer, all of whom have now died, none of them disclosed it further.

This fact is, prima facie, an objection to the thesis here being advanced. Lewis, it may be contended, was not a secretive or deceitful person. Although he kept his network of intimate friends fairly small, he was, within that circle, an open and honest man. Sayer records: 'We talked in the frankest way as friends should. I have never known a man more open about his private life.' And although Lewis’s friendship with Sayer may not have been ‘about’ literary composition, we could reasonably expect a similar degree of openness with, say, Green, to whom Lewis related very deeply on literary matters, especially the writing of the Chronicles. But Green makes no reference to the planets in connection with the Narniad.

In answering this objection, we will attempt to show: i) that secrecy was not temperamentally or practically impossible for Lewis; and ii) that there were good literary reasons why he should have wanted to maintain such a secret.

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" 'Friendship must be about something', FL 63.
i) the temperamental and practical possibility of secrecy

First, we must consider whether the view of Lewis as invariably and wholly candid is quite accurate. His was a complex personality, even a mysterious one. Barfield wrote that 'he stood before me as a mystery as solidly as he stood before me as a friend"; Tolkien commented that he was unfathomable"; Muggeridge sensed there was about Lewis 'an element of mystery' and, more darkly, that it included 'some evasion he is hiding from us"; Medcalf has written illuminatingly about his various personae". And if he presented many faces to other people, he did no less to himself, for he was able to identify his own 'postures" and 'multiple factions".

A multi-faceted and impenetrable personality does not of course, equal a secretive (still less, a dishonest) one, but it may create possibilities for such traits. Before Lewis's conversion, he was capable of hiding things from his father", and admitted as much himself". More significantly, he was sometimes content to be less than frank after his conversion. The same Sayer who praises Lewis's openness also recognised the opposite strain in his friend: 'Jack never ceased to be secretive"; he could put up a 'smoke screen". The various omissions from Surprised by Joy (for example, Mrs Moore's name never appears there) led one of his friends to joke that it would have been better entitled Suppressed by Jack". He kept his Civil Marriage concealed for the best part of a year" and the way in which he eventually disclosed it to Maureen Moore was described by Warren Lewis as a 'suggestio falsi". He supported lying if it protected a friend"; and reportedly practised it in order to defend his students") and foxes")

Opinions will differ as to the justifiability of these examples of secretiveness or deception. They do not require to be examined further here for it is not by any means the intention of this thesis to

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" See Sayer, op. cit. xvii.
" See the poem beginning 'Because of endless pride', PR 233; reprinted as 'Posturing', CP 103.
" See 'Legion', The Month XIII (April 1955) 210; revised and reprinted CP 133.
" 'Jack concealed the amount of time he was spending with the Moores ... Jack tried to justify his delay in traveling to Ireland during the long vacation of 1919 by lying ... In the pre-Christian stage of his life, Jack did not hesitate to write whatever he thought necessary to keep his father happy.' Sayer, George. Jack: C.S. Lewis and His Times (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988) 88-90.
" 'My relations to my father help to explain (I am not suggesting that they excuse) one of the worst acts of my life. I allowed myself to be prepared for confirmation, and confirmed, and make my first Communion, in total disbelief', SBJ 130.
" Sayer, op. cit. 238.
" Ibid. 198.
" Ibid. Lewis acknowledges certain omissions (SBJ 160).
" He told Sayer 'it should be kept secret' (Sayer, op. cit. 221) and it was, from 23 April to 24 December 1956.
" See Sayer, op. cit. 209.
build its case on the claim that Lewis was untrustworthy. Though continuingly mysterious and complex, Lewis was undoubtedly in the second half of his life, by most normal measurements, a man of integrity. We merely wish to note that a thoroughly well-maintained secretiveness about the design of Narnia would not be inconsistent with what is recorded about some of his actions and habits. He valued privacy and saw no need to decompartmentalise the various segments of his life: Oxford friends, for instance, may never have heard mention of his Belfast friends. His benefactions were hidden from nearly all his circle and the gifts themselves were almost invariably made anonymously. His kept own identity secret in certain publications, using four different *nom de plume* in the course of his career: 'Clive Hamilton' (for *Spirits in Bondage* and *Dymer*); 'N.W.' (for most of his poems); 'Anonymous' (for the poems in *Fear No More*); and ‘N.W. Clerk’ (for *A Grief Observed*). He lent *Dymer* to Griffiths without revealing that he was the author and he kept up the façade as ‘N.W. Clerk’ even in private correspondence.

Since the post-conversion Lewis was occasionally willing to be economical with the actualité, even in matters of personal honour (such as his marriage), it need come as no surprise that, in the relatively minor and non-moral matter of a literary technique, he should have kept his own counsel. No artist is obliged to disclose his every strategy and we have at least one example of this particular artist actually admitting secrecy, in his letter to Greeves about 'The Quest of Bleheris' mentioned above. Lewis shared his youthful heart and soul with Greeves, but was still prepared to withhold 'the inner meaning' of that early work.

With regard to the Narnia Chronicles and the sheer practical possibility of keeping such a secret, it must be borne in mind that they were 'never read aloud' to the Inklings and that they therefore did not undergo the same scrutiny of that inquisitive and perceptive group as did much of Lewis's output. Tolkien was given a private reading of the first book, but so disliked what he heard that 'he soon gave up trying to read them': there was to be no meeting of minds in that direction. Green, the young protégé, responded more sympathetically and discussed the early drafts with their author in some detail, but seems to have been deliberately steered away from conversation which might have led towards the planetary secret. Pauline Baynes was given free rein to illustrate the books as she thought fit: Lewis carefully examined her finished drawings but did not usually direct their composition.

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Ibid. 238.
E.g., see Schofield, op. cit. 54.
He wrote under that name to Mrs John R. Rolston, 14/5/62 (Wade Center). Cf. letter to Nancy Warner, 26/10/63 (private collection).
See Sayer, op. cit. 189.
See below, Chapter Nine, section 4.

‘He was, to me, the most kindly and tolerant of authors - who seemed happy to leave everything in my completely inexperienced hands! ... I had rather the feeling that, having got the story written down and out of his mind, the rest was someone else’s job, and that he wouldn’t interfere.’ Letter of Pauline Baynes to Walter Hooper, 15/8/67, quoted in Hooper, Walter. *C.S. Lewis, A Companion and Guide* (London: HarperCollins, 1996) 406.
Contending that Lewis was psychologically and practically capable of keeping such a secret is different, of course, from showing that the secret actually existed. The following seven chapters will attempt to demonstrate that. This leaves intact the question as to why Lewis should have wished to be secretive. Literary and theological reasons present themselves. The latter we have lightly touched on in Chapter Three (in the discussion of the impossibility of spiritual introspection) and will treat more fully in Chapter Twelve; the former we will address directly.

ii) literary reasons for secrecy

It is quite clear - even before we consider the planetary theme - that Lewis was attempting to express many aspects of medieval life in the Narnia Chronicles. Language, dress, polity, geography, cosmology and cartography are all presented so as to communicate a sense of the Middle Ages. We will contend that Lewis drew not only on the matter, but also on the compositional conventions, of medieval and early renaissance times in his construction of the Narniad. Secrecy and polysemy were important features of the literature of that period.

For instance, Spenser disguised Venus in the Faerie Queene because he was drawing on the tradition of neo-Platonic thought which deemed it proper that 'all great truths should be veiled', should 'be treated mythically (per fabulosa) by the prudent'. It is for the same reason that the good 'is (usually) hidden' in Spenser and that the Faerie Queene is 'dangerous, cryptic, its every detail loaded with unguessed meaning'. And as with the romance, so with the masque: 'The iconography of masques could be extremely sophisticated. In fact, much of the effort in writing them must have gone into subtle finessing on the well-known iconographical types, into progressively lightening the touch in pursuit of the ideal of multum in parvo. One particular element that was hidden or finessed by these techniques was divine presence. 'In the medieval allegories and the renaissance masks, God, if we may say so without irreverence, appears frequently, but always incognito'. Sir Philip Sidney summed up the prevailing aesthetic temper of the period when he wrote: 'there are many mysteries contained in Poetrie, which of purpose were written darkly, least by prophane wits

E. g., 'hastitude', 'gentilesse', 'estres', 'pajock', 'seneschal', 'cantrips', 'dromonds' are among the medieval (or at any rate medieval-sounding) words which help establish a medieval atmosphere in the Narniad.

E. g., 'silk and cloth of gold . . . snowy linen glancing through slashed sleeves . . . silver mail shirts and jewelled sword hilts . . . gilt helmets and feathered bonnets', PC 183.

Narnia is a medieval monarchy in which sovereigns have real power under the law. Bracton's definition of kingship ('The King is under the Law for it is the Law that maketh him a King', see EL 48) is uttered by King Lune (HHB 187).

E. g., Narnia is a flat, not spherical, world (VDT 175f).

E. g., the Narnian planets have 'influences' (SC 198).

He suggested to Pauline Baynes (letter, 5/11, Bodleian Library) that she draw her map of Narnia so that it looked 'more like a medieval map than an Ordnance Survey', with winds blowing in the corners and dolphins sporting in the sea.
it should be abused." In an age long before universal education and mass communication, and when
the idea of using the vernacular instead of Latin for religious purposes was still a relative novelty, it
was customary to think in such categories. To the modern mind there can only be precious and
élitist reasons for such exclusivity, but at the time the distinctions which these habits of thought
maintained would have been felt to be real and valuable. Since both pearls and swine were believed
to exist, it was important not to throw the former before the latter.

But the pearls of Christian wisdom which suppositionally underlie Narnia are obvious and Lewis
happily discussed them in numerous letters and published articles. We might therefore well ask:
where is the truly hidden, medieval sense of these works? Lewis's professional life was largely given
over to nurturing the relevance of the mindset operating in the literature of medieval and
renaisance Europe, so different from much of the art of the twentieth century, in which
functionalist and brutalism hold 'high-style' and rhetorical maskings in low esteem, and even
buildings are constructed with their innards showing. If Spenser, Sidney and others valued literary
secretiveness, there is little reason to suppose that Lewis, their modern champion, would have
thought differently, indeed strong reason to suppose that he would have followed their example.

In addition to these specifically medieval and renaissance literary reasons for secrecy, Lewis had a
high view in general of the importance in literature of obliquity and praised it in authors as modern
as Walter de la Mere and John Galsworthy. He believed that success in writing comes about
partly by 'secretly evoking powerful associations'; that expressions should 'not merely state but
suggest'; that the mechanism in poetry by which its effects are obtained should not be 'too
visible'; that silences could be 'dialectical' and could make certain things audible; that 'what
the reader is made to do for himself has a particular importance'; that 'an influence which cannot
evade our consciousness will not go very deep'.

As a disciple of the "mystic and natural symbolist" George MacDonald, Lewis had good precedent
for keeping quiet about his artistic intentions. In a Socratic dialogue about the fantastic
imagination, MacDonald writes:

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University Press, 1912-26), iii, 45. Cf. SIL 14.
132 "The immense importance of what is not said, which delights us in Mr de la Mere": 'The Novels of Charles Williams',
BBC broadcast, 1949; reprinted EC 571-576: 573.
133 Irene Forsyte is 'one of the very few heroines whose beauty is made convincing, though it is never described', AMR
105.
134 SIW 317.
135 SBJ 63; cf. letter to Dorothy L. Sayers, 7/4/42 (CLII 515).
136 AOL 229.
137 LTM 79.
138 In Morris's The Life and Death of Jason (1867) every pause of the action 'is but a silence to make audible the
"Formless and wailing thoughts, that press / About our hour of happiness": 'William Morris', R 35-55; reprinted SLE
219-231: 226.
139 'Imagery in the Last Eleven Cantos of Dante's Comedy', paper read to the Oxford Dante Society, 9/11/48; reprinted
SMRL 78-93: 81.
140 'The Literary Impact of the Authorised Version', The Ethel M. Wood Lecture, delivered to the University of London
141 AOL 232.

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Lewis provided a key, in the form of chapter headlines, to the third edition of *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, but did so against his better judgement. If he thought it inadvisable in an avowed allegory, how much more inadvisable would it have been for him to explain the real inner meaning of his Narnian romances?

8. Why undetected?

A second objection also needs to be addressed at the outset: why has it taken over fifty years for the planetary key to be discovered? This reading must be terribly abstruse and convoluted (and therefore implausible or, if plausible, unimportant), or else another of Lewis’s critics would have thought of it long since.

Here the issue is somewhat delicate. Lewis’s critics have indeed been numerous and have included in their ranks many minds with the greatest levels of penetration and insight. The author of this thesis makes no claim even to equal, let alone to surpass, the general critical prowess of such figures as Owen Barfield, Roger Lancelyn Green, Walter Hooper, Rowan Williams, Kallistos Ware, Paul Fiddes, and the many other distinguished scholars who have scrutinised Lewis’s works. Far from being a relationship of even near-equality, this author feels like a child before grown-ups in such company. Nevertheless, a child may sometimes notice what escapes an adult simply by dint of his shorter stature.

To speak personally for a moment and to drop the authorial ‘we’, I must confess that I regard this discovery as a godsend: its circumstances are summarised in the Appendix. I ought also to add, in view of what I am about to say, that I had been reading Lewis for thirty years and studying him for nearly half that time, before happening upon this key. The animadversions which I am about to pass on my colleagues in this field could be applied just as well to my own previous work on Lewis.

There are three main explanations for the overlooking of this matter in the half century since the Narniad was originally published.

The first has already been touched on in the previous chapter and has to do with Owen Barfield, who unwittingly laid something of a false trail across the field of Lewis studies by repeatedly drawing
attention to Lewis’s alleged emphasis upon God’s transcendence. Given his status as ‘the wisest and best’\textsuperscript{134} of Lewis’s unofficial counsellors, Barfield’s views have received close attention. Most of that attention has been fully deserved, but in this one respect Barfield’s testimony is highly subjective. As noted above (Chapter Three, section 3), there were good reasons why Lewis should have emphasised divine transcendence in his private conversations with the anthroposophist Barfield, but it does not follow that there was a similar emphasis in his overall theological outlook. This thesis will be arguing that, among other things, the planetary imagery that informs the Chronicles expresses something of divine immanence. Barfield’s perspective would not incline researchers to suppose that Lewis was especially interested in immanence.

The second reason is that the books’ secret was already considered open. It was always known that the Narniad had more than one level of meaning. Readers were familiar with the second level (the Christian ‘suppositions’); many were not looking for a third stratum of significance.

And the final reason is that those critics who were looking for a third level may not have been as open to the subject of astrology as his work really requires\textsuperscript{135}. Astrology is not a subject which is generally thought to deserve serious consideration; academics are apt to dismiss it as trivial entertainment or foolish superstition. Academics who are Christians may, in addition, regard it as potentially or actually dangerous to spiritual health, and given that most of Lewis’s readers and students have been Christian or well-disposed to the Christian tradition, there was an in-built improbability that his main audience would fully understand his most successful work.

For instance, even where astrology is explicit in Lewis’s work, it has received surprisingly little attention. The Ransom Trilogy is infused throughout with astrological symbolism, but in the only major study of that trilogy, \textit{Planets in Peril} by David C. Downing, there is no more than a single chapter on its medieval and renaissance background, and very little of that is concerned with astrology. Some of the other chapter headings indicate where the author’s principal interests lie: ‘“Smuggled Theology”: The Christian Vision of the Trilogy’; ‘“Souls Who Have Lost the Intellectual Good”: Portraits of Evil’; ‘Ransom and Lewis: Cosmic Voyage as Spiritual Pilgrimage.’ Dimble’s prediction that ‘there will be no mention . . . of . . . the Planets’\textsuperscript{136} when accounts are written of the story’s events seems to have come true! And in studies of Lewis’s poetry, where astrology abounds, the situation is the same. The pioneering study of Lewis’s poetry by Don W. King, repeatedly overlooks astrological symbolism\textsuperscript{137}. If this is the situation apropos the outright

\textsuperscript{134} ‘Wisest and best of my unofficial counsellors’: Lewis’s words of dedication to Barfield on the title page of AOL. Lewis met Barfield in 1919 and had a close, sparring, intellectual relationship with him until some time shortly after his Christian conversion when Barfield felt that ‘something was broken. So, thereafter, broadly speaking, anything Lewis knew about my ideas and opinions he got only from my books, not from conversation with me’ (Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis, 106). And the same was true in reverse: ‘I really know no more of what [Lewis] thought after his conversion than can be gathered from his published writings’ (Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis, 79).

\textsuperscript{135} Whether Lewis seriously believed in astrology will be addressed in Chapter Twelve below.

\textsuperscript{136} THS 369.

\textsuperscript{137} King, Don W. \textit{C.S. Lewis, Poet: The Legacy of his Poetic Impulse} (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2001). For instance, in discussing ‘Break, Sun, my Crusted Earth’ (192-3), King takes the metaphor in the title as a ‘mining metaphor’, when it is clearly an astrological one. In discussing the conclusion of Dymer (136) he focusses on Balder and makes no reference to the inclusion of ‘Saturnian years’. In discussing ‘Thou Only Art Alternative to God’ (206) he inexplicably omits the word ‘Venus’ in his quotation of the last line.
and unavoidable astrology in his work, it is to be expected that the fundamental but implicit astrology of the Narnia Chronicles would escape detection all the more.

Lewis ponders 'who loves Dante as a poet and who loves him as a Thomist'119? A similar question could be asked in the field of Lewis studies: 'Who loves him as a writer and who loves him as a Christian?' His status as a Christian too often causes Pavlovian reactions of approval among his co-religionist readership119; his interest in astrology gets overlooked in the rush to lionise him. As in all schools of study, there is a tendency to concentrate on those elements in the author's writings which harmonize best with critics' existing interests, rather than a willingness to swallow him tout à fait. This inevitable predisposition is mentioned not for the purpose of denigrating Lewis scholarship, but simply to help explain the length of time it has taken for the Narnian penny to drop. This thesis may have been a long time coming, but it is not necessarily to be mistrusted on that account.

Robert Houston Smith and Nancy-Lou Patterson are the only two critics known to this author who have already seen parallels between the Chronicles and the planets: Houston Smith has noticed the Lunar divide in The Silver Chair117; Patterson has seen something of the Saturnine influence in The Last Battle115. But they have not pursued these leads within those stories nor stepped outside those individual texts to see whether such planetary symbolism is to be found across the septet. A third critic, Peter Milward, recognizes the importance of Jupiter in Lewis's imagination and comes close to finding the Jovial theme of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe111. As it happens, none of these critics provided the spark for this present research: their observations were not discovered until it was into its stride. Nevertheless, they provide a sort of unwitting and retroactive corroboration of its findings.

Before leaving the subject of Lewis's other critics, we must mention Sammons118, Haigh118, Oliver118 and Foster118 among those of his readers who have paid attention to his sidereal preoccupations. Even taken together, their studies do not amount to a satisfactory treatment of the subject; and it is

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115 EIC 115.
117 Lindskoog, who considered herself 'mentally “married... to Lewis is an example of this kind of reader: see Lindskoog, Kathryn. 'Reactions from Other Women', in Schofield, Stephen (ed.). In Search of C.S. Lewis (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, 1983) 77-88: 82. See also Bramlett, Perry. C.S. Lewis: Life at the Center (Macon, GA: Peak Road, 1996). It ought to be added that certain reactions of disapproval among Lewis's non-Christian audience seem possibly to be motivated by an equal but opposite Pavlovian response. The uncritical hostility demonstrated towards him by Pullman, Goldthwaite and Holbrook, among others, is, one suspects, owing in part to an a priori opposition to Christianity and/or the Church.
118 See Chapter Eight below, section 4 i).
119 See Chapter Eleven below, section 4 i).
117 Milward, Peter. A Challenge to C-S. Lewis (London: Associated University Presses, 1995). He notes that Jupiter was Lewis's favourite planet (103) and remembers Lewis's own 'sturdily jovial manner' (79), adding 'he was indeed a ... jovial man; and these qualities of his I later recognized ... in his character of the kingly animal Aslan' (104).
120 Oliver, Naomi Glenn. 'The Higher and Lower Mediums of Meaning in Three Models Presented by C.S. Lewis: The Medieval, Modern and Incarnational Models' (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1992). The medieval model, Oliver holds, is 'foundational to Lewis's theology' (54).
a remarkable oversight, for celestial interest is certainly a major feature of the total Lewis landscape, as one of his pastimes", as part of his pre-Christian as well as his post-conversion aesthetic", and in his overall weltanschauung. And it still awaits a full treatment. This dissertation confines itself to an examination of what Donne calls "the Heptarchy" of the Ptolemaic cosmos.

9. Lewis and Dante

One might almost as well say 'the Dantean cosmos', for it was largely through his love of Dante that Lewis grew to be enamoured of the Ptolemaic universe. In 1930 we find him rhapsodising about its portrayal in the Paradiso. He describes the third canticle of The Divine Comedy as like the stars - endless mathematical subtility of orb, cycle, epicycle and ecliptic, unthinkable & unpicturable, & yet at the same time the freedom and liquidity of empty space and the triumphant certainty of movement. I should describe it as feeling more important than any poetry I have ever read... its blend of complexity and beauty is very like Catholic theology - wheel within wheel, but wheels of glory, and the One radiated through the Many.

We shall, as far as space permits, trace some of Lewis's debts to the Commedia in what follows. One debt is secrecy, for Dante thought of poetry as something 'to be adorned as much as possible', to have its 'true sense' hidden beneath a rich vesture of 'rhetorical colouring'. Another debt is the Christianisation of that cosmos, for Dante was the only poet, in Lewis's view, to have infused...

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Footnotes:

1. 'He was much interested in astronomy. Once, when letting a friend and me out of college late at night, he pointed out to us the extremely rare conjunction of five planets all brilliantly visible in a circle in the sky at once'. Derek Brewer, 'The Tutor: A Portrait' in Como, James T. (ed.). C.S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table and Other Reminiscences (London: Collins, 1980) 41-67: 48. Margaret Neyland, who spent January-July 1940 at The Kilns as an evacuee, reports that Lewis was 'a keen astronomer and had a telescope on the balcony of his bedroom': CSL: The Bulletin of the New York C.S. Lewis Society, Vol. 8, No. 11 (September 1977) 16. Joan O’Hare relates how Lewis ‘tried me on astronomy but kindly did not pursue a subject of which I was totally ignorant’: ‘Intellectual Development’ in Graham, David (ed.). We Remember C.S. Lewis: Essays and Memoirs (Nashville TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001) 41-45: 43f.

2. SIB and Dymer are as riddled with celestial interest as are the post-1931 writings.

3. Lewis’s whole outlook was (or attempted to be) cosmic in its range for ‘if you have religion it must be cosmic’: ‘Unreal Estates’, SF Horizons, Spring 1964; reprinted EC 530-538: 533. One of his mental habits was to illustrate the mundane by reference to the sidereal: e.g., ‘[the weather at Dunkirk] was decreed, and decreed for a purpose, when the world was made - but no more so (though more interestingly to us) than the precise position at this moment of every atom in the ring of Saturn... This may sound excessive, but in reality we are attributing to the Omniscient only an infinitely superior degree of the same kind of skill which a mere human novelist exercises daily in constructing his plot’, M 179; cf. MC 43f, 141. Consideration of the heavens showed mundane concerns in a new light, for those who “stare long at the night sky” are ‘less likely than others to be ardent or orthodox partisans’: ‘On Science Fiction’, address to the Cambridge University English Club, 24/11/55; reprinted EC 450-460: 456.


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the medieval model of the heavens with "high religious ardour". We aim to demonstrate that Dante is no longer alone in this latter respect, because Lewis has joined him. It seems appropriate then that, in projecting this analysis of Lewis's theological imagination, we should note his own plans for studying the great Florentine:

The aim is to surprise the imagination of the poet in its more secret workings, to disengage that incessant orchestration which accompanies his drama and which, though it may escape notice while our attention is fixed on the stage, probably contributes in the highest degree to the total effect.\footnote{DI 120; cf. 18f.}

\footnote{Imagery in the Last Eleven Cantos of Dante's "Comedy", a paper read to the Oxford Dante Society, 9/11/48; reprinted SMRL 78-93: 78.}
CHAPTER FIVE

Jupiter

Winter passed and guilt forgiven

Our aim in Chapters Five to Eleven will be three-fold: to track the appearances of the seven planets over the course of Lewis’s writings, to analyse in depth the deployment of those images in the poema of the Chronicles, and then to assess the theological logos embodied in and expressed by that deployment. We will show that the Chronicles, like all good works of art, ‘are complex and carefully made objects’, and that close attention to the very objects they are is both required and amply repaid. Only when we have submitted to the pattern of their design may we consider the ‘many interesting reflections’ which that pattern suggests.

As noted in Chapter Three, of the seven medieval planets only one is named by Lewis in the Narniad: Jupiter, the planet of kingship, which, as Milward has noted, ‘is evidently his favourite’. Jupiter has a long pedigree in Lewis’s works: it shows strongly in his scholarship and poetry, makes a central contribution to the Ransom Trilogy and, most importantly, as we will argue, animates the imaginative vision of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. We will contend that, in this first story, the whole Narnian world and everything in it (including, in a special way, the character of Aslan) are designed so as to embody the Jovial spirit. Both the incarnate Christ-figure and what might be called the discamate Logos - the cosmic Christ, by whom the Narnian universe holds together - owe their nature to the characteristics of Jupiter. What Lewis thus presents to his readers is a Christological image which is a new phenomenon in imaginative literature, a phenomenon which, following hints from him, we will be calling donegality.

1. The pre-eminence of Jupiter

Lewis’s first published encomium on Jupiter appeared in 1935 in the Lysistrata article which accompanied ‘The Planets’. So far we have not examined in its entirety the introduction he gives to that poem. It is now time to see how he chooses to conclude it:

the characters of the planets, as conceived by medieval astrology, seem to me to have a permanent value as spiritual symbols - to provide a Phänomenologie des Geistes which is specially worth while in our own generation. Of Saturn we know more than enough, but who does not need to be reminded of Jove?

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2. EIC 82.
3. Ibid. 84.
4. MN 38. The reason for its being named in MN will be explored in Chapter Ten.
As a key to Lewis’s imagination, the final sentence of this quotation is highly significant. There is permanent symbolic value in all seven planets, but the most timely value is that found in Jupiter; the least timely is in Saturn. Saturn will be considered in Chapter Eleven. Our present task is to see what it was about the symbolic qualities of Jupiter which made Lewis think them so particularly worth while for his own generation.

2. Jupiter in Lewis’s scholarship

Three years before his Lysistrata article, Lewis had for the first time given his series of Oxford lectures entitled ‘Prolegomena to Medieval Poetry’ which found permanent form in The Discarded Image. Its fifth chapter, ‘The Heavens’, summarises his thoughts about the spheres of the Ptolemaic cosmos and deals with Jupiter as follows:

Jupiter, the King, produces in the earth, rather disappointingly, tin; this shining metal said different things to the imagination before the canning industry came in. The character he produces in men would now be very imperfectly expressed by the word ‘jovial’, and is not very easy to grasp; it is no longer, like the saturnine character, one of our archetypes. We may say it is Könung; but we must think of a King at peace, enthroned, taking his leisure, serene. The Jovial character is cheerful, festive, yet temperate, tranquil, magnanimous. When this planet dominates we may expect halcyon days and prosperity. In Dante wise and just princes go to his sphere when they die. He is the best planet, and is called The Greater Fortune, Fortuna Major.7

Lewis acknowledges that Jupiter is no longer archetypal for the modern imagination, and he fastens on the Jovial metal as emblematic of this loss. It is ‘disappointing’ that Jupiter’s metal should be tin. Though seemingly a minor point, this observation flags up the very change Lewis is reporting. No medieval writer could have used tinny as Lewis elsewhere uses it of authors who seemed to him ‘thin’. The medieval mind would have made tin’s ‘shining’ quality the focus of imaginative response, for brightness was then as attractive as bigness is to the modern mind. But since the arrival of the canning industry Jove’s metal has connoted hollowness and cheapness, by association with ‘tin-can’ and ‘tin-pot’. And as with Jove’s metal, so with Jove’s whole personality, Lewis avers: ‘Changes in outlook . . . have almost annihilated Jupiter.’ Concluding his summary of the planets in The Discarded Image, he comments, ‘We find no difficulty in grasping the character of Saturn’; Jove, on the other hand, ‘almost evaded us’10.

Lewis was troubled by this modern inability to recognise Jove at a glance. Jupiter was a staple figure in Western literature, not only in classical sources, but also - Christianized - in medieval and

7 DI 105-106.
8 SBJ 171.
9 DI 109.
10 Ibid.
In nearly four decades of teaching the Western canon at Oxford and Cambridge, Lewis came to a full awareness of Jupiter's centrality. All mainstream writers from Plato to Statoius to Chaucer to Dante to Lydgate to Spenser to Shakespeare to Milton had made use of the Jovial character, many of them with the intent of figuring the deity of their believed religion under a pagan veil. How could students of the twentieth century properly understand that literature if the Jovial archetype were allowed to be forgotten? Anxious to prevent Jupiter's complete disappearance, Lewis began a campaign on his behalf. He put himself forward as Jove's standard-bearer; he advanced his cause in various poetic and fictional operations; and (which is our concern in this section) he repeatedly defended Jove as a yardstick of judgement in his literary criticism.

'Barrow and Bastwick relate how Lewis's 'determined and even aggressive joviality was all on the surface: within was a settled contentment': 'Dante's Status', Medium Aevum XXV, No. 3, 1957; reprinted SMRL 99-100: CF DI 54.


'Dante speaks of the true God under the Pagan name [of Jupiter in Purgatorio VI, 113]: 'Dante's Status', SMRL 99.

In AOL 273 Lewis draws attention to the 'very important marginal gloss' found in Lydgate's Reason and Sensuality which helps explain the significatio of the gods wherever they appear in medieval poetry: 'Jupiter apud poetas accipitur multis modis; aliquando pro deo vero et summno sicut hic ... aliquando capitur pro planeta, aliquando pro celo, aliquando pro igne vel aere superiori, aliquando eciam historialiter accipitur pro rege Crete' (Jupiter is handled among the poets in a variety of ways, sometimes in the place of the true and most powerful God (as here) ... sometimes for the planet Jupiter, sometimes for the sky, sometimes for fire or the aether, sometimes even historically for the King of Crete'). In his copy of Lydgate (now in the Wade Center) Lewis underlined the words aliquando pro deo vero et summno sic hic ut.


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One example occurs in *The Allegory of Love* where Lewis contends that Chaucer’s ‘Troilus and Criseyde’ is a Jovial poem. He writes:

> The poetry which represents peace and joy, desires fulfilled and winter overgone, the poetry born under festal Jove, is of a high and difficult order: if rarity be the test of difficulty, it is the most difficult of all. In it Chaucer has few rivals and no masters.\(^\text{1}\)

Our interest here is not in assessing the validity of Lewis’s judgements; we are simply trying to penetrate his imagination and it is enough to acknowledge what he considered Jovial poetry to be: good in its moral qualities, but difficult poetically to achieve, and rare for that reason (perhaps for the moral reason too). These opinions, we suggest, are likely to have had a bearing on his own poetic practice. Lewis’s moralising compass would have directed him towards Joviality for its goodness; his ambitiousness would have drawn him to its difficulty; his canniness along with his popularising instincts would have noted the implications of its rarity, for there is always a keen and widespread demand for that good which is scarce.

It is worth noting also how Lewis construes Joviality in his comments on ‘Troilus and Criseyde’. He extends the meaning beyond festal and magnanimous kingship to encompass ‘desires fulfilled and winter overgone’. This focus upon the aestival aspect of Jove’s influence was derived, in part, from Lewis’s observation of the development of the Criseyde story in post-Chaucerian English poetry. In Henryson’s fifteenth-century version, ‘The Testament of Cresseid’, Saturn is depicted as a condemnatory and malign Jack Frost character, cold and withering, who is outshone by his son. When Jupiter appears, ‘Fra his father Saturne far different’ (line 172), wintry imagery is replaced by imagery of early summer. Upon Jupiter’s head is ‘ane garland, wonder gay, / Of flouris fair, as it had bene May’ (lines 174-5)\(^\text{3}\).

Another appeal to Jove is found in *Seventeenth Century Studies Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson*. Lewis’s contribution, ‘Donne and Love Poetry in the Seventeenth Century’, is unusual in the Lewis corpus for consisting largely of an attack on its subject\(^\text{4}\). Normally, Lewis writes to praise an accepted author or to rehabilitate an overlooked one, rarely is his motive to downgrade. As so often when we find literary Lewis in depreciatory mode, T.S. Eliot is at the back of it. Eliot had effectively rediscovered Donne for the twentieth century; he rated him very highly. But to Lewis, Donne was, if not our saddest poet, then at least the most uncomfortable, because - paradoxically - he exposes to us something that we find very congenial:

> It would be foolish not to recognize the growth in our criticism of something that I can only describe as literary Manicheaism - a dislike of peace and pleasure and heartsease simply as such. To be bilious is, in some circles, almost the first

\(^\text{1}\) AOL 197.  
qualification for a place in the Temple of Fame. We distrust the pleasures of imagination, however hotly and unmerrily we preach the pleasures of the body... We want, in fact, just what Donne can give us - something stern and tough, though not necessarily virtuous, something that does not conciliate. Born under Saturn, we do well to confess the liking complexionally forced upon us; but not to attempt that wisdom which dominates the stars is pusillanimous, and to set up our limitation as a norm - to believe, against all experience, in a Saturnocentric universe - is folly.  

Lewis fully admits - as a veteran of the trenches he could hardly deny - the Saturnine shadow cast over his contemporaries (that generation which was ‘born under Saturn’). It is sometimes forgotten that Lewis had been a teenage officer in the Great War; he had witnessed ‘horribly smashed men... sitting or standing corpses’ and as an ex-serviceman was under no illusions: he knew that Saturn was the zeitgeist. He turned thither for inspiration himself as he composed the grimmer poems of *Spirits in Bondage*. But he eventually tired of Saturnocentricity (see below, Chapter Eleven) and he tired too of those poets who insisted on repeatedly serving up Saturnine mess, poets such as Owen, Pound, Sassoon and Eliot.

Lewis never explicitly critiques the poetry of Owen or Pound, though his defence of Horatian patriotism in *The Abolition of Man* is presumably in part a response either to Owen’s ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’ or to Pound’s ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’ or to both. But Lewis did pass explicit comment on the poetry of Sassoon and that of Eliot (who began work at a London bank in 1917, just as Lewis was arriving as a volunteer in the front line). Sassoon’s poetry he regarded as stuck in the phase of disillusionment; his was a case of arrested emotional development. Disillusionment was not necessarily a bad thing: it could be a natural phase of maturation and needful for the attainment of deeper realism. Adopted as a fixed perspective, however, it was insufficient. Similarly, the ‘penitential’ quality of Eliot’s poetry at its best was worthy of ‘honour’; but to conclude that all poetry must share that quality would be a *non sequitur*. Such a settled regimen of ‘prayer and fasting’, such an avoidance of cakes and ale, amounted in Lewis’s eyes to a kind of rapprochement with bleakness; it painted its canvas full of unrelieved evil. This was what he meant when he said he found an ‘ultimate deformity’ in Eliot’s poetry.

Stephen Medcalf has shown brilliantly some significant similarities between the later Lewis and the later Eliot. Of the earlier and (for Lewis) far more significant dissimilarities between the two writers we may find a convenient token in the following examples of artistic licence. Lewis was
driven to Whipsnade in late September 1931, but says there were bluebells on the ground at the
time". Eliot was driven to Little Gidding in May 1936, but when it emerged in poetic form he had
turned the event into winter").

Lewis would not have seen these two examples of poetic rewriting as equal and opposite options.
Although his Christianity was as dualistic as he could make it", he believed that, in the last resort,
Jove and Saturn are not on all fours: Jupiter's wisdom 'dominates the stars'. Therefore he
conceived it his Christian duty to be as Jovial as possible, which conviction feeds into his
imaginative writings. The way he satirises the fashionably Saturnine post-Armistice attitude in The
Pilgrim's Regress in the characters of the silly Clevers, who are ever harking back to 'the mud and
the flood and the blood"", is one early indication of this resolve. And in his essay on Donne he
concludes by observing that Donne's influence on the poets of the seventeenth century is seen to
best advantage when his successors (Carew, Lovelace, Marvell) take a Donne-like conceit and
translate it into 'ordinary poetry' where beauty and cheerfulness, 'the great regal name of Jove' and
an 'Olympian' mastery of Saturnine sensations, can break in.

The three scholarly works we have considered all date from the 1930s. The Lysistrata article came
first in 1935; The Allegory of Love followed in 1936; the Grierson festschrift appeared in 1938.
Lewis knew the dangers of over-playing a hand and we find no further explicit appeals to Joviality
in his remaining works of literary criticism (though certain other planets do appear from time to
time, as we shall see below). But if 1938 saw his farewell to Jupiter as a public tool of literary
scholarship, it also saw his emergence as a writer of fiction, a department of letters where different
and more relaxed rules apply. Imaginative writers are allowed - indeed, expected - to adopt symbol
systems, and Lewis transported his love of Jove into this new realm with exuberance.

3. Jupiter in the Ransom Trilogy

The Ransom Trilogy puts in prose fiction much of what Lewis had already expressed about Jupiter
in his lectures and literary criticism, and it is remarkable how little attention this astrological
symbolism has attracted from students of these works. Since Jupiter's wisdom is the dominant

SBJ 189. Lewis may have genuinely misremembered and confused it with a later trip to Whipsnade when the bluebells
were in flower; see his letter to his brother of 14/6/32 (CLII 83). As a votary of Novalis's Blue Flower (SBJ 12) he had
good reason to redate the visit. Cf. the 'acres of blue flowers' in LWW 150.


See letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 20/12/61 (L 501).

PR 69.

Of course, Lewis had already written one work of fiction five years earlier, in the form of PR, but it was allegorical and
autobiographical rather than novelistic and entirely fictional; it also did not sell at all well: hence 1938 as the date of his
'emergence as a writer of fiction'. Even in PR we find Jovial imagery. God is portrayed likening himself to Jove by
implication when he asks John if he has not heard the story of Semele, who was turned to ashes after demanding to see
Jupiter in his unveiled majesty (PR 217). Cf. Ovid, Metamorphoses, Book III.

For instance, even the best extant study of THS, that by Myers, mentions only the manifestations of Mercurial power.
See Myers, Doris. C.S. Lewis in Context (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994) 87. Downing likewise gives a
cursory treatment (see Chapter Four, section 8 above). Robert Houston Smith is alone in recognising that, at the end of
OSP, 'Lewis seemed to imply . . . that Jupiter is the center of his fictional universe.' Smith, Robert Houston. Patches of
power in the heavens we should expect to find a considerable focus on Jovial qualities in these interplanetary adventures. And we do find that. Although Ransom never visits the planet Jupiter, something more important happens: over the course of the trilogy he becomes Jovial himself.

i) Out of the Silent Planet

At the end of Out of the Silent Planet, Ransom, standing on Mars, looks up at the firmament and sees ‘the true king of night’ threading his way through the western galaxy, ‘making its lights dim by comparison with his own’. That is, he sees ‘Jupiter rising beyond the Asteroids’. Ransom ruminates on what the inhabitants of Mars (the Malacandrans) say about the stars:

They call the Asteroids the ‘dancers before the threshold of the Great Worlds’. The Great Worlds are the planets . . . Glundandra” (Jupiter) is the greatest of these and has some importance in Malacandran thought which I cannot fathom. He is ‘the centre’, ‘great Meldilorn’, ‘throne’ and ‘feast’. They are, of course, well aware that he is uninhabitable, at least by animals of the planetary type; and they certainly have no pagan idea of giving a local habitation to Maleldil”. But somebody or something of great importance is connected with Jupiter.”

Those are very nearly the closing words of Out of the Silent Planet; they come in a letter supposedly written by Ransom to the narrator. This letter, as Lewis told one of his correspondents, was meant as ‘a way of preparing a sequel’:

ii) Perelandra

But Lewis was not at this stage clear what kind of sequel there was going to be. In the very final sentence of Out of the Silent Planet there is an indication that any further voyages to the planets will have to involve time-travel. This sentence was intended to cue up Tolkien, who had agreed to write a story about time-travel if Lewis would write one about space-travel. But Tolkien never came up with the goods. As a consequence, in an attempt to justify the final words of Out of the Silent Planet, Lewis roughed out an opening to a time-travel story of his own in that work to which

77 ‘There is no conscious connection between any of the phonetic elements in my “Old Solar” words and those of any actual language. I am always playing with syllables and fitting them together (purely by ear) to see if I can hatch up new words that please me. I want them to have an emotional, not intellectual, suggestiveness: the heaviness of glund for as huge a planet as Jupiter’, letter to Mrs Hook, 29/12/58 (L 476). (Jupiter is heavier than all the other planets put together.) Given that at least one of Lewis’s other planetary names, Viritribia, is an apparent portmanteau of existing English words (see below, Chapter Nine), one suspects that ‘glund’ may be not unconnected with ‘glad’ and ‘jocund’, two important words in Lewis’s Jovial lexicon.

80 Maleldil is the Christ-figure (and sometimes, as here it seems, the God-figure) of the trilogy. ‘Local habitation’ is an allusion to Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream (V, i, 17): ‘a local habitation and a name’. For more on attributing to God ‘a throne and a local habitation’, see M 81.

77 OSP 187.

Letter to Sister Penelope, 9/8/39 (CLII 261).


77
Hooper has given the title *The Dark Tower*. This he eventually abandoned, though not without first salvaging the image of the tower and a little of the time-travel theme for later use in *That Hideous Strength*. Then, dismissing the idea of time-travel for the immediate sequel and getting down to what really interested him, he returned to the threads which he had left dangling in the much longer and far more significant passage at the end of *Out of the Silent Planet*, namely the lines about Jupiter. This, as we shall see, links the first book to the second and both to the third.

The link between the first and second books is small but important. Almost the last words of Ransom in the first book had been, 'Somebody or something of great importance is connected with Jupiter.' The very first words spoken by Ransom in *Perelandra* are, 'By Jove, I'm glad to see you.' He says this out of relief that *Lewis* has survived the spiritual barrage which had bombarded him as he arrived at the cottage in Ransom's absence. But it is not merely a conventional expostulation; it is a literally meant expression. *Lewis*'s survival and Ransom's gladness at it have both been brought about 'by Jove'. A recurrent feature of the Ransom Trilogy is semantics: dead metaphors are brought back to life, decayed meanings are reawakened in various words, Ransom's own name is given an alternative etymology. If we take Ransom's opening 'By Jove!' as an empty phrase, we are missing a trick. Jupiter has brought about *Lewis*'s safe arrival at Ransom's cottage and now the second story can get under weigh. Having linked the end of the Martial book with the beginning of the Venereal book, Jupiter has performed that action which is to be one of his main functions in the third story when Lewis makes him into a priest-king who draws lineages together by his sovereign power and marries them by his sacerdotal authority.

A central theme of the Ransom Trilogy is sex or gender (or both). Having developed, as it were in the background, images of masculinity and femininity respectively in the first two books, Lewis foregrounds the theme in Ransom's own mind near the end of *Perelandra* when he tries 'a hundred times' to put into words the difference between the ousiarchs of Mars and Venus:

He has said that Malacandra affected him like a quantitative, Perelandra like an accentual metre. He thinks that the first held in his hand something like a spear, but the hands of the other were open with the palms towards him... All this

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*The tower is the centrepiece of the N.I.C.E.'s plans (THS 23; cf. 288). The time-travel element consists in Merlin's appearance in the twentieth century from the age of Arthur.*

*Per 16; cf. 68. Ransom longs to return to Malacandra and enjoy another evening 'when Jupiter was rising, too bright to look at' (Per 17).*

*Italicised to differentiate the Lewis who is a character in the story from the Lewis who is writing the story.*

*The language of Weston and Devine, however, is empty. When they say 'By Jove' (OSP 12, 147; THS 38) they mean nothing by it.*

*In THS Lewis extends Joviality so that it includes not just the idea of king, but also of priest-king. This development seems to have come about as Lewis meditated on the significance of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20) about whom he would later write in ROP. In the person of Melchizedek, the 'older, pre-Judaic, priesthood is united with royalty' (ROP 103). 'In some communities priest-kings were normal, but not in Israel. It is thus simply a fact that Melchizedek resembles (in his peculiar way he is the only Old Testament character who resembles) Christ Himself. For He, like Melchizedek claims to be Priest, though not of the priestly tribe, and also King' (ROP 103-4). Interestingly, the Hebrew word for Jupiter is 'Zedek', but it is not clear how it is linked to 'Melchizedek', if at all. Melchisedec [sic] features in THS (274) when Ransom tells Merlin: 'Melchisedec is he in whose hall the steep-stoned ring sparkles on the forefinger of the Pendragon.' Ransom lives on bread and wine (THS 149) which are especially connected with Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18). Cf. letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 16/4/40 (CLII 390).
Ransom saw, as it were, with his own eyes... With deep wonder he thought to himself, "My eyes have seen Mars and Venus. I have seen Ares and Aphrodite.""

The scene is now set for the third book in which these masculine and feminine principles will be united.

iii) That Hideous Strength

It is no accident that the first word of That Hideous Strength is 'matrimony'. The marriage of Mark and Jane Studdock is the mundane expression of mighty cosmic forces. Mark's very name derives from Mars and he becomes, as we shall discover in the next chapter, a Martial character. Jane likewise becomes a Venereal character, as we shall see in Chapter Ten.

The priestly-kingly operations of Jove manifest themselves in two ways in That Hideous Strength: a) at a human level in the character of Ransom; b) at a cosmic level in the actual descent of Jupiter in Chapter 15.

a) Ransom

It has not before been noted by critics of That Hideous Strength that Ransom has by this stage in the trilogy turned into a human version of Jupiter. Although 'Ransom isn't the king of this country or trying to become king' (282), he is unmistakably a king of sorts. He is likened to Solomon (143), Arthur (143)" and to the King in MacDonald's The Princess and Curdie (149); he is seated in a 'throne room' (142); and even his name has changed, from 'Ransom' to 'Fisher-King' (114). In Arthurian romance the Fisher King was a king encountered during the quest for the Holy Grail and in some versions of the story he is identified with the Wounded King. (In the Vulgate Version, for instance, he is known as known as 'Pelles', and the Maimed King as 'Parlan' or 'Pellam').

Ransom's own woundedness is repeatedly emphasised (141-143) and when Jane first sees him we are told that 'she tasted the word King itself with all linked associations of battle, marriage, priesthood, mercy, and power' (143)'*. Later, after she emerges from an audience with him she finds herself 'in the sphere of Jove, amid light and music and festal pomp, brimmed with life and radiant in health, jocund and clothed in shining garments"*. Clearly, Ransom has become a personification of Jupiter, and it is no surprise in the final chapter when we see him 'crowned' and wearing his own 'festal garments'*.

* Per 185-6.
* At the end of the story he goes to the same resting-place as Arthur, which is variously called Abhalljin (274) and Aphallin (368), i.e. Avalon.
* In addition to Ransom and his divine archetype, Maleldil (whom the eldils regard 'as their king', 225), Lewis presents an anti-king (see below in this chapter) and various kingly supernumeraries, including the 'old British under-kings' (31), 'unheard-of kings' of the Pre-Roman and Pre-British past (233), and George VI (210), whom Merlin describes as 'this Saxon king of yours who sits at Windsor' (292; cf. 343). Merlin is said to look like a 'carving of a king' (286).
* This 151.
* Ibid. 367.

79
In his sacerdotal capacity, Ransom acts as wounded healer. His wound is in his foot (an allusion to the messianic text, Gen. 3:15). His pontifical role emerges partly when he serves as the 'bridge' (291) across which the planetary powers pass and partly as he bridges the growing divide in Jane's marriage to Mark, though he makes it clear to her that 'it is not a question of how you or I look on marriage but how my Masters look on it' (334ff). Participating in that Jovial wisdom which governs the heavens, Ransom is able to reunite Jane and Mark with their respective governing planetary powers.

After her interview with Ransom, Jane resolves to 'give Mark much more than she had ever given him before' (151). Her resolution will, among other things, lead to an abandonment of contraceptive sexual intercourse*. The Studdocks' marriage has been emotionally sterile partly because it has been wilfully infertile at the physiological level; but spiritually Jane is learning what it means to be 'left without protection' (144). In Chapter 14, 'Real Life is Meeting', Jane encounters Maleldil 'with no veil or protection between' (318) and from that point onwards, having 'become a Christian' (316), she can receive the virtue of Venus. Once Mark has encountered the crucified Christ (334ff) and undergone a similar conversion, being freed by Martial strength from his whelpish anxieties, he can likewise obediently play his part. In the final chapter, 'Venus at St. Anne's', Mark arrives at the Lodge in a luminous mist** and, entering, finds himself 'in some place of sweet smells and bright fires, with food and wine and a rich bed' (382). Arriving at the Lodge a little later, and standing hesitantly outside, Jane notices how the sleeve of Mark's discarded shirt is hanging over the sill of the bedroom window: 'And in all this damp too. How exactly like Mark! Obviously it was high time she went in.' At this moment, Lewis drops the curtain on the scene and the whole story, and we close the book.

Ransom, like the reader, is left outside the bedroom door, but he knows (as we do) what is going to happen. By choosing to put themselves under the influence of Venus ‘baptised’, instead of Venus ‘untransformed’ (314), Jane and Mark*** are demonstrating their obedience to true, not demoniac", kingship. Like Merlin, who is ‘a true King’s man’ (22), they accept the kingly authority of Ransom, and through him, that of Jupiter, whose sovereignty works through all the heavenly bodies, not only his own. But it is to the planetary Jupiter considered in his own right that we must now look.

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* Ibid. 146. Cf. Ransom's joke about making MacPhee and Grace Ironwood 'marry one another' (200).
** It has even been suggested that this subject gave Lewis the name 'Studdock': stud - dock.
*** The 'warmth' and 'wetness' and 'cloudy light' of the luminous mist pervading this scene make it reminiscent of the 'smoky rain' attendant on Troilus and Criseyde in Chaucer's poem (see AOL 196). In this connection, Ransom can be seen as the 'Jovialisation' of Pandarus, 'the go-between, the bridge' (AOL 197).
**** The reason for Martial Mark's submission to Venus is discussed below in Chapter Six.
***** The 'demoniac' Venus (314) operates under that demoniac king who is alluded to in various places throughout the book. Straik prophesies his arrival: 'A king cometh ... who shall rule the universe ... who shall rule the universe with righteousness and the heavens with judgment' (178); 'It is a man - or a being made by man - who will finally ascend the throne of the universe' (179). This anthropic, usurping spirit of kingship is represented by the logo of the N.I.C.E., 'a muscular male nude grasping a thunderbolt' (215), a clear parody of Jove's bolt. In reality the N.I.C.E. king turns out to be less than human, is indeed anti-human: 'monstrous, improbable, the huge shape of the elephant thrusts its way into the room ... its ears standing stiffly out like the devil's wings ... Something more than danger darted from the sight into Mark's brain. The pride and insolent glory of the beast, the carelessness of its killings, seemed to crush his spirit even as its flat feet were crushing women and men. Here surely came the King of the world' (349-350).
b) Glund

Ransom, of course, is only a vicegerent on behalf of Jupiter himself, who descends majestically in Chapter 15, last of the five planets to do so:

Suddenly a greater spirit came - one whose influence tempered and almost transformed to his own quality the skill of leaping Mercury, the clearness of Mars, the subtler vibration of Venus, and even the numbing weight of Saturn.

In the kitchen his coming was felt. No one afterwards knew how it happened but somehow the kettle was put on, the hot toddy was brewed. Arthur - the only musician among them - was bidden to get out his fiddle. The chairs were pushed back, the floor cleared. They danced. What they danced no one could remember. It was some round dance, no modern shuffling: it involved beating the floor, clapping of hands, leaping high. And no one while it lasted thought himself or his fellows ridiculous. It may, in fact, have been some village measure, not ill-suited to the tiled kitchen: the spirit in which they danced it was not so. It seemed to each that the room was filled with kings and queens, that the wildness of their dance expressed heroic energy and its quieter movements had seized the very spirit behind all noble ceremonies.

Upstairs his mighty beam turned the Blue Room into a blaze of lights. Before the other angels a man might sink: before this he might die, but if he lived at all, he would laugh. If you had caught one breath of the air that came from him, you would have felt yourself taller than before. Though you were a cripple, your walk would have become stately: though a beggar, you would have worn your rags magnanimously. Kingship and power and festal pomp and courtesy shot from him as sparks fly from an anvil. The pealing of bells, the blowing of trumpets, the spreading out of banners, are means used on earth to make a faint symbol of his quality. It was like a long sunlit wave, creamy-crested and arched with emerald, that comes on nine feet tall, with roaring and with terror and unquenchable laughter. It was like the first beginning of music in the halls of some King so high and at some festival so solemn that a tremor akin to fear runs through young hearts when they hear it. For this was the great Glund-Oyarsa, King of Kings, through whom the joy of creation principally blows across these fields of Arbol, known to men in old times as Jove and under that name, by fatal but not inexplicable misprision, confused with his Maker - so little did they dream by how many degrees the stair even of created being rises above him.

At his coming there was holiday in the Blue Room ...

Thus Jupiter arrives on earth and under his wisdom, 'that wisdom which dominates the stars', the other planets are ordered aright in the operations of their influence. Mercury (through the instrumentality of Merlin) confuses the language of the banqueters at Belbury; Mars inflames the animals against the members of the N.I.C.E. who in turn attack one another; Saturn brings a variety of deaths to the evil characters; and Venus at St. Anne's-on-the-Hill presides over the loves of the animals and the married couples, including, of course, the Studdocks.

* With this image of the anvil, Lewis adroitly brings in Thor, the Norse equivalent of Greek Zeus and Roman Jupiter.
* Cf. Tolkien's use of these means. When Aragorn arrives at Gondor 'the joy and wonder of the City was a music of trumpets and a ringing of bells'. Tolkien, J.R.R. The Return of the King (London: Allen & Unwin, 1984) 123.
* THS 326-327.
Mark and Jane are ‘but lately married’ (278) and Jupiter is planning to work through their bodies, bringing to birth the child who is to save Logres (228). The final chapter title, ‘Venus at St Anne’s’, should not lead us to conclude that Venus, rather than Jupiter, has suddenly become Lewis’s chief object of interest. It is in ‘Jove’s monarchal presence bright’ that ‘Aphrodite’s saffron light’ may shine⁴⁴. Venus, more than any of the other planets, can properly operate only under Jupiter’s sovereign and cynosural influence. (For more on this, see Chapter Ten below.) Furthermore, the purpose of Mark and Jane’s intercourse is Jovial, and that in two senses.

At one level, their physical act of love is typically Jovial by virtue of being counter-Saturnine. Jane’s doctoral dissertation was to have been on Donne’s ‘triumphant vindication of the body’ (14; cf. 16); she and Mark originally preferred having a thesis to having children. Now, they together are vindicating their own bodies and ‘the body’ more generally considered (as against the disembodied ‘head’ of the N.I.C.E.) by forgetting Jane’s ‘imagined vocation’⁴⁵ and having ‘children instead’ (380). Donne, that ‘saturnine’ poet⁴⁶, is overcome.

At another level, their act of love will make up for the missed opportunity of which Merlin speaks: ‘For a hundred generations in two lines the begetting of this child was prepared; and unless God should rip up the work of time, such seed, and such an hour, in such a land, shall never be again’ (278f). Rowan Williams finds this reference ‘puzzling’⁴⁷, but it becomes fully explicable if Jove is kept at the centre of interpretation. Ransom disagrees with Merlin; he believes that the Studdocks’ child ‘may yet be born’ (278), even though the most auspicious hour for its begetting has passed. And indeed, it will be born: it will be the next Pendragon, Ransom’s successor. Ransom was the seventy-ninth Pendragon; he inherited the office from a senex in Cumberland who himself had been ‘the successor of Arthur and Uther and Cassibelaun’ (369). But Ransom is now about to hand over his mantle and ‘tomorrow we shall know, or tonight, who is to be the eightieth’ (369). The monarchal presence presiding over Mark and Jane’s bed will bring to life that eightieth Pendragon. We know this from the highly important detail that Jane’s maiden name was ‘Tudor’ (65), a distinction of which she tries not to be excessively proud. Although That Hideous Strength does not disclose the significance of ‘Tudor’, we know from elsewhere what it meant to Lewis. He believed that the mythical British or Celtic line (the heritage of Logres) was the one ‘that goes back through the Tudors to Cadwallader and thence to Arthur, Uther, Cassibelan, Lear, Lud, Brut’⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ ‘The Small Man Orders his Wedding’, lines 45-46 (CP 45-47).
⁴⁶ ‘Dante’s Similes’, paper read to the Oxford Dante Society, 13/2/40; reprinted SMRL 64-77: 73.
⁴⁷ Williams, Rowan. ‘That Hideous Strength: A Reassessment’, address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 5/10/88 (Lewis Society recordings archive).
⁴⁸ Brut, the first king of Britain in mythical history, was the son of Aeneas Silvius (grandson of Ascanius and great-grandson of Aeneas of Troy) and called his British capital Troyovant (New Troy); cf. SMRL 24; DI 179. As part of Brut’s line, Jane is reminiscent of Spenser’s Britomart: ‘from thy wombe a famous Progenie / Shall spring, out of the ancient Trojan blood’, Faerie Queene, III, iii, 22 (SIL 25). Incidentally, Ruth Pitter, whom Lewis once said he would have liked to have married, was another descendant: ‘I always thought the Pitters (dies-piter and all that) descended from Jove, through Aeneas and Brute’, letter to Pitter, 4/1/54 (Bodleian Library). Cf. Bevan, Edwyn. Symbolism and Belief (London: Allen & Unwin, 1938) 30ff.
Aeneas, Jupiter". Thus the Ransom Trilogy concludes with the imminent conception of the heir of Jove".

4. Jupiter in Lewis’s poetry

The delights of the marriage bed are celebrated in one of Lewis’ most astrological poems, ‘The Small Man Orders his Wedding’ to which we have already made brief reference above. It is worth quoting a little more fully, partly in order to understand the effects which Lewis was aiming to achieve at the end of That Hideous Strength, and partly in order to introduce the next stage of our survey: Jupiter in Lewis’s poetry.

The final two stanzas run as follows:

What flame before our chamber door
Shines in on love’s security?
Fiercer than day, its piercing ray
Pours round us unendurably.
It’s Aphrodite’s saffron light,
And Jove’s monarchal presence bright
And Genius burning through the night
The torch of man’s futurity.

For her the swords of furthest lords
Have flashed in fields ethereal;
The dynasts seven incline from heaven
With glad regard and serious,
And ponder there beyond our air
The infinite unborn, and care
For history, while the mortal pair
Lie drowned in dreaming weariness."

The poem is Jovial, heavily indebted to the ‘festal” Epithalamion of Spenser which Lewis clearly regards, like Chaucer’s ‘Troilus’, as having been written under Jove: “Those who have attempted to write poetry will know how very much easier it is to express sorrow than joy. That is what makes

LAM 25.

That a redemptive infant life is about to arrive is suggested by the time of year: ‘It’s ever so near Christmas,’ says Ivy Maggs, just after Ransom has referred to “what happened at Bethlehem” (262; cf. 282). Lewis dated the Preface of THS ‘Christmas Eve, 1943’. Strictly speaking, Lewis ought to allude to the Annunciation, not Christmas. Sammons, in her Guide Through C.S. Lewis’s Space Trilogy (65), thinks that Arthur Denniston will be the new Pendragon, partly because of his Christian name and partly because Camilla is told, by Ransom, that she carries the ‘future’ of Logres in her body (THS 228). (Her pregnancy is the reason Ransom forbids her from joining the dangerous search for Merlin.) At the time of Ransom’s speaking, it is indeed true that the future of Logres rests with the Dennistons’ unborn child, but the story does not end there: more than seven chapters, nearly half the novel, are to follow. Sammons, who is unaware of the importance of Jovial symbolism, elevates two minor characters and Ransom’s passing comment beyond their real significance.


‘The Small Man Orders his Wedding’, lines 41-56 (CP 4647).

‘Edmund Spenser, 1522-99’, Major British Writers, Vol. I, ed. G.B. Harrison (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1954) 91-103; reprinted SMRL 121-145: 130. Cf. ‘The intense desire for posterity (who will people not only earth but heaven) and the astrological connexion of this with the “thousand torches flaming bright” above the house-tops add not only a public but almost a cosmic solemnity to the poem’, EL 373.
the Epithalamion matchless. Music has often reached that jocundity; poetry, seldom. Here in ‘The Small Man’ Lewis tries, with considerable success, to recreate Spenser’s combination of ‘jollity’ and ‘pomp’ in his own blending of ‘merriment’ (line 20) and ‘trumpet blare’ (line 21). Jove is both mentioned in the poem and evoked by its events and images: he is at once an actor in the drama (one of ‘the dynasts seven’) and the ‘monarchal presence’ felt throughout.

Jupiter appears, under various guises, in at least eight of Lewis’s other poems. We will reserve ‘Quam Bene Saturno’, and Dymer for consideration in Chapter Eleven. ‘The Turn of the Tide’ and ‘The Day With a White Mark’ will be mentioned in later sections of this chapter. ‘Le Roi S’Amuse’ and a piece of Latin translation do not require comment. That leaves just two. We deal first with ‘The Planets’. The following lines are the relevant portion:

Soft breathes the air
Mild, and meadowy, as we mount further
Where rippled radiance rolls about us
Moved with music - measureless the waves’
Joy and jubilee. It is JOVE’s orbit,
Filled and festal, faster turning
With arc ampler. From the Isles of Tin
Tyrian traders, in trouble steering
Came with his cargoes; the Cornish treasure
That his ray ripens. Of wrath ended
And woes mended, of winter passed
And guilt forgiven, and good fortune
Jove is master; and of jocund revel,
Laughter of ladies. The lion-hearted,
The myriad-minded, men like the gods,
Helps and heroes, helms of nations
Just and gentle, are Jove’s children,4
Work his wonders. On his wide forehead
Calm and kingly, no care darkens
Nor wrath wrinkles: but righteous power
And leisure and largess their loose splendours
Have wrapped around him - a rich mantle
Of ease and empire.5

Ignoring the complex quantitative and alliterative technique, we focus on the imagery of these lines, noting some of the recurrent themes in Lewis’s presentation of Jupiter: his ‘kingly’ aspect, his ‘festal’ aspect, his association with waves and with the passing of winter, ‘winter passed / And guilt forgiven’—‘Arc ampler’ is an astrological detail, for the sweep of Jupiter’s sphere is wider than that of Mars (the subject of the preceding lines). ‘Faster turning’ is also astrological (the nearer the...

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sphere was to the Empyrean, the quicker its speed of rotation), but possibly has a more modern, astronomical meaning too, given that Jupiter, though the largest of the planets in the Solar System, is the quickest at turning on its own axis, performing one revolution in less than ten hours. Lewis was a keen amateur astronomer and in his correspondence frequently details his observations of Jupiter in the night sky?.

The ‘Isles of Tin’ is a reference to the British Isles (specifically, Cornwall and the Scilly Isles), an area known to the merchantmen of Tyre (see Ezekiel 26-28) as the Casseritides or ‘Tin-Land’. In particular Lewis may be alluding to Himilco’s voyage (c.500 B.C.) round Spain to Great Britain, as recorded in Pliny?° These Tyrian (i.e. Phoenician) traders also make an appearance in the final Jovial poem which we have to consider here. It is the ‘Prologue’ to Spirits in Bondage, which opens thus:

As of old Phoenician men, to the Tin Isles sailing
Straight against the sunset and the edges of the earth,
Chaunted loud above the storm and the strange sea’s wailing,
Legends of their people and the land that gave them birth -
Sang aloud to Baal-Peor, sang unto the horned maiden,
Sang how they should come again with the Brethon treasure laden,
Sang of all the pride and glory of their hardy enterprise,
How they found the outer islands, where the unknown stars arise;
And the rowers down below, rowing hard as they could row,
Toiling at the stroke and feather through the wet and weary weather,
Even they forgot their burden in the measure of a song,
And the merchants and the masters and the bondmen all together,
Dreaming of the wondrous islands, brought the gallant ship along."

The similarities between the ‘Prologue’ and ‘The Planets’ are obvious. In the one, Lewis gives us ‘Tin Isles’, ‘Phoenician men’, ‘Brethon treasure’, ‘toiling . . . through weary weather’; in the other, ‘Isles of Tin’, ‘Tyrian traders’, ‘Cornish treasure’, ‘trouble steering’. Although the ‘Prologue’ does not explicitly mention Jupiter, it is so strikingly similar to the lines from ‘The Planets’ and it heads up a collection in which sidereal imagery is so prevalent, that it may justifiably be counted as one of Lewis’s Jovial poems; in fact, the earliest?°. Taken with the Jovial treatment of the Arthurian legend in That Hideous Strength, these two poems show that Lewis repeatedly conceived of Jupiter as the presiding deity of Britain. He may have been consciously following the astrological system propounded in the Ghâya, a tenth century Arabic manual of magic, in which each planet is said to hold sway over a certain region of the earth. Writing about the Ghâya, Seznec reports (in a passage

7° See letter to Barfield: ‘Isn’t Jupiter splendid these nights?’ (6/9/38, CLII 230); letters to his brother: ‘the most beautiful night I’ve ever seen - full moon, and Jupiter, not, as when you were here, over Adders [Addison’s Walk] but over the tower and under the moon’ (24/11/39, CLII 298); ‘the sky [above The Kilns] was blazing “with few, but with how splendid stars” [a line from James Elroy Flecker, Jupiter among them’ (31/12/39, CLII 312); ‘Did you happen to see the moon (first quarter), Jupiter and Venus, all in a line?’ (18/2/40, CLII 348); and letter to Ruth Pitter: ‘It was beautiful, on two or three successive nights about the Holy Time [i.e. the Christmas just passed], to see Venus and Jove blazing at one another, once with the Moon right between them: Majesty and Love linked by Virginity - what could be more appropriate?’ (2/1/53, Bodleian Library).
8° Pliny the Elder, Natural History, 2.169a.
9° ‘Prologue’, SIB; reprinted CP 163, lines 1-14.
10 That is, the earliest in which Jupiter is treated medievally. See the discussion of ‘Quam Bene Saturno’ in Chapter Eleven below.

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marked by Lewis) that 'Jupiter is the ruler of the Western countries, and for that reason, as the Ghâya expressly states, is the patron of the Christians.'

Whether or not Lewis had encountered the Ghâya before he read Seznec (which was some time after 1953) is unknown. However, we know for certain that Lewis had reason to associate Jupiter not just with Christendom but with Christ himself by 1948 at the latest. That was the year he published Arthurian Torso, his study of the poetry of Charles Williams. In Taliessin through Logres, Williams had written (with characteristic density) of ‘Jupiter’s red-pierced planet’. About this mysterious image Lewis comments as follows:

Williams assumes that the huge reddish spot which astronomers observe on the surface of Jupiter is a wound and the redness is that of blood. Jupiter, the planet of Kingship, thus wounded becomes, like the wounded King Pelles, another ectype of the Divine King wounded on Calvary.

This comment confirms our Jovial-Christological understanding of Ransom in That Hideous Strength. It also helps to explain Lewis’s next work of fiction. With this explicit connection between Jupiter and Christ firmly established in his mind, Lewis was readying himself to capitalize upon all the scholarly and imaginative energy he had devoted to Jove over the years. Everything was now set for the final (and, as it turned out, most successful) push in his campaign to express the Jovial character. In that same year, 1948, Lewis began to compose The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

5. Jupiter in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

In this first of the Narnia Chronicles, Lewis used Joviality in a new way. Jupiter is not merely summarised, as he is in the The Discarded Image, nor merely portrayed, as he is in ‘The Planets’, nor merely personified, as he is by Ransom in That Hideous Strength. The closest precedent for what Lewis was trying to achieve here is ‘The Small Man Orders his Wedding’ where Jove both features as a character and is evoked by the whole poem. But in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe Lewis attempts something more sophisticated than in ‘The Small Man’. He does not press a Jovial orientation onto selected symbols garnered from his general store of images: rather he goes inside Jove, as it were, and writes from within specifically Jovial imagery so that Joviality constitutes the very esse of the story. Jupiter is never named for our Contemplation, but is evoked in an Enjoyable fashion. The tale in toto is constructed out of Jovial symbolism, and, most

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* AT 149-150.

* Cf. letter to William Kinter, 28/3/53 (Wade Center).

significantly, Aslan incarnates that symbolism. In the following analysis, we will look first at the *The Lion* as 'something made' (*poeima*), then examine it in its capacity as 'something said' (*logos*).

i) the Jovial Poeima

Perhaps the best approach to the Joviality which upholds this tale is by looking at the central turning-point in the story, the change from winter to summer. It would be a mistake to think that this seasonal change is simply a way of depicting the advent of 'new life'. Of course it does depict that advent, but it does more. It also conveys the peculiarly Jovial spirit, for Jupiter brings about 'winter passed' ('*The Planets*'), 'winter overgone' (*The Allegory of Love*); he 'overmatches' the 'freezing wastes' and 'unendurable cold' of Saturn and defeats Frost, Wither, Winter, Stone, Steele, *et al*., producing 'torrents of melted snow' (*That Hideous Strength)*. Lewis had pictured a key moment in his path to faith in a similar way*. It would be inconsistent to admit the presence of Jove in all these earlier works and not conclude that Lewis was attempting to communicate a similar thing in *The Lion*. Jove's aestivating influence accounts for the key architectonic feature of this story: the overthrow of the White Witch's reign. She had made it 'always winter. Always winter and never Christmas; think of that!' (23); 'always winter in Narnia - always winter, but it never gets to Christmas' (42); 'always winter and never Christmas' (57); 'always winter and never Christmas' (98). But this Saturnocentric world is about to be brought to its end. Sumer is icumen in.

The great transition away from winter and towards summer starts in Chapter 10 ('The Spell begins to break') and continues gradually throughout the book, culminating in the arrival at the sea in the final chapter. There is not space here to trace the full movement and all the light touches by which Lewis communicates the atmospheric change, but it is worth quoting the main section dealing with the thaw at the end of Chapter 11 and the beginning of Chapter 12:

> Every moment the patches of green grew bigger and the patches of snow grew smaller. Every moment more and more of the trees shook off their robes of snow. Soon, wherever you looked, instead of white shapes you saw the dark green of firs or the black prickly branches of bare oaks and beeches and elms. Then the mist turned from white to gold and presently cleared away altogether. Shafts of delicious sunlight struck down on to the forest floor and overhead you could see a blue sky between the tree tops.

> Soon there were more wonderful things happening. -Coming suddenly round a corner into a glade of silver birch trees Edmund saw the ground covered in all

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* It might fairly be pointed out that in *THS*, the 'sudden warmth' (380) could be considered as much the result of Venereal as of Jovial influence. Lewis might have met this objection by pointing out that he was only following Spenser, for whom 'a single emblem might have many meanings' (SIL 99). But he might have agreed with the objection for he had his doubts about *THS* (see letters to E.R. Eddison, 29/4/43, CLII 571; Owen Barfield, 17/5/43, CLII 574; and Laurence Harwood, 22/12/44, CLII 634). His symbols are so numerous in this story that they sometimes get in the way of one another. It would be better to focus on one planet in one book at a time.

* He describes himself as a snowman beginning to melt (SBJ 179). Cf. his use of the terms 'cosmic summer', 'cosmic winter', and the 'high mid-summer pomp' in which the Son of Man already dwells ('The Grand Miracle', sermon preached at St Jude on the Hill, London, and first published *The Guardian* (27/4/45) 161, 165; reprinted EC 3-9). His full-length work on the same subject of miracles adopts the same set of images. The Incarnation leads to 'spring' (M 127), 'spring-time' (M 128), the first 'snowdrop' (M 145); 'Summer is coming' (M 146).
directions with little yellow flowers - celandines. The noise of water grew louder. Presently they actually crossed a stream. Beyond it they found snowdrops growing.

"Mind your own business!" said the dwarf when he saw that Edmund had turned his head to look at them; and he gave the rope a vicious jerk.

But of course this didn't prevent Edmund from seeing. Only five minutes later he noticed a dozen crocuses growing round the foot of an old tree - gold and purple and white. Then came a sound even more delicious than the sound of the water. Close beside the path they were following a bird suddenly chirped from the branch of a tree. It was answered by the chuckle of another bird a little further off. And then, as if that had been a signal, there was chattering and chirruping in every direction, and then a moment of full song, and within five minutes the whole wood was ringing with birds' music, and wherever Edmund's eyes turned he saw birds alighting on branches, or sailing overhead or chasing one another or having little quarrels or tidying up their feathers with their beaks.

"Faster! Faster!" said the Witch.

There was no trace of the fog now. The sky became bluer and bluer, and now there were white clouds hurrying across it from time to time. In the wide glades there were primroses. A light breeze sprang up which scattered drops of moisture from the swaying branches and carried cool, delicious scents against the faces of the travellers. The trees began to come fully alive. The larches and birches were covered with green, the laburnums with gold. Soon the beech trees had put forth their delicate, transparent leaves. As the travellers walked under them the light also became green. A bee buzzed across their path.

"This is no thaw," said the dwarf, suddenly stopping. "This is Spring. What are we to do? Your winter has been destroyed, I tell you! This is Aslan's doing."

"If either of you mention that name again," said the Witch, "he shall instantly be killed."

While the dwarf and the White Witch were saying this, miles away the Beavers and the children were walking on hour after hour into what seemed a delicious dream. Long ago they had left the coats behind them. And by now they had even stopped saying to one another, "Look! There's a kingfisher," or "I say, bluebells!" or "What was that lovely smell?" or "Just listen to that thrush!"

They walked on in silence drinking it all in, passing through patches of warm sunlight into cool, green thickets and out again into wide mossy glades where tall elms raised the leafy roof far overhead, and then into dense masses of flowering currant and among hawthorn bushes where the sweet smell was almost overpowering.

They had been just as surprised as Edmund when they saw the winter vanishing and the whole wood passing in a few hours or so from January to May. They hadn't even known for certain (as the Witch did) that this was what would happen when Aslan came to Narnia. But they all knew that it was her spells which had produced the endless winter; and therefore they all knew when this magic spring began that something had gone wrong, and badly wrong, with the Witch's schemes. And after the thaw had been going on for some time they all realized that the Witch would no longer be able to use her sledge. After that they didn't hurry so much and they allowed themselves more rests and longer ones. They were pretty tired by now of course; but not what I'd call bitterly tired - only slow and feeling very dreamy and quiet inside as one does when one is coming to the end of a long day in the open. Susan had a slight blister on one heel.

They had left the course of the big river some time ago; for one had to turn a little to the right (that meant a little to the south) to reach the place of the Stone Table. Even if this had not been their way they couldn't have kept to the river valley once the thaw began, for with all that melting snow the river was soon in
flood - a wonderful, roaring, thundering yellow flood - and their path would have
been under water."

This passage expands to the full what Lewis had elsewhere summarised in a couple of words: 'winter
passed', 'winter overgone'. The mention of 'May' is especially notable, for he gives pride of place
to May in his analysis of the theme of Jocundity in Spenser's Mutabilitie Cantos; it is a reminder
of Henryson's Jupiter who is crowned with a garland 'Of flouris fair, as it had bene May'.

Jupiter's May crown leads us to the second major Jovial theme which we find constituting The Lion,
the Witch and the Wardrobe: kingliness. This theme is introduced in the very first description of
Aslan. The children are told that he is 'the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-
beyond-the-sea. Don't you know who is the King of the Beasts?' (75). In case they missed it, they
are told again, almost immediately, 'He's the King' (75). Aslan is 'the true king' (101) who has a
'crown' and a 'standard' (115); he is 'royal, solemn' (117), 'royal and strong' (118), with a 'great,
royal head' (136). Nowhere else in the Narniad is he 'royal'. The theological messages that Lewis
wishes to convey by means of this monarchical imagery will be discussed below. Our purpose here is
to note that Aslan's kingship is only the most obvious form of sovereignty on display.

This is a tale in which kingliness cascades down from 'the Emperor' to 'the King of the wood' to
the High King Peter, and thence to Susan, Edmund and Lucy. Their coronation does not confer a
transitory or accidental attribute, but represents a permanent and essential transformation: 'Once a
king or queen in Narnia, always a king or queen' (165); 'Once a King in Narnia, always a King in
Narnia' (170). Aslan shows Peter 'the castle where you are to be King' and the four thrones 'in
one of which you must sit as King . . . you will be High King over all the rest' (119).

Edmund's hatred of the true King ('that awful Aslan', 85) drives the plot. Edmund prefers the
usurping 'Queen of Narnia and Empress of the Lone Islands' (127) who ensnares him with her
declaration that she wants a boy 'who would be King of Narnia after I am gone' (39); and soon
afterwards she promises him, 'You are to be the Prince and - later on - the King' (39). Edmund is
convinced this is his destiny; he thinks 'about Turkish Delight and about being a King ('And I
wonder how Peter will like that?' he asked himself) and horrible ideas came into his head' (67); he
wants 'to be Prince (and later a King) and to pay Peter out for calling him a beast' (83); he resolves
to 'make some decent roads' when 'I'm King of Narnia'; this 'set him off thinking about being a
King' (84). But eventually he realises that 'It didn't look now as if the Witch intended to make
him King' (104). He finds himself bound to a tree and hears the sound of a knife being sharpened.

Not only is Lewis interested in differentiating good kingship from bad, he is also concerned to
associate good kingship with a certain set of majestic material accoutrements. As a literary critic he

LWW 110-114.
SIL 193.
" CC letter to Warfield Firor, 21/5/48, the year he began composing LWW in earnest where he says that he is enjoying
"the best May this country has had this century" (CLII 853).
* His kingship is referred to in only two of the other six books; VDT 122; HHB 140.

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was interested in images which conveyed that atmosphere of sovereignty typified by Solomon, Charlemagne, Haroun-al-Raschid and Louis XIV, those kings who sat upon 'thrones of ivory between lanes of drawn swords and under jewelled baldachins'\(^1\). In That Hideous Strength, he had suggested this kind of grandeur, sketchily, in his depiction of Ransom's 'throne room' where he reclines in a space full of light upon a sofa placed on a dais under what seem to Jane to be 'massed hangings of blue'. In The Lion he goes further, supplying two descriptions of regal splendour. One is the pavilion where Aslan is first encountered in Chapter 12: 'A wonderful pavilion it was - and especially now when the light of the setting sun fell upon it - with sides of what looked like yellow silk and cords of crimson and tent-pegs of ivory; and high above it on a pole a banner which bore a red rampant lion fluttering in the breeze' (115). The second description serves as the climax of the kingly theme, the coronation of the four children:

In the Great Hall of Cair Paravel - that wonderful hall with the ivory roof and the west wall hung with peacock's feathers and the eastern door which looks towards the sea, in the presence of all their friends and to the sound of trumpets, Aslan solemnly crowned them and led them to the four thrones amid deafening shouts of 'Long Live King Peter! Long Live Queen Susan! Long Live King Edmund! Long Live Queen Lucy!' ... So the children sat on their thrones and sceptres were put into their hands ... And that night there was a great feast at Cair Paravel, and revelry and dancing, and gold flashed and wine flowed.\(^2\)

In this passage Lewis is drawing on the descriptions of Solomon's court in 1 Kings 10:14ff and 2 Chronicles 9:13ff which are full of thrones, lions, gold, ivory and peacocks. Jupiter is 'throne' and 'feast', according to Out of the Silent Planet, and here the images of 'throne' and 'feast' (and also 'crown'), which have been key terms throughout The Lion\(^*\), show themselves to have grown to something of great constancy: in the moment of their crowning the children participate as fully as possible in the kingly spirit which bears up their world.

The two images or themes which we have now examined (kingship and the passing of winter) are clearly fundamental to the book. They do not ornament the story: they comprise the story. But there are a good many other images which supplement these foundational ones for, as Lewis knew, a poet might 'announce the theme of Kingship first and then go on to ring the changes on particular aspects of Kingship. It is one of the simplest ways of turning an abstract conception into poetry'\(^4\). The question arises: 'How far can we - indeed, should we - trace the other images in the book to Jupiter?' Although we aim to show that there are numerous tributaries (some sizeable, some mere rivulets) which supply further Joviality to The Lion, we do not propose to hunt them all down to the last drop, for, as Lewis himself wisely advises, 'it is the task of the critic to begin analyses but not complete them'\(^5\). Also, of course, the more minutely we trace the links, the more debatable

\(^{1}\) PPL 118.
\(^{2}\) LWW 165.
\(^{3}\) 'Throne' (24, 76, 77, 80, 119, 122, 131, 165); 'feast' (20, 105, 165); 'crown' (39, 42, 115, 165).
\(^{4}\) 'Variation in Shakespeare and Others', R 159-180; reprinted SLE 74-87: 79.
\(^{5}\) 'The more concrete and vital the poetry is, the more hopelessly complicated it will become in analysis: but the imagination receives it as simple - in both senses of the word. Oddly enough, it is the chief duty of the interpreter to begin analyses and leave them unfinished', AOL 345.

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certain connecting points will inevitably appear. However, as Farrer contends in defence of his own interpretation of imagery: 'If we appreciate the connexion rightly, we feel the new image emerging out of the hidden mind under the evocation of the images already in place.' Likewise we would suggest that the supplementary and relatively incidental images of Joviality in The Lion emerged into Lewis's imagination once he had in place the central images of kingship and the coming of summer. Avoiding minutiæ then, we will proceed by cross-referencing The Lion with the various Jupiter passages which preceded it in Lewis’s oeuvre and what we independently know of Jupiter from classical and medieval sources. By doing so we will find many other Jovial images in this first Narnia tale. We observe the following:

a) According to ‘The Planets’, Jupiter inspires the ‘lion-hearted’. In the first Chronicle not only do we encounter the great lion, Aslan, but also another lion, who is very excited when he hears Aslan use the phrase ‘Us Lions’: ‘Did you hear what he said? Us Lions. That means him and me. That’s what I like about Aslan: no side, no stand-offishness. Us Lions. That means him and me’ (158). Lewis’s explanation to a young correspondent that he ‘meant the Lion of Judah”, accounts only for Aslan. The Jovial explanation accounts for both Aslan and the other lion. Lewis’s technique here is an echo of that iconographical ambiguity of sixteenth-century poets, of whom he wrote: ‘It was not felt desirable, much less necessary, when you mentioned, say, Jove, to exclude any of his meanings; the Christian God, the Pagan god, the planet as actually seen, the planet astrologically considered, were all welcome to enrich the figure, by turns or even simultaneously.” Thus here: the Jovial imagery informs both the Christological lion and the other lion at once. Significantly ‘other lions’ never appear again in the other Chronicles, for the later books are dominated by planets other than Jupiter”.

b) According to ‘The Planets’, Jupiter is master of ‘jocund revel, / Laughter of ladies’, an accurate description of the ‘happy laughing . . . romp’ (148) which Susan and Lucy (but neither of the boys) enjoy with the resurrected Aslan.

c) Again, according to ‘The Planets’, Jupiter influences people so that they turn into ‘helps and heroes, helms of nations’, which is just what the four children have become by the end of the tale. In the final battle, Peter, Susan and Edmund fight like heroes and Lucy uses her cordial as help in the aftermath, before they are enthroned as ‘helms’ of Narnia.

d) Jovial nations are ‘just and gentle’, according to ‘The Planets’. It is significant that Edmund is given the title ‘Just’, and Susan the title ‘Gentle’ (167). Peter’s title is also Jovial. He is known as ‘Magnificent’ which, on the face of it, has no specific link to the semantic field out of which Lewis

Letter to Carrol, 22/1/52 (LTC 29).
"Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser", SMRL 160.
"It may be asked why Aslan continues to appear as a lion at all in the other, non-Jovial books. Three answers may be given. First, ‘all the planets are represented in each’ (THS 316). Second, Jupiter is especially liable to make his presence felt outside his own domain because his is the wisdom which governs the stars. Third, there are limits to the flexibility of any symbol-system. Nevertheless, as we will demonstrate below, in the other six books Aslan takes on the properties of the other planets even while he (usually) maintains his leonine form.
works when writing about Jupiter. On closer inspection, Lewis is deliberately perpetuating an error Spenser made ('due to some bad Latin translation') when he mistook Aristotle's *megaloprepeia* for *megalopsychia*, 'Magnificence' for 'Magnanimity'. The Jovial character is 'magnanimous' according to the Jupiter passages of both *The Discarded Image* and *That Hideous Strength*. 'King Peter the Magnanimous' is the real meaning of his name. As for Lucy's title, 'Valiant', this is probably derived from Giordano Bruno’s presentation of valour (*fortezza*) as the king of the virtues. Of the four children, Lucy is the closest to the King of the Beasts: it is therefore apt that she should be named after this sovereign moral quality, 'the palladium of every other virtue'.

e) According to the poem, Jupiter wears a 'rich mantle / Of ease and empire'. Both mantle and empire feature in *The Lion*, and both in good and bad modes. The good mantles are the long fur coats which the children find in the wardrobe and which look 'more like royal robes than coats when they had put them on' (54); the bad equivalent is the Witch's 'mantle' (36, 124). (Edmund's abandonment of his robe at the Beavers' house is a clear indication of his preference for the wrong kind of kingship.) As regards 'empire', Aslan's father is 'Emperor' (128, 129) and the usurping Witch lays claim to the title 'Imperial Majesty' and 'Empress' (57, 127). As the Jovial influence works its effects, all names are 'restored to their proper owners' (127).

f) According to 'The Planets', Jupiter brings about 'wrath ended / And woes mended'; according to the book, 'Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight, / At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more' (75). Compare Henryson's 'Testament of Cresseid': 'In his right hand he [Jupiter] had ane groundin speir, / Of his father [Saturn] the wraith [wrath] fra us to weir [ward off].

g) One of the symbols sacred to Jupiter in classical literature is the oak. The oak appears three times in *The Lion*. We read of 'bare oaks' (110), 'sunny glades of oak' (150); and Aslan requires the Witch to leave her wand behind her at 'that great oak' (127) before the parley.

h) Jupiter was especially associated with the island of Crete; the Cretan Jove is mentioned in *That Hideous Strength* (316). The minotaur (the bull-headed man) was known as 'the infamy of Crete' and we find 'Minotaurs' among the monsters at the slaying of Aslan in *The Lion* (123, 138, 142). They never again feature among the *dramatis personae* of the Chronicles.
To return to where we started - 'winter passed' - not only does *The Lion* depict the coming of spring to the countryside, it also presents the thawing-out of the stone statues in the Witch's castle. Lewis is here drawing on Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* and the revivification of the statue of Hermione, a scene which always moved him greatly. The Jovial spirit manifest in *The Winter's Tale* is no doubt one of the main reasons why Lewis valued it so highly, but that aspect of the play is not so relevant for our present purpose as the structural oddities evident in the work. Lewis wrote of them:

> The irregularities in *The Winter's Tale* do not impair, but embody and perfect, the inward unity of its spirit... A supreme workman will never break by one note or one syllable or one stroke of the brush the living and inward law of the work he is producing. But he will break without scruple any number of those superficial regularities and orthodoxies which little, unimaginative critics mistake for its laws. The extent to which one can distinguish a just "license" from a mere botch or failure of unity depends on the extent to which one has grasped the real and inward significance of the work as a whole.

Those comments are worth quoting because of a very frequent criticism which has been levelled at *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Starting with Green, several critics (none of them little and unimaginative) have cavilled at its inclusion of Father Christmas. Kilby calls his presence 'incongruous'; Glover says it 'strikes the wrong note'; Schakel opines: 'To be true to his fantasy world, Lewis should perhaps have created a Narnian equivalent to our Christmas instead of taking it into Narnia.' All these are fair criticisms, on the face of it. But once one has grasped 'the real and inward significance of the work as a whole' one can see why Lewis was so adamant to retain Father Christmas, despite Green's objections. Father Christmas is, in modern culture, the Jovial character par excellence, loud-voiced, red-faced and jolly. Of all the characters in the book, he is the one most unmistakably 'born under Jupiter'. In his copy of *The Golden Bough*, Lewis underlined Frazer's observation that Roman generals, celebrating a triumph, would wear the costume of Jupiter and would have their faces 'reddened with vermilion' so as to imitate the rouged features of the divinity who had brought them victory. And this Jovial redness is part of the colour
scheme of Lewis’s story”. Father Christmas’s gladdeningly red cheeks and his ‘bright red robe (bright as holly-berries)” (98) are entirely within the spirit of the book. The holly berries are especially appropriate for, as the traditional carol has it, ‘the holly bears a berry as red as any blood, and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ to do poor sinners good’. Father Christmas’s berry-red robe, no less than his red-cheeked face, signifies the coming of the true Jupiter, the sacrificial Christ-Lion.

Moreover, his redness is strongly reminiscent of what George MacDonald, Lewis’s ‘master”, once wrote about certain stories he had read in translation: ‘As stories they just want the one central spot of red - the wonderful thing which, whether in a fairy story or a word or a human being, is the life and depth - whether of truth or humour or pathos - the eye to the face of it - the thing that shows the unshowable””. Father Christmas standing against the snow represents just that splash of red-on-white which a tale of Joviality requires. It is the eye to the face of this story, the eye of Jupiter.

II) The Jovial Logos

Having paid close attention to the poiema of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, we are now better equipped to consider the theological messages which the story communicates. We will do this first through an examination of the purport of its two central Jovial images (kingship and the passing of winter). Second, by means of comparison with That Hideous Strength, we will see how Lewis’s theological use of Jovial imagery in The Lion is solidly grounded in his overall theological disposition.

The kingliness of Joviality presented Lewis with a range of metaphors which he felt were particularly useful in presenting Christian ideas. Writing about the Narniad, he explained to a correspondent: “The world of fairy-tale, as the world of Christianity, makes the heart and imagination royalist . . . What my stories do is to liberate - to free from inhibitions - a spontaneous impulse to serve and adore, to have a “dearest dread”, which the modern world starves, or diverts to film-stars, crooners, and athletes.”” The mention of dread reminds us of the ‘tremor akin to fear’ which (in the passage describing the descent of Jove upon St Anne’s) is said to run through young

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iii The different reds in the story are all versions, or perversions, or variants of the redness of Aslan’s blood (143), which is the ultimate token of Jovial presence. Tumnus wears a ‘red muffler’ and ‘his skin was rather reddish too’ (15), his house is dug out of ‘reddish stone’ (19); Lucy grows ‘red in the face’ (28); the winter sun is ‘very red’ (32); the dwarf wears a ‘red hood’ (33); the Witch has a ‘very red mouth’ (33); Edmund’s face becomes ‘very red’ (39); the robin has ‘such a red breast’ (58); ‘you couldn’t have found a robin with a redder chest’ (58); Maugrim the wolf has a ‘great red mouth’ (91); Peter’s shield bears the picture of ‘a red lion, bright as a ripe strawberry’ (100), a ‘drop of blood’ appears on the white cheek of the Witch (106); the sunlight turns ‘redder’ (120); the Witch claims Edmund’s ‘blood’ (129, 130); ‘evil-looking red flames’ rise from the torches of the Witch’s accomplices (138); the sky begins ‘to turn red’ (146); Rumblebuffin has a ‘great red face’ (157).

iv ‘I have never concealed the fact that I regarded him as my master, indeed I fancy I have never written a book in which I did not quote from him. But it has not seemed to me that those who have received my books kindly take even now sufficient notice of the affiliation. Honesty drives me to emphasize it. And even if honesty did not - well, I am a don . . . xxxvii. MacDonald, George. An Expression of Character: the Letters of George MacDonald, ed. Glenn Edward Sadler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994) 133.

hearts in the presence of a mighty king. This kind of royalist reaction is ‘spontaneous’ because people are born ‘to adore and obey’.

Where men are forbidden to honour a king they honour millionaires . . . even famous prostitutes or gangsters. For spiritual nature, like bodily nature, will be served; deny it food and it will gobble poison.”

Elected politicians cannot elicit such a response because their status is temporarily meritocratic, not innate. But people naturally reverence kingship (that is, good kingship, - things are defined by their perfection) because it is a reflection of an aspect of divinity: ‘The universe itself is a constitutional monarchy.’

Lewis would have not regarded Philip Pullman’s ‘republic of heaven” as a realistic alternative image to this monarchical one; he would have thought it poetically ungrammatical, an imaginative solecism, because it is spiritually anthropocentric.

It is important to stress that Lewis is here thinking of ideal kingship, not of its inevitably corrupt human manifestations. (This is one of the great advantages of the genre of romance, that it allows for the presentation of something beyond mundane norms.) Aslan’s kingly power is not self-assertive, but rests on a foundation of submissive acceptance to his Father’s appointment. He will not work against ‘the Emperor’s magic’ but demonstrates his complete devotion to it by dying to achieve Edmund’s ransom.

Peter’s kingship likewise is obedient to higher authority: when he first meets Aslan he apologises for the way he has treated Edmund (‘I think that helped him to go wrong’) and his sincerity is tested when he risks his life to save Susan from the wolf. Later, Edmund learns the same truth in his private conversation with Aslan, and he acts accordingly in his apology to his siblings and in his courage on the battlefield. As Richard Harries observes, Edmund had wanted ‘to make himself king, deceiving himself in the process”

for coronation is a receptive, not a self-assertive, rite. True human kingliness (taking its form from Christ) finds its authority in submission to the commands of the higher king and issues in service of the lower king, who in turn communicates royalty to the rank below him, and so on through all creation”

Lewis, with his ready recognition of God’s sustaining presence in the world, does not see an absolutely strict demarcation between king and commons. Both the creator and the creature are, in a sense, enacting the creature’s life, and therefore the creator’s kingship can be manifest in every creature”. This is what every human heart wants (Lewis believes) if only it could be had.

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18 "Equality", The Spectator, CLXLI (27/8/43); reprinted EC 666-668: 668.
19 EL 49.
22 ‘Cair Paravel’ is a combination of ‘cair’, meaning walled city or castle or fortress, and ‘paravail’, meaning beneath or under (a ‘tenant paravail’ holds property under another who is himself a tenant). ‘Cair Paravel’ thus means something like ‘Castle Under Castle’. Cf. letter to Arthur Greeves, 18/10/19 (CLI 468).
23 Lewis was deeply moved watching the coronation of Elizabeth II on television. He wrote: ‘The pressing of that huge, heavy crown on that small, young head becomes a sort of symbol of the situation of humanity itself: humanity called by God to be His vice-gerent and high priest on earth, yet feeling so inadequate . . . One has missed the whole point unless one feels that we have all been crowned and that coronation is somehow, if splendid, a tragic splendour’, letter to Mary Willis Shelburne, 10/7/53 (LAL 18).
And it is to be had in this romance, which is why Edmund's heart gives 'a great leap (though he hardly knew why) when he realized that the frost was over' (109), for at root he knows that the Queen is 'bad and cruel' (83). The coming of summer is very explicitly said to originate with the Christ-figure: 'this is what would happen when Aslan came to Narnia' (113). It is the prose equivalent of what happens in Lewis's poem 'The Turn of the Tide', whose subject is the nativity at Bethlehem. There, at the birth of Christ, 'Saturn laughed and lost his latter age's frost, / His beard, Niagara-like, unfroze"". Here, in Narnia, with the astrological characters of Saturn and Jove woven silently into the fabric of the story, Lewis presents the same thing. To underscore the connection between Aslan’s parousia and the change of season, Lewis even includes an ‘old rhyme’ which prophesies this very occurrence:

When he bares his teeth, winter meets its death,
And when he shakes his mane, we shall have spring again."

Thus Aslan is ‘the Captain, the fore-runner’ who ‘is already in May or June’ (as Lewis wrote of Christ in Miracles) while his followers on earth are still living ‘in the frosts and east winds of Old Nature - for “spring comes slowly up this way””114. His miracles over Nature ‘proclaim that He who has come is not merely a king, but the King, her King and ours’115.

By means of this aestival image, Lewis communicates the idea that divine kingship is real and effectual, it has practical and observable consequences. Moreover, its effects are not limited to the interiors of individual souls, but are efficacious for the whole of society (releasing Narnia from dictatorship) and even for the non-human environment (trees and rivers and birds and animals all participate in this cosmic spring). The whole creation, which had been groaning in Pauline travail (Rom. 8:22-23), is set free to share in the glorious liberty of the heirs of God.

Having examined some of the theological messages Lewis communicates through his Jovial imagery, we now continue to assess the logos of The Lion, by comparing it with That Hideous Strength. We see three main ways in which Lewis’s handling of Joviality improves on the earlier work.

First, in That Hideous Strength Jupiter is ‘by fatal but not inexplicable misprision, confused with his Maker’. In The Lion there is no need for Lewis to have to distinguish Jovial imagery from the imagery used for the divine figure because they are collapsed into one. Jovial symbolism is simply appropriated and put to work as Christian symbolism. In this respect, Lewis is ingeniously reversing

113 The Turn of the Tide, Punch CCXV (1/11/48) 237; revised and reprinted CP 63-65, lines 69-70. For an instructive comparison of ‘The Turn of the Tide’ to Milton’s ‘On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity’; see King, C.S. Lewis, Poet 216-217.
114 LWW 75.
115 M 146.
116 Ibid. 136.
the normal pattern of his medieval and renaissance sources. ‘In Spenser, as in Milton and many others, Jove is often Jehovah incognito.’ In The Lion, the divine figure is Jove incognito.

Second, by making his protagonist into a Jovial lion instead of a Jovial man, Lewis avoids one of the chief problems of That Hideous Strength, namely the distractions which arise out of the fact that Jane and Ransom are of different sexes. Although Lewis shows himself to be alive to the difficulties of the Ransom-Jane relationship and manages them delicately, the very fact that they are difficulties and have to be treated so gingerly points to a flaw in the original artistic conception.

In The Lion, Lewis’s imaginative blueprint is without this particular smudge. The idea of children relating to a Jovial lion avoids the tricky ramifications of adults (most of the principal ones women) relating to a Jovial man. And positively it allows for a powerful new strain of emotion by tapping into those feelings which adult readers will be able to recall from their earlier days, and which child readers will readily respond to, namely the wonders and dangers of the animal kingdom. Rowan Williams points out the ‘sense of an overpowering intimacy and physicality in relation to God which helps pre-adult (and adult!) readers to make a successful ‘translation’ of the erotic, the warm, enfolding, overwhelming awareness of God without the ambivalence of overtly sexual imagery . . . Aslan as a wild animal allows a sort of redeemed eroticism.’ He calls this ‘brilliantly successful risk-taking’.

A third improvement resides in the handling of the priestly aspect of the Jovial imagery. Aslan brings no couple together in marriage (though his crowning of two boys and two girls together is a distant echo of this theme), but with respect to the sacrificial dimension of priestliness, Aslan’s death for Edmund is a far deeper exploration of this subject than is Ransom’s rather inconsequential bleeding heel. Ransom’s woundedness has no particular dramatic significance in That Hideous Strength; it is merely a left-over from Perelandra. Its non-functioning aspect contributes to the impression that Ransom’s Joviality is slightly theatrical. He has too many of the trappings of a role in proportion to the actions he is called upon to perform; there is a whiff of grease-paint in the Blue Room. On the one hand, he has a tremendous physical presence (strong, young, golden, bearded), but on the other hand, he is an invalid on a couch, at the mercy of his sidereal masters, and faint with longing for the Perelandran Avalon. And it is these latter qualities which seem to

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118 Neoplatonism in the Poetry of Spenser”, SMRL 152.
119 That is, the presentation of Aslan’s character is not so much based upon Lewis’s general understanding of Christ as upon his particular understanding of Jove as a Christologically potent symbol.
120 E.g., Jane warns herself of the dangers of becoming ‘another of this man’s female adorers’, THS 142. Later, when she has become that very thing, she is upbraided by MacPhce for lavishing loyalty on ‘individual personalities’, THS 193. Despite her devotion to Ransom, she takes it for granted that he is ‘the most virginal of his sex’, THS 315.
121 John Goldthwaite is of the view that LWW has its own problems with regard to the presentation of the sexes. He thinks that, in this book, Lewis sets ‘man against woman in a Christian muse parable . . . Christ - how can I put this strongly enough? - Christ was not crucified by a woman’. Goldthwaite, John. The Natural History of Make-Believe: A Guide to the Principal Works of Britain, Europe and America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 237. He overlooks a) the fact that the White Witch is stated to be ‘no Daughter of Eve’, but is half-Jinn and half-giant: ‘there isn’t a drop of real human blood in the Witch’, LWW 76; and b) that Christ - how can this be put strongly enough? - was not crucified as a lion.
122 Williams, Rowan. ‘A Theologian in Narnia’, address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 9/11/99; speaker’s own notes (copy in this author’s possession).
linger in the minds of even quite sympathetic readers. Thus Dorothy Sayers cheerfully mocks Ransom for having become ‘golden-haired and interesting’\(^{133}\). And Rowan Williams can say that Ransom is ‘de-humanised’, ‘disembodied’\(^{134}\). They have a point. Ransom’s sacrificial aura, which he bought at a price in the caves of Perelandra, has become etiolated by the time of the third book. He has turned into a excessively passive valetudinarian, a role which is unsuitable for a Jovial hero, however muscular his arms and shoulders remain.

But in *The Lion*, Aslan’s sacrifice, which ‘lays upon the altar the dearest and the best’\(^{135}\), is dramatically central. It is performative and effectual, not theatrical; this is kingliness in action, the tragic splendour of true goldenness, gentleness and strength. As a consequence, the children’s reactions to Aslan feel completely clean and honest. There is no frisson of masochism in their self-abasement before him. He has earned their deepest devotion.

However, the centrality of sacrifice in *The Lion* is a centrality in terms of plot, not atmosphere. The Narnian atonement is a means to an end, not an end in itself. As Kort points out: ‘the children do not dwell on the sacrifice of Aslan. They know that it is grave, painful, and terribly significant, but they do not try to understand it . . . [F]or Lewis the doctrine of Atonement, while basic, is not central in a Christian account of things.’\(^{136}\) Kort’s judgement is borne out by reference to Lewis’s wider Trinitarian understanding. In Lewis’s view, Christ’s surrender on the Cross was nothing new for he had always been perfectly surrendered to the Father’s will\(^{137}\). What was ‘new’ was his Incarnation, a different mode of surrender, a kenosis that was historically unique: ‘What had happened on Earth, when Maleldil was born a man at Bethlehem, had altered the universe for ever’ (THS 132). Of course, the crucifixion is the acme of that kenosis, the low point which proves his highest obedience. But, as Lewis phrases it, ‘He descends to reascend.’\(^{138}\) In Christ’s great dive the descent to the river-bed is a dredging operation, a demonstration in the flesh of that ‘blessed death of self-surrender to the Father’\(^{139}\) which is a permanent feature of the intra-Trinitarian life, - a feature which is important not so much for what it is simply in itself as for what it produces: the performance of the Father’s will and the procession of the Holy Spirit. It is this perichoretic understanding of the immanent Trinity, as distinct from an approach based on salvific economy, which accounts for why Lewis focusses so little on the atonement *per se*.

It would be in keeping with Lewis’s general theological disposition to say that mankind is saved by the eternal and holy Trinity, rather than by one of His particular historical actions in space-time: -

The incarnation is merely a subset of that divine Supra-Person; the atonement merely a subset of

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\(^{134}\) Williams, Rowan. *That Hideous Strength: A Reassessment*, address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 5/10/88; Lewis Society recordings archive.

\(^{135}\) See note 161 below.

\(^{136}\) Kort, Wesley A. C.S. Lewis Then and Now (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 147.

\(^{137}\) See POP 140.

\(^{138}\) M 115.

\(^{139}\) Ibid. 134.
that incarnation. To ask doctrinal questions about Lewis’s presentation of the Narnian atonement in isolation from the Narnian Trinity is to put the cart before the horse. It may be that there is a crudely substitutional view of the atonement in *The Lion*, such as Lewis claimed to dislike when he found it in *The Court of Sapience*. It may be that there is an element of ‘deception’ in the chosen atoning method (as Worsley suggests). But such questions are by the by. Lewis was not so much interested in how the atonement worked as in the fact that it worked.

‘How’ questions, though useful up to a point, were, in his view, inexhaustible. We can never ‘look at’ the atonement from the outside, determining scientifically how it operates, the relative quantities of human and divine action, the precise calibration of the juridical element. At some point we must simply enjoy it as one feature of the divine life. Myers approaches the right kind of opinion when she says: ‘the desired response to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is not to believe in the vicarious suffering of Christ but to taste it, as Jane tasted kingship in *That Hideous Strength*’. The kingship offered to our palates in *The Lion* is a fuller-bodied kingship than that in the final Ransom book, and vicarious suffering is only one ingredient in it, but the principle Myers enunciates is correct.

We are invited to taste the Jovial flavour in *The Lion* in a much richer and deeper way than is on offer in *That Hideous Strength*. Aslan is not just a Jovial character in an otherwise ‘normal’ and ‘neutral’ story, he is the incarnation of the spirit which animates the entire tale. Jupiter is responsible, as it were, for the existence of the book and everything in it: melting snow, clemency, kings, lions, thrones, feasts, revels, oaks and rubicund faces. Winter does not pass simply as a convenient symbol of regeneration consequent upon the arrival of a Christ-figure: his arrival, his leonine form as the king of the beasts, his crowning of the children, and the passing of winter are all interdependent images which are selected in order to give expression to Jove, whose character is being deployed to present a theological message of considerable complexity and subtlety. We must not think that the Jovial elements are stuck on afterwards to a story that could otherwise exist without them. The central arc of the story, the role of Aslan and the countless apparently ‘ornamental’ details are equally manifestations of the underlying Jovial personality.

It is divine, kingly personality or supra-personality (for God is ‘beyond personality’ and ‘is more than a person’) which is the focus of concern in *The Lion*. And that supra-personality is evident in a variety of ways. It is evident through transcendence (the Emperor-beyond-the-Sea); through creation (as Narnian nature salutes its Maker by tuning itself to His signature key of May-time); through incarnation (the localised, warm, tangible Lion); and through pneumatological enjoyment (the transforming power of the Spirit who enables the children, even after Aslan’s departure, to live

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See AOL 262.


See MC 53-58; cf. *LTM* 106. See also: ‘I think the ideas of Sacrifice, Ransom, Championship (over Death), Substitution etc are all images to suggest the reality (not otherwise comprehensible to us) of the Atonement. To fix on any one of them as if it contained and limited the truth like a scientific definition wd. in my opinion be a mistake’, letter to Mr. Young, 31/10/63 (Wade Center).


MC 131, 137-141.

in great joy', 167). Divine personality (variously imperial, immanent, incarnate and inspirational) is central, not just one of its incarnate actions, however important that might be. Configured under the rubric of Jove, this divine personality is what Lewis is chiefly concerned to communicate.

The transcendent aspect of that quality is the aspect which receives least attention in The Lion, necessarily so, since transcendence is by definition beyond normal experience. Aslan's father, the Emperor is mentioned on a few occasions (75, 128, 129), but never features in propria persona44. Lewis is much more interested in the other three aspects of divine personality.

The creational aspect is a large subject and will not be treated fully until Chapter Twelve. We will suggest there that Lewis's arguments against Naturalism (the belief that creation is not redolent in some respects of a Creator's nature) may well have played a key role in occasioning the composition of The Lion. For now we will simply note that when Peter says 'By Jovel!' (53, 81) he is speaking wiser than he knows, - just as Naturalism must for as long as it claims any truth content for its position. In Lewis's view there is a saturation of created being with the qualities of its creator, even if those qualities remain unrecognised by human creatures.

But there is an incarnation which may bring divine Joviality into relief before the conscious mind: 'The world which would not know Him as present everywhere was saved by His becoming local'14. Aslan's bodily presence is the concentration of the Jovial supra-personality in one place, one character. That kingship which cannot be seen in the transcendent Emperor (because it is beyond human discernment) or in the broader Narnian cosmos (it escapes attention like a large word on a map45) becomes focussed in the King of the Wood. Peter and his siblings can actually hear the name of this manifestation of Jupiter (65). Better, they can actually encounter him: 'they saw what they had come to see' (115). Better still, they can touch him and even stroke him (136). As Farrer wrote, the human mind is 'in the presence of God always' but remains unable to see him 'until he finds a mirror in created existence which will in some measure reflect his image'14. And we will find that, in each book, Aslan is the embodiment of the presiding planetary personality. His character and behaviour in each story are determined by that qualitative reality which each story embodies and expresses.

And what of the Holy Spirit? As Rowan Williams observes: 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe gives us a picture closest to the narrative of Christian doctrine - therefore, not surprisingly, its Trinitarian model is the most 'primitive' and pluralist'15. By this he seems to be noting the fact that the 'Father' (the Emperor) is mentioned more often in The Lion than in any of the other six

14 Nevertheless, his presence is felt in LWW more than in any of the other books. He is not mentioned at all in SC or MN. He receives a single mention only in each of the other stories: PC 86; VDT 87, HHB 140 and LB 126.
15 M 144.
16 Cf. 'the largely printed names of continents [which] escape us on the map - too big for notice, too visible for sight', AOL 358-359.
18 Williams, Rowan. 'A Theologian in Narnia', address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 9/11/99; speaker's own notes (copy in this author's possession).
books. There is an unsophisticated, almost binitarian theology on offer, it would seem. ‘Where is the Spirit?’ Williams asks.

There is one clear suggestion of the Spirit: Asian’s breath and smell (147). There are also some less obvious portrayals of the Spirit’s activity at work. For instance, the way in which the children react to hearing Aslan’s name (‘each felt something jump in its inside’, 65) suggests hearts being strangely warmed. (Edmund feels no great joy, only a sensation of ‘mysterious horror’: Aslan’s name has the odour of death to him, as it has the odour of life to his brother and sisters.) Later, Peter’s penitence before Aslan again suggests the Holy Spirit at work: ‘something made Peter say’ his apology (117). This repeated reference to a vague ‘something’ which stirs and prompts reminds us of Lewis’s comment that ‘“another of whom he was not quite sure” is perhaps no bad beginning for a knowledge about the Holy Ghost’. The Spirit is always elusive (He bloweth where He listeth) and the vagueness of these passages in The Lion may well be Lewis’s acknowledgement of that characteristic.

Whether that is the case or not, the Holy Spirit does not receive much of an explicit treatment in this book - or indeed any of the Narnia Chronicles - for that reason which we examined in Chapter Three: the Spirit cannot be consciously Contemplated. ‘It is the actual presence, not the sensation of the presence, of the Holy Ghost which begets Christ in us’. That the Jovial Spirit is present in the children is evidenced by their fruit; it is by the children’s actions that they discover of whose spirit they are. Edmund must choose the right kind of kingship; Peter must accept his destiny as the High King (117ff); Lucy must learn to obey the King of the Beasts (163). All of them have to grow up in His Spirit and mystically participate in His kingly life. This they do: ‘So they lived in great joy and if ever they remembered their life in this world it was only as one remembers a dream’ (167). They become saturated with Joviality; nothing of them is ‘left over or outside the act’. Their bodies, their clothes, their very patterns of speech become regal as they increasingly submit themselves to this Spirit. Since they would know of the doctrine of the Trinity, they do the Father’s will, bowing the knee to the Son, and showing their faith by their works. It is by His fruits that the Holy Spirit is chiefly depicted.

Ibid.

Holbrook is wide of the mark when he claims that ‘Nowhere does [Aslan] operate within the heart as a prompting to choice’. Holbrook, David. The Skeleton in the Wardrobe, C.S. Lewis’s Fantasies: A Phenomenological Study (Lewisburg: Associated University Presses, 1991) 217, his italics.


We should perceive novitas significance in the ‘spring air flooding into all the dark and evil places’ (156); the ‘rustling’ which Edmund hears when spring comes (108); and the wind ‘rustling’ as Aslan and the Witch talk (130).

We have to watch for His appearances as breath or wind or scent. In PC, the Spirit is in evidence when, despite the lack of wind the leaves of the trees stir and rustle (103, 121); there is ‘magic in [Aslan’s] mane’ (125); his ‘warm breath’ comes all round Lucy (124); he breathes on Susan (133), on Edmund (153), and on the leader of the Telmarines (186). In VDT, ‘a delicious smell breathed’ in Lucy’s face (143) and a ‘fair wind’ (145) bears the ship from the Dark Island. In SC, Aslan blows Eustace and Jill down to Narnia on his ‘breath’ (30, 31), a ‘breath’ which Jill feels again later (104) and a third time (204), the ‘wild breath of Aslan’ (201). In HHB, Aslan breathes ‘on a very large scale’ (137), he gives ‘a deep, rich sigh’ (138) which is ‘not the breath of a ghost’ (138), the trees rustle the third time he speaks his name (140) and there is a ‘strange and solemn perfume’ that hangs about his mane (140). In MN, Polly and Digory look in Aslan’s face and ‘a sweetness and power rolled about them and over them and entered into them’ (165), he has a ‘deep breath’ and a ‘Lion’s kiss’ for Digory (132), and creates Narnia partly with his ‘long, warm breath’ (108). In LB, Aslan breathes on Emeth (156), and the runners in the heavenly Narnia never get ‘out of breath’ (162).

Letter to Mary Willis Shelburne, 20/2/55 (LAL 37).

SBJ 189.
6. Donegality

And in the same way that the children are inside this experience, so readers are intended to enjoy the Jovial influence in the book as its kappa element; it is the beam we are meant to 'look along', not 'look at'. To have disclosed the planetary theme would have been to destroy the very thing he was trying to achieve. As Lewis wrote in The Discarded Image, the characters of the planets 'need to be seized in an intuition rather than built up out of concepts'. If we think about the atmosphere of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe we are, so to speak, intuiting the character of Jupiter.

The quality or atmosphere of a romance is the artistic ipseitas by which Lewis set so much store. In The Lion this ipseitas is not an atmosphere which Lewis discovers as he writes, but one which had an existence in his mind before he put pen to paper. He works within the images with which he is already well acquainted and moves about in that image world so as to create a Jovial setting, a Jovial cast, and a Jovial story.

The images which Lewis co-ordinates are analogous to the musical notes which Holst arranges in his Planets Suite. Lewis greatly admired Holst's orchestral interpretation of the planets and the Suite presumably played a part in the various sources of inspiration which led him to write the Chronicles. This presumption is made not only because of the obvious material similarity between the two works and the fact that Lewis knew and liked the piece, but also because Lewis often drew comparisons between his critical interests and the sorts of effects that musicians were able to achieve:

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Di 109.

Lewis first heard The Planets Suite (or part of it) at a concert in 1935; see Lewis, W.H. Brothers and Friends: The Diaries of Major Warren Hamilton Lewis, ed. Clyde S. Kilby and Marjorie Lamp Mead (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982) 169. Ten years later he heard a gramophone recording and 'was greatly moved by it', though he thought 'Jupiter the weakest'; see letter to Arthur Greeves, 26/12/45 (CLII 693), cf. 13/5/46 (CLII 710). In a letter to Sister Penelope, 31/1/46, discussing the Suite in connection with 'The Descent of the Gods', Lewis wrote: 'About Holst's Planets, I heard Mars and Jupiter long ago and greatly admired them but have heard the complete work only within the last six weeks. But his characters are rather different from mine, I think ... On Jupiter I am closer to him: but I think his is more "jovial" in the modern sense of the word. The folk tune on which he bases it is not regal enough for my conception. But of course there is a general similarity because we're both following the medieval astrologers. His is, anyway, a rich and marvellous work' (CLII 701-702). Holst's Jupiter is named 'the Bringer of Jollity'; cf. 'jollification' (LWW 21), 'jolly' (99), words which do not reappear in the Narniad ('jolly' reappears as an intensifier, but never adjectivally, as here). Seven years after the end of the First World War Holst made the central melody of his Jupiter movement into a hymn-tune, 'Thaxted', and fitted to it the words of Sir Cecil Spring-Rice's poem 'The Two Fatherlands', written in 1919. In its first stanza the poem speaks of love for one's country: 'The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test, / That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best; / The love that never falters, the love that pays the price, / The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.' In the second stanza it speaks of 'another country': 'we may not count her armies, we may not see her King, / Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering.' Once established as the melody to this patriotic hymn (I Vow To Thee My Country), the folk tune which Lewis had found not regal enough for his conception became inextricably linked with a Royalist-Christian-Romantic view of England. It was sung at the wedding of the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1981 and at the Princess's funeral in 1997.

Not that Holst's seven planets are identical with the medieval seven. He omits Sol and Luna, replacing them with Uranus (discovered 1781) and Neptune (discovered 1846).
A story of this kind [i.e. a romance] is in a way more like a symphony than a novel. Corresponding to the themes of the musical form, the literary form has images ... worked into the experience or the world of the characters ... it is always the symphonic treatment of the images that counts, the combination that makes out of them a poetic whole."

The Chronicles of Narnia likewise have their images 'worked into the experience or the world of the characters'. In this they do not differ from other romances (most notably The Faerie Queene); where they do differ is that the 'poetic whole' which they are intended to evince consists of something which already existed in the author's mind: the characters of the planets.

Since there seems to be no precise literary precedent for what Lewis was trying to achieve, it requires a new word. For the quality or atmosphere which arises out of a novel or a romance we may conveniently go on using such terms as 'quality' and 'atmosphere'. For the deliberate encapsulation (or, at any rate, the deliberate attempt at encapsulation) of a pre-existing quality along with the presentation of an individual, Christological incarnation of that quality, it will be useful to have a particular term. Surveying the various words which Lewis uses to denote ipsettas (see Chapter Four, section 4 above), we propose to elect 'Donegality' for this special destiny. Reasons biographical and semantic could be adduced; but the best reason has to do with imagery. Jupiter gives rise to the waves' joy and jubilee', and Donegal was the place which Lewis especially associated with the joy of waves. In Surprised by Joy he writes of enjoying 'glorious hours of bathing in Donegal ... in which the waves, the monstrous, emerald, deafening waves, are always the winner, and it is at once a joke, a terror and a joy to look over your shoulder and see (too late) one breaker of such sublime proportions that you would have avoided him had you known he was coming. But they gather themselves up, pre-eminent above their fellows, as suddenly and unpredictably as a revolution."

Lewis is clearly (and cleverly) deploying Jovial imagery here in his autobiography. God is about to cause a revolution in his whole outlook, and Lewis 'would have avoided him' if he had had the chance. This God is Glund, 'like a long sunlit wave, creamy-crested and arched with emerald, that comes on nine feet tall, with roaring and with terror and unquenchable laughter'. This is 'the cloudily crested, fifty-league long, loud uplifted wave / Of a journeying angel's transit roaring over and through my heart". Lewis, 'like a surf-bather', is 'happily overwhelmed'.

'Donegality' then will serve very aptly as a technical term. By donegality we mean to denote the spiritual essence or quiddity of a work of art as intended by the artist and inhabited unconsciously by

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\*\* SIL 116-117. Cf. 'On Stories' (EC 495); letters to Greeves, 6/10/14 (CLI 75-78), 14/10/14 (CLI 80-82), 8/6/15 (CLI 129f), 11/7/16 (CLI 210).
\*\* SIL 115.

Lewis loved Donegal all his life. See letters to Arthur Greeves, 3/6/17 (CLI 313), 24/7/17 (CLI 330); Warren Lewis, 9/6/19 (CLI 455); Roger Lancelyn Green, 15/9/53 (Bodleian Library); Mary Willis Shelburne, 19/9/54 (LAL 30), 5/10/55 (LAL 43); Rhona Bodle, 3/10/56 (Bodleian Library).

\*\* If we imagine the etymology 'don' (as presiding intelligence) + 'egalité' (equality), we get a word which means 'something equal to a presiding intelligence'. It also yields the useful adjective 'donegalitarian'.


\*\* 'The Day With a White Mark', Punch CCXVII (17/8/49) 170; revised and reprinted CP 42-43, lines 3-4.

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the reader. The donegality of a story is its peculiar and deliberated epiphenomenal atmosphere or quality; its pervasive and purposed integral tone or flavour; its tutelary but tacit spirit, that spirit which the author consciously sought to conjure, but which was designed to remain implicit in the matter of the text, despite being also concentrated and consummated in a Christologically representative character, the more influentially to inform the work and so affect the reader.

'Donegality' applies especially appropriately to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, but will be used equally for it and for all the Chronicles of Narnia. Like the word 'angel' it denotes both the first rank and all subsequent ranks".

The surf of Donegal makes an appearance in *The Lion* and it returns us to the question asked above: where is the Spirit? In keeping with Lewis's focus on the quality of divine Personality, there is no clear equivalent in *The Lion* either to the Spirit's role in the conception of Christ nor to the descent of the Spirit following the Christ-figure's 'Ascension'. Lewis is not interested in a rigorous reworking of all the events of Christ's incarnation, only in those which will best suggest Joviality. The mode of Aslan's arrival is left vague: he is said to be 'on the move'. And his departure is likewise given scant treatment. He 'slips away' after the coronation of the children, and they are simply told, 'He'll be coming and going' (165).

Since there is no clear 'Ascension' in *The Lion*, there is naturally no 'Pentecost'. However, there is a moment which is strongly evocative of the hovering and descending Spirit and of the narrator's powerful desire for union therewith. Artists work best, in Lewis's view, when they suggest rather than when they state, and this moment is a suggestion, embedded within the Jovial imagery of the story: we Enjoy it as we read. The passage comes in the final chapter. Aslan has died and has risen; now it is time for him to confer a double portion of his Jovial spirit on the children before slipping away. Structurally, it is perfect. Waves play an important part in this moment, waves which, like the waters of Spenser's Dart, are doubtless 'nigh chockt with sands of tinny mines". Birds also are important, as we would expect given the common use of birds in Lewis to signify the Spirit (see Chapter Three above, note 95). Musically, the moment is *allargando*. After all the enclosed spaces (wardrobes, dams, caves) and all the tests and trials (the treachery of Edmund, the fight with the wolf, the sacrifice of Aslan, the battle with the Witch), the children finally gain sight of home and have a first taste of the spacious days which await them as Jovial characters in a Jovial world:

> They began marching eastward down the side of the great river. And the next day after that, at about teatime, they actually reached the mouth. The castle of Cair Paravel on its little hill towered up above them; before them were the sands, with rocks and little pools of salt water, and seaweed, and the smell of the sea and long miles of bluish-green waves breaking for ever and ever on the beach. And oh, the cry of the sea-gulls! Have you heard it? Can you remember?"
CHAPTER SIX

Mars

*He is cold and strong, necessity's son*¹

As he let his imagination range over the Ptolemaic heavens, Lewis found his strongest affinity with Jupiter, but his earliest interest was in Mars, one of Jupiter’s many children. Hooper suggests that Lewis ‘can’t have been much more than five or six years old’ when he began to write the following story, reproduced here in full as it appears in his notebook²:

To Mars and back – Lewis

I.

When I first met Brown F.R.A.S., I had no idea that his love for Jules Verne’s side of astronomy would lead me into this. I came to know him through his 1/2-brother James: as I took a mild interest in astronomy, Brown and I were good chums. It was after I had known him for about a month that he suddenly dined in to see me one night.

“Bensin I’m going to Mars” he said in his short way. I laughed. “How?” said I. “In a vessel” said he “all I want is money.” “Don’t be a fool Brown” said I “you’ll never do it!” “Oh yes I will” quoth he “at any rate I’ll try.”

[page two]

“It is wrong to commit suicide specially when one has wife and children” I observed. “It is, very wrong,” said Brown “but I am not doing to. However I thought I’d give you the chance of coming with me: - will you?” Come with him! - I hadn’t thought of that. I reflected and then said, “If you don’t mind Brown I’ll wait till you have settled your arrangements” “Sorry Bensin” returned my friend “but I am going

¹ ‘The Planets’, CP 28, lines 78-79.
² OTOW 10.
³ Now in the possession of Walter Hooper.
Bensin's concern for 'Brown, F.R.A.S.' foreshadows Lewis's anxiety over Ransom in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*. The reference to 'Jules Verne's side of astronomy' indicates the extent of the young Lewis's reading and suggests that the 'heady attraction' to the planets, which he said was exorcised by the writing of his planetary romances, was already taking hold. Since the story never gets as far as Mars, it is hardly surprising that we are given no Martian imagery in the fragment: at this age Lewis had not developed his technique of striking the key-note in the opening page or paragraph. However, other works of juvenilia, such as the poem written when he was 10 or 11, entitled 'The Old Grey Mare', about a knight and his steed, and his Boxonian stories, with their knightly hero, Samuel Macgoullah, point in the likely direction the imagery would have taken. The young Lewis was clearly enamoured of the chivalric ideal. Not many years later he was delighted by his discovery of Chaucer's knight.

Lewis lived through two world wars: he fought in the first and addressed troops in the second. His essays and letters show a recurrent interest in the ethics of war. In this chapter we shall trace the young Lewis may have learned about Fellows of the Royal Astronomical Society in the conversations which he enjoyed with his uncle about astronomy and science (SBJ 40f).

Italicised to distinguish the Lewis in the story from the Lewis who is writing it.

SBJ 34.


B 100ff.

See letter to Arthur Greeves, 30/5/16 (CLI 187) after getting a copy of *The Canterbury Tales*: 'I have only had time so far to read the Prologue and The Knight's Tale... but I adore them. The Knight's tale is a perfect poem of chivalry, isn't it?' Cf. letters to Greeves, 14/6/16 (CLI 192); 25/10/16 (CLI 240). The combat between Palamon and Arcite occurs, significantly, on a Tuesday (line 2486, 2491), the day of Tyr or Tiw, who is the Norse equivalent of Mars, and it is partly for this reason that Lewis writes: 'the character and influence of the planets are worked into the Knight's Tale' (DI 198). In the *Cambridge Review* obituary of Lewis, the anonymous author wrote: 'It is Chaucer's Knight... who comes most often to mind when one remembers C.S.L... He was a chivalric figure, and his imagination ran most richly in the forms of chivalry and adventure.' In Memoriam: C.S. Lewis', *Cambridge Review* (20/11/64), reprinted in Watson, George (ed.). *Critical Essays on C.S. Lewis* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1992) 23.


E.g., 'Private Bates' (*The Spectator*, Vol. CLXXXIII, 29/12/44; reprinted EC 604-606); 'Why I Am Not A Pacifist' (read to a pacifist society in Oxford, 1940; reprinted EC 281-293); 'Is English Doomed?' (*The Spectator*, Vol. CLXXII, 11/2/44; reprinted EC 434-436) where he notes 'what diverse realities - Launcelot, Baron Bradwardine, Mulvaney - hide behind the word militarism'. See also 'Talking about Bicycles' (*Resistance* (October 1946) 10-13; reprinted EC 689-692) where he divides poets of war into the Enchanted (Sidney, Macaulay, Chesterton, Brooke), Disenchanted (Sassoon), and Re-enchanted (Homer, the Maldon poet). Clearly Lewis intends to include himself among the Re-enchanted: 'One is not in the least deceived: we remember the trenches too well. We know how much of the reality the romantic view left out. But we also know that heroism is a real thing' (EC 691).

E.g., letters to Dom Bede Griffiths, 5/10/38 (CLII 233f); the Editor of *Theology*, 27/2/39 (CLII 250ff); Stephen Schofield, 23/8/56 (Schofield, Stephen (ed.). *In Search of C.S. Lewis* (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge Publishing, 1983) 194).
his use of Martial imagery in his poetry and scholarship, observe how it provides the theme for his first full-length work of non-allegorical fiction, show its significance in That Hideous Strength, and argue that it constitutes the donegality of his second Chronicle of Narnia, Prince Caspian.

1. Mars in Lewis's poetry

At the age of eighteen Lewis volunteered and began gaining first-hand experience of what he had hitherto only read about and imagined. He joined the Cadet Battalion of the Officers' Training Corps billeted at Keble College, was given a commission as a Second Lieutenant and sent to France. Arriving at the front-line trenches on his nineteenth birthday, he saw most of his action at Fampoux and Monchy before being wounded in the Battle of Arras in the spring of 1918.

He considered the army 'an odious necessity, a ghastly interruption'\(^{14}\). This determination to see his war service as a separable interlude in his life, rather than as an integral part of it, has been seen by some as a psychological coping mechanism\(^{1}\), but it is not a question we can consider here. We would point to the phrase 'odious necessity' as deserving at least as much attention as the phrase 'ghastly interruption'. Necessity is highly pertinent to the symbolic value which Lewis found in Mars, for Mars is 'necessity's son', as he put it in 'The Planets'. The complete Martial section runs as follows:

```poetry
But other country
Dark with discord dins beyond him [Sol],
With noise of nakers\(^{14}\), neighing of horses,
Hammering of harness\(^{7}\). A haughty god
MARS mercenary, makes there his camp
And flies his flag; flaunts laughingly
The graceless beauty; grey-eyed and keen,
- Blond insolence - of his blithe visage
Which is hard and happy. He hews the act,
The indifferent deed with dint of his mallet
And his chisel of choice; achievement comes not
Unhelped by him; - hired gladiator
Of evil and good. All's one to Mars,
The wrong righted, rescued meekness,
Or trouble in trenches, with trees splintered
And birds banished, banks fill'd with gold
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\(^{1}\) SBJ 151.
\(^{14}\) E.g., Myers suspects a 'denial of woundedness' (Myers, Doris. C.S. Lewis in Context (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994) 24). Lewis deliberately prevented himself from thinking about the war in advance of volunteering, but argues that this was no 'flight from reality' (SBJ 128). Looking back on his army experience, he remarks that it is 'so cut off from the rest of my experience' that it 'often seems to have happened to someone else' (SBJ 157), though his memories of it 'haunted my dreams for years' (letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 8/5/39, CLII 258) and it was these memories that caused him to be upset by the sight of his stepson's burning Guy one Bonfire Night (see Gresham, Douglas. Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C.S. Lewis (London: HarperCollins, 1988) 108). Sayer opines that Lewis felt the war too strongly to write about it (Sayer, George. Jack: C.S. Lewis and His Times (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988) 86), but overlooks how extensively he wrote about it, albeit indirectly, in his journalism, poetry and fiction.
\(^{7}\) That is, 'kettle-drums'; cf Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Knight's Tale', line 2511.
\(^{14}\) That is, 'armour' rather than modern 'harness'. Cf Robert Henryson, 'The Testament of Cresseid', line 186: 'In hard harnes, hewmond, and habirgeon' (in hard armour, helmet and mail), - part of the description of Mars.
And the liar made lord. Like handiwork
He offers to all - earns his wages
And whistles the while. White-feathered dread
Mars has mastered. His metal's iron
That was hammered through hands into holy cross,
Cruel carpentry. He is cold and strong,
Necessity's son."

The depiction of Mars given in these lines is very finely balanced. Lewis knows that Mars 'is a bad planet, Infortuna Minor'; he readily acknowledges Martial cruelty, trouble, haughtiness, gracelessness, mercenariness, insolence, coldness. On the other hand, he knows that, above the orbit of the Moon, there is nothing bad per se. And so we find Lewis listing, alongside many Martial vices, many Martial virtues: righting wrongs, rescuing the meek, laughter, beauty, keenness, blitheness, happiness, achievement, courage, strength. He does this not because he thought Mars innately ambiguous, like Luna (see below, Chapter Eight). Rather it is because Mars is 'indifferent' to his effects: 'all's one to Mars'. When 'hired' by evil, Mars will work his violent work to evil ends. When hired by good, he will work just as hard, but for a worthy purpose. Mars is not necessarily evil; rather his is the spirit which, used aright, enables hard but necessary tasks to be accomplished. The crucifixion of Christ may be considered a project carried out under the influence of Mars: 'His metal's iron / That was hammered through hands into holy cross'. Whether Mars strengthened the evil crucifiers or the innocent crucified or both is not specified in the poem.

Other poems in which Martial imagery may be traced include three early efforts ('Exercise on an Old Theme', 'To the Gods of Old Time' and 'Sonnet'), a trio of later poems ('Deception', 'The Adam at Night', 'A Cliché Came Out of its Cage') and two of his narrative poems, 'The Queen of Drum' and 'Launcelot'.

2. Mars in Lewis's scholarship

Despite his interest in Launcelot and his love of chivalry in general, Lewis writes less about Mars in his scholarship than he does about any of the other planets, and the short paragraph which he devotes to Mars in The Discarded Image will be spliced into other portions of this chapter instead.
of receiving its own separate treatment here. However, it will be worth spending a little more time on the question Lewis raises of ‘how, in that unfallen or translunary world, there come to be such things as ‘bad’ or malefical planets”’. Clarifying this issue will be of use to us in the remainder of this chapter and even more so, in a later chapter, in connection with Saturn, Infortuna Major.

The answer Lewis finds is that

they are bad only in relation to us. On the psychological side this answer is implicit in Dante’s allocation of blessed souls to their various planets after death. The temperament derived from each planet can be turned either to a good or a bad use [. . . ] The other bad effects of the ‘infortunes’ - the plagues, the disasters - can no doubt be dealt with in the same way. The fault lies not in the influence but in the terrestrial nature which receives it. In a fallen Earth it is permitted by Divine justice that we and our Earth and air respond thus disastrously to influences which are good in themselves. ‘Bad’ influences are those of which our corrupt world can no longer make a good use; the bad patient makes the agent bad in effect [. . . ] If all things here below were rightly disposed to the heavens, all influences, as Trismegistus taught, would be extremely good (optimos). When an evil effect follows them, this must be attributed to the ill-disposed subject (indispositio subjecto).

These remarks help explain how Lewis thought he could use Mars Christologically in Prince Caspian: the Martial influence qualifies you to become ‘either an Attila or a martyr’”, not just the former. It also helps explain why Mars in Out of the Silent Planet is depicted as such a pleasant place. Despite his effect on some men, Mars is not evil in his own nature, and ‘Martians may be delightful creatures’.

3. Mars in the Ransom Trilogy

i) Out of the Silent Planet

In his first volume of the Ransom Trilogy, Lewis gives Mars the name Malacandra and locates most of the story there. The planet is not merely the setting for the drama, its spirit is also an actor of sorts in that drama. Following Ransom’s arrival on Malacandra every incident and image is designed to communicate the Martial spirit, for ‘What’s the excuse for locating one’s story on Mars unless “Martianity” is through and through used? . . . Emotionally and atmospherically as well as logically.”

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Ibid. 117. Dante made Mars the heaven of martyrs partly for the obvious reason but partly, Lewis thinks, ‘because of a mistaken philological connection between martyr and Martem’ (DI 106).

‘De Descriptione Temporum, An Inaugural Lecture by the Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English Literature in the University of Cambridge’ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); reprinted SLE 1-14: 12.

Letter to Arthur C. Clarke, 20/1/54 (Wade Center).
The most striking feature of Malacandran Martianity, in terms of imagery, is vertiginousness. Throughout the book we encounter things which are described as high, narrow, steep, slender, pointed, elongated, ‘needling’. We find soaring columns, pinnacles, pillars; the vegetation which Ransom first encounters is likened to organ-pipes, rolls of cloth standing on end, and to umbrellas blown inside out (47ff). Certain unnamed creatures whom Ransom sees just after his arrival are compared to giraffes and even to pylons. He meets sorns, who are creatures of giant stature, cadaverously lean; also hrossa, who are ‘six or seven feet high and too thin for [their] height, like everything in Malacandra’ (61). The third rational species is pfiffiggi, miners and artisans, who, being associated with the underground world, are the only group who are not tall and thin. They are the social base of Malacandra on whom the other two species rely: the hrossa live above them, higher up in the valleys (the handramit), and the sorns live higher still, close to the table-land (the harandra). Thus, built into the social topography of Mars we find again the ‘theme of perpendicularity - the same rush to the sky’ (54).

This perpendicularity is a manifestation of Mars’s masculinity. Lewis, though no follower of Freud, was of course aware of the use that could be made of phallic imagery, and he is clearly deploying it here. Although each species on Malacandra is male and female, the planet as a whole is masculine", just as Perelandra (Venus) is feminine, even though it has a king as well as a queen. The repeated images of height and uprightness connote the taller stature of the male vis-à-vis the female, the straight lines of the male musculature and the phallus. But once we have acknowledged the phallic aspect, we must not, in Lewis’s view, automatically conclude that perpendicular imagery is simply sexual10. It is not simple, but complex. The complexity Lewis finds in such imagery is perhaps best expressed if we refer to Till We Have Faces and say that Malacandra is a ‘weaponed” world. A key artefact of Malacandran craft is the spear. This simultaneously serves as a token of war and of maleness. The hrossa long to kill the monstrous hnakra with a ‘straight spear’ (86). Ransom, enrolled in the hnakra-hunt, finds himself in a boat with a ‘pile of throwing-spears between his knees’ (89). It is this weapon which Lewis uses later on in the trilogy as the principal symbol of Mars. When Ransom tries to summarise the difference between Mars and Venus, ‘he thinks that the first held in his hand something like a spear, but the hands of the other were open with the palms towards him.”12 The Martial spear does not ‘represent’ male genitalia any more than it ‘represents’ war. It represents both in one of those primal unities which Barfield identified and which fascinated Lewis.

In addition, then, to maleness, the perpendicular imagery symbolises the warring element of the Martial spirit. War - against the hnakra - is an essential part of Malacandran life. It is the danger posed by these aquatic monsters that makes the forests bright and the water warm and love sweet11. This is partly why Lewis sets his satirical short story ‘Ministering Angels’ on Mars: men on a masculine planet are doubly in need of the relief which only women can bring. It was published in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Vol. XIII (January 1958) 5-14; reprinted EC 849-857.12

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11 See Orual’s distinction between ‘a weaponed man’ and a eunuch (TWHF 195). Cf. ‘There is, hidden or flaunted, a sword between the sexes till an entire marriage reconciles them’, AGO 42f.
12 Per 183.
Although the hrossa hate the hnakra as their enemy, they also love him as an element of their own identity.

Ransom observes 'the war-like nature' of the preparations for the hnakra-hunt (82) and it speaks to something long sleeping in his blood (91). The Martial influence - 'something in the air he now breathed' (89), - is making Ransom strengthen and become a man, a hunter. Early in the book we learn that 'the gap between boyhood’s dreams and his actual experience of the [Great] War had been startling' (40)\textsuperscript{11}. We are reminded of that immaturity when later we discover that he could hardly ride a trotting horse when he had been 'in the army' (70). He is frightened before the hunt, but the hunt 'was necessary, and the necessary was always possible' (89)\textsuperscript{4}. His participation in it gives him a 'new-found manhood' (92); and when he turns out to be the hnakra-slayer we are told that 'he had grown up' (93). In short, Out of the Silent Planet is, as Lewis elsewhere puts it, Ransom’s enfance\textsuperscript{7}. We have already examined the culmination of his development when he becomes kingly in That Hideous Strength. The mid-point of his journey, in Perelandra, will be looked at in Chapter Ten below\textsuperscript{39}.

Before leaving Out of the Silent Planet we must comment on another pervasive image of the book: the tree, the forest. The pfifltriggi live in ‘forest lowlands’ (168); the hrossa live surrounded by forests (48, 52, 54, 68, 72, 73, 76, 79, 87, 88, 93, 100, 107, 134, 167, 181); the sorns are likened to trees (117); the harandra is covered in stone forests (116, 119, 128);\textsuperscript{24} at Meldilorn Ransom comes across ‘such trees as man had never seen’ (121); and in the funeral liturgy for the dead hrossa (153) trees are a key part of the symbolism.

At first glance it might appear that this arboreal imagery is just a variation on the theme of perpendicularity. On closer inspection it turns out to be a fundamental aspect of the planet’s presiding deity. Mars was not always or only a god of war. Originally, he was a god of vegetation and fertility, the husband of the vestal Rhea Silvia, as Lewis knew\textsuperscript{6}. His functions were at first rustic. Under the name of Mars Silvanus (who later became a distinct divinity), he presided over the prosperity of cattle; he lived in forests and mountains. Among the plants and trees which were dedicated to him were the fig-tree, the dog-wood, the laurel and the bean. The wood-pecker, the wolf and the horse were creatures especially associated with his name. He was the god of Spring (the vernal month of March became consecrated to and named after him) and was also known as Mars Gradivus (‘to become big; to grow’). His warrior functions only came afterwards, but in the end they supplanted his former duties which were then transferred to Ceres and Liber. When he became

\textsuperscript{11} Ransom had fought on the Somme (see Per 99), like Tolkien, on whom he is partly based.
\textsuperscript{4} Cf. ‘it will not be necessary’ for the Malacandran Oyarsa to kill the visitors from Thulcandra (OSP 143).
\textsuperscript{7} Letter to William Kinter, 27/11/51 (Bodleian Library).
\textsuperscript{24} But here we should note that Ransom is only gaining a preliminary acquaintance with war. He ‘learns war’ fully in the sphere of Venus (THS 274) and it is his ‘long struggle in the caves of Perelandra’ which comes back to him when Mars descends in THS 323-325. To explain this apparent inconsistency, we must recall that ‘all the planets are represented in each’ (THS 316); also that the trilogy is largely concerned with the acquisition of true masculinity and true femininity. Mythologically, Lewis is saying that masculinity is only fully learnt in relation to femininity. Deep in the ‘caves’ of Venus, stricken with pain (as the Malacandran Oyarsa had foretold, OSP 166), Ransom realises what it means to be a man.
\textsuperscript{6} Cf. ‘On Mars the very forests are of stone’ (Per 186).
\textsuperscript{24} See AT 160 where he mentions the ‘twins whom Rhea Silvia bore to Mars and who were suckled by a wolf’.
the god of battle, Mars still preserved his former title of Gradivus, but it had changed in meaning and was now connected with the verb grado 'to march'. Lewis would have known all this from - among other sources - Cato the Elder⁴¹ and Frazer's *The Golden Bough*⁴¹.

This helps to explain why Ransom's visit to Mars is not the occasion for much fighting. To be sure, we are shown the ritual hnakra-hunt and we are told that the Oyarsa of Malacandra once fought a 'war' against the Oyarsa of Thulcandra (140); the Oyarsa also tells Ransom to 'fight' Weston and Devine once they are back on earth (166). But the specifically militaristic happenings and imagery are not the most obvious aspects of Malacandra. This is partly because we see the planet through the eyes of Ransom, who suffers alongside Hyoi (the martyr), rather than becoming murderous (Attila-like), as Weston and Devine do, and we find it odd that the Martial spirit should be as much evident in the former as in the latter. Partly, the absence of war is owing to the fact that the Malacandran Oyarsa is one of the 'subjects of Maleldil' and therefore, despite his ability to inspire war, has an essential 'peace' (163). But mostly it is because Lewis is drawing on the god's origin as a vegetation deity to supplement and balance the militaristic aspects. Lewis's liking was more for the late classical/pagan model of the universe than the medieval/renaissance one, according to Milward⁴³. That probably overstates the case, but it is certainly worth remembering how very deeply immersed Lewis was in the classical world⁴⁴. At any rate, Honda is mistaken when she asserts that it is only the medieval and not the Greek or Roman conception of Mars which is present in *Out of the Silent Planet*. Such an assertion would be true of *That Hideous Strength*, where Lewis has so many other planetary themes to juggle that he has to confine his treatment of Mars to the medieval version only. But in *Out of the Silent Planet*, where he has greater freedom, he can afford to extend Martianity ad fontes.

We leave the last word on Malacandra to Austin Farrer who, after speculating in *Saving Belief* about the existence of hypothetical races on other planets, introduces the 'Christian imagination' and the 'theological wisdom' of 'Dr. C. S. Lewis', remarking that *Out of the Silent Planet*, like its sequel, displays 'a heavenly gift of concrete fantasy'. He then advises his reader:

'Go aboard. I will leave you and Lewis in orbit;  
With him for your pilot, perhaps you'll  
Encounter the Martian mind, and absorb it;  
I'm backing to earth in my capsule.'⁴⁴

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⁴¹ Cato the Elder: *De Agricultura* 83, *De Re Rustica* 141.  
Back on earth, Ransom obeys the Oyarsa's command to fight his enemies. Having fully 'learned war' in his monomachy with Weston in *Perelandra*, Ransom now finds himself at the head of those forces, human and planetary, who are going to do battle with 'the Bent One' on Thulcandra. The Martial element in *That Hideous Strength* has three main manifestations: a) in the growing conflict between the N.I.C.E. and St Anne's; b) in the descent of Malacandra in Chapter 15; and c) in the individual story of Mark Studdock.

a) The conflict between the N.I.C.E. and St Anne's

In terms of the conflict between the villains of the N.I.C.E. and the heroes of St Anne's, Mars appears, on the face of it, to influence only the former. We hear Feverstone remarking on the need for 'a real war with real casualties' (41), Straik promising 'violence' (78) and Frost mentioning the 'sixteen major wars' (259) which help constitute his 'plan of campaign' (330). Their 'army' (99) mounts an 'invasion' of Edgestow (121), catching Bracton College 'in the net of necessity' (122) and establishing 'a terror' (215). By the time we get to Chapter 10 ('The Conquered City') Jane has been 'tortured' (218) and Edgestow 'occupied' (219). The N.I.C.E. splinter Bragdon Wood with 'the rattle of iron' (216), 'saeva sonare verbera, tum stridor ferri tractaeque catena' (90)⁴. There are machine-guns (93), barricades and manufactured riots (130), and the whole operation seems to be going largely their own way until we reach Chapter 11, 'Battle Begun'.

'Battle has started,' says Dimble (223); 'battle has started,' repeats Ransom (225). The heroes' motley 'army' (144) has seemed slow to engage the enemy, despite its declared willingness 'both to kill and to die' (200). It is not until more than half way through the book that Ransom announces, 'We're going into action at last' (225). Jane's dreams have finally given them something to go on and even now the plan is very roundabout. All they have in mind is the capture of Merlin, so that the N.I.C.E. are not able to press him into service first. Dimble, Denniston and Jane, armed only with a revolver (228) set out to find him. But they do not fire any shots, nor indeed do they find him. He turns up at St Anne's of his own accord and no explanation for his arrival is given. We are to understand that the 'passion of patience' (194), in which the heroes' heroism largely consists, has paid off. The company at St Anne's have, in fact, been just as Martial as their opponents, but since they are turning his influence to good effect, it makes them into martyrs⁵: they courageously witness to truth in spite of danger, and Merlin is providentially drawn to their side. He is told of the dire predicament in which Logres stands, offers his help, but confesses he is 'no longer much of a man of war' (289). Ransom declares: 'I have stood before Mars himself in the sphere of Mars and

⁴ Virgil: *Aeneid* VI, 557-8.
⁵ 'Martyr', of course, means 'witness' (see letter to Sister Penelope, 19/2/44, CLII 603), and Straik's use of 'witness' (78) is probably intended to connote a martyr's religious fervour. Jane calls Mrs Dimble a 'martyr', who denies it (76). Merlin does not sound likely to be a martyr (332), according to the imperceptive Frost. Fairy Hardcastle announces that Alcasan is to be 'made into a martyr' (98). Cf. Weston's 'expected martyrdom' (OSP 155).
before Venus herself in the sphere of Venus. It is their strength, and the strength of some greater than they, which will destroy our enemies’ (290). This brings us to the second main Martial feature of the story, the actual descent of Mars in Chapter 15.

b) Malacandra

Lewis presents the descent of Malacandra as follows:

Down in the kitchen MacPhee sharply drew back his chair so that it grated on the tiled floor like a pencil squeaking on a slate. “Man!” he exclaimed, “it’s a shame for us to be sitting here looking at the fire. If the Director hadn’t got a game leg himself, I’ll bet you he’d have found some other way for us to go to work.” Camilla’s eyes flashed towards him. “Go on!” she said, “go on!” “What do you mean MacPhee?” said Dimble. “He means fighting,” said Camilla. “They’d be too many for us, I’m afraid,” said Arthur Denniston. “Maybe that!” said MacPhee. “But maybe they’ll be too many for us this way too. But it would be grand to have one go at them before the end. To tell you the truth I sometimes feel I don’t greatly care what happens. But I wouldn’t be easy in my grave if I knew they’d won and I’d never had my hands on them. I’d like to be able to say as an old sergeant said to me in the first war, about a bit of a raid we did near Monchy. Our fellows did it all with the butt end, you know. “Sir,” says he, “did ever you hear anything like the way their heads cracked.” “I think that’s disgusting,” said Mother Dimble. “That part is, I suppose,” said Camilla. “But oh if one could have a charge in the old style. I don’t mind anything once I’m on a horse.” “I don’t understand it,” said Dimble. “I’m not like you, MacPhee. I’m not brave. But I was just thinking as you spoke that I don’t feel afraid of being killed and hurt as I used to do. Not tonight.” “We may be, I suppose,” said Jane. “As long as we’re all together,” said Mother Dimble. “It might be . . . no, I don’t mean anything heroic . . . it might be a nice way to die.” And suddenly all their faces and voices were changed. They were laughing again, but it was a different kind of laughter. Their love for one another became intense. Each, looking on all the rest, thought, “I’m lucky to be here. I could die with these.” But MacPhee was humming to himself:

King William said, Be not dismayed, for the loss of one commander."

Upstairs it was, at first, much the same. Merlin saw in memory the wintry grass of Badon Hill", the long banner of the Virgin fluttering above the heavy British-Roman cataphracts, the yellow-haired barbarians. He heard the snap of the bows, the click-clack of steel points in wooden shields, the cheers, the howling, and the ring of struck mail. He remembered also the evening, fires twinkling along the hill, frost making the gashes smart, starlight on a pool fouled with blood, eagles crowding together in the pale sky. And Ransom, it may be, remembered his long struggle in the caves of Perelandra. But all this passed. Something tonic and lusty and cheerily cold, like a sea breeze, was coming over them. There was no fear anywhere: the blood inside them flowed as if to a marching-song. They felt themselves taking their places in the ordered rhythm of the universe, side by side with punctual seasons and patterned atoms and the

Site of Arthur’s twelfth victory in battle where the Saxon advance into Britain was finally halted.
Cf. the ‘blond insolence’ in ‘The Planets’ (CP 27, line 63) and the ‘yellow hair’ in ‘A Cliché Came Out of its Cage’ (CP 18, stanza 2, line 14).
Cf. the ‘mechanical rhythm’ which drives Ransom to Meldilorn (OSP 102).
obeying Seraphim. Under the immense weight of their obedience their wills stood up straight and untiring like caryatids. Eased of all fickleness and all protestings they stood: gay, light, nimble, and alert. They had outlived all anxieties; care was a word without meaning. To live meant to share in this processional pomp. Ransom knew, as a man knows when he touches iron, the clear, taut splendour of that celestial spirit which now flashed between them: vigilant Malacandra, captain of a cold orb, whom men call Mars and Mavors, and Tyr who put his hand in the wolf-mouth.

In this powerful passage Lewis is attempting to convey 'the good element in the martial spirit, the discipline and freedom from anxiety', as distinct from the evil elements which he thought were present in Holst's Planets. Within the parameters of this passage itself, he does indeed achieve that end. Within the larger context of the story he is less successful since the company at St Anne's are, as a whole, never in real danger: their 'freedom from anxiety' is therefore somewhat cheap and irrelevant. Even when Jane, Dimble and Denniston go in search of Merlin they never face any immediate peril. The only 'good' characters who actually suffer in the story are Jane, who is burnt by Miss Hardcastle's cheroot (153-159) - although the burns are 'not serious' (163), - and Mark. Jane's torment occurs before the descent of Mars and before she has become a Christian; it does not appear to be intentionally linked to Martial martyrdom. Her role is tied to Venus (as we shall see in Chapter Ten), not Mars.

c) Mark Studdock

Mark, on the other hand, as his name implies, has a special connection with Mars. Although 'Mark had never seen war' (214), he is to be tried in his own personal battle with the N.I.C.E. Frost is determined to bring Mark to that state of subjugation where obedience is, ever after, 'a matter of psychological, or even physical necessity' (337). Mark, who had in childhood imagined himself as a 'hero and martyr' (268), realises that he is facing a 'straight fight' (268), and that now he will find out the truth of his childhood fancies. He finds that the prospect of a 'straight fight, after the long series of diplomatic failures, was tonic' (267). He pictures himself 'in the front-line: Jane was almost a non-combatant' (268).

"'Weight' is important on Mars as it is not on Perelandra (cf. Per 28) and the upright wills may be intended to connote the involuntary erection that can be caused in a man carrying a heavy weight. Lewis uses the image of a caryatid also in OSP 71. The word 'caryatid' does not feature in PC, but the thing does, in the illustration drawn by Pauline Baynes that fills page 19, where the head and torso of a faun serve as a caryatid in the walls of Cair Paravel. Miss Baynes tells me that Lewis never gave her any directions about what to depict. He was frequently disappointed by her efforts, but told George Sayer that he was 'pleased' by the full-page illustrations for PC; see Sayer, George. Jack: C.S. Lewis and His Times (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988) 190.

Virgil's name for Mars (Aeneid VIII, 630).

THS 323-325.

'About Holst's Planets, I heard Mars...long ago and greatly admired [it]...But his characters are rather different from mine, I think. Wasn't his Mars brutal and ferocious? - in mine I tried to get the good element in the martial spirit, the discipline and freedom from anxiety', letter to Sister Penelope, 31/1/46 (CLII 701-702). Cf. 'Mars, of course, bowls one over but I suppose there is an element of trick in it', letter to Arthur Greeves, 26/12/45 (CLII 693). See also Warren Lewis’s diary entry (7/2/35) after he and his brother (denoted ‘J’) attended a performance of the Planets: ‘we both thought Mars was the best... “the finest piece of anti-war propaganda I have struck” said J.’ Lewis, W.H. Brothers and Friends: The Diaries of Major Warren Hamilton Lewis, ed. Clyde S. Kilby and Marjorie Lamp Mead (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982) 169.
The moment of martyrdom (that is, of witnessing to Christ despite danger) arrives when Mark is required to trample on a crucifix, a striking scene which Rowan Williams has approvingly described as 'the gospel with knobs on'". Mark, ‘thinking hard’, looks down at the defenceless wooden figure beneath him, at its wooden hands 'nailed and helpless', and the object becomes for him 'a picture of what happened when the Straight met the Crooked, a picture of what the Crooked did to the Straight, what it would do to him if he remained straight. It was, in a more emphatic sense than he had yet understood, a cross' (336). He remains 'straight', identifying his own predicament with that of Christ, and finds himself 'frightened by the very fact that his fears seemed to have momentarily vanished' (337). He, so to speak, accepts the imprint of the 'iron / That was hammered through hands into holy cross', as he turns to Frost and says: 'It's all bloody nonsense, and I'm damned if I do any such thing' (337). Mark has passed the test and has lived up to his name. By choosing to imitate the example of Christ and to 'go down with the ship' (337), he makes himself patient of Mars's good effects. He becomes strong enough to accomplish the hard but necessary task.

He thus acquires the status of a Christian knight and consequently is able to discover the true meaning of the word 'lady' (380-382) which before had only ever been 'part of his vocabulary' either as a 'pure form or else in mockery'. He now perceives that he has been a boor, that he has treated his wife with an offensively proprietorial spirit, 'as if he were native to that fenced garden and even its natural possessor' (381). At the end of the story, in his connubial reunion with Jane, Mark embodies 'the typically medieval theme of the proud young man (Bayard-Troilus) tamed by Venus'". Botticelli's 'Mars and Venus' was a particular favourite of Lewis's when he was in his 'Warburgian state of mind"', and the Studdocks' nuptial embrace is his literary homage to that painting, as well as the resolution of the trilogy. In myth, Mars and Venus had a child, Harmonia: in That Hideous Strength, Mark and Jane also become parents, helping bring harmony to planet Earth in the form of that child who will be the new Pendragon.

4. Mars in Prince Caspian

i) the Martial Poeima

Glover calls Prince Caspian a 'chivalric romance'" and Myers notes the central importance of the image of 'plant life". Between them they have identified the two main aspects of the Martial

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Footnotes:

1. Williams, Rowan. 'That Hideous Strength: A Reassessment', address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 5/10/1988 (Lewis Society recordings archive). Williams thinks less highly of the descent of the gods, pointing out that, whereas 'Mark is saved by the Cross, England is saved by the intervention of angelic powers through Merlin'. St Anne's, Williams thinks, speaks the 'language of power and mystery, not grace'; there is a confusion of the supernatural with the preternatural.

2. Watson, George. 'The Art of Disagreement: C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)', The Hudson Review (1995) 229-239: 233. Cf. 'In the Odyssey those loves [of Mars and Venus] were little more than a merry tale; by Spenser's time they had come to symbolize the victory of beauty over strength and peace over war': 'Spenser's Cruel Cupid', SMRL 164-165. See also AMR 95; EIC 18,19; SIL 50, 78, 104.


The military theme is the stronger for Lewis is chiefly motivated to make his readers ‘look along the beam’ of medieval chivalry⁴. The four Pevensie children find that they have arrived in Narnia ‘in the middle of a war’ (91). The war in question is ‘the Great War of Deliverance’, as it is referred to in a later book⁵ or simply the ‘Civil War’ in Lewis’s ‘Outline of Narnian History’⁶. It is ‘a real war to drive Miraz out of Narnia’ (71) and restore the kingdom to Caspian. At the start of the story he is a mere boy, hardly aware of the Martial spirit which is already abroad. When Glenstorm tells Caspian: ‘I and my sons are ready for war. When is the battle to be joined?’, Caspian replies that he had ‘not been thinking of a war’. Glenstorm asks why it is, then, that he goes ‘clad in mail and girt with sword?’ and informs him that the omens are good: the planets foretell success (72). Nerved, Caspian thinks it ‘quite possible that they might win a war and quite certain that they must wage one’ (72), so he convenes a ‘Council of War’ (72, 77). The Council authorizes action and Caspian leads the skirmishing forces as they engage the usurping power. Once the Pevensies arrive, Peter challenges Miraz to ‘monomachy’ (152). Miraz is killed, not by Peter as it turns out, but by one of his own men, Glozelle⁷, after which ‘full battle’ (167) is joined.

This brief summary mentions only the more important military events in the story. There are numerous subsidiary episodes too: the children’s rediscovery of their armour, the rescue of the dwarf from the soldiers, the swordsmanship and archery test, the revelation that Caspian’s father was murdered, Nikabrik’s urge to kill the prince, the arrow attack on the children in the wood, the fight with the werewolf and the hag. The cast-list consists very largely of military figures: ‘armies’, ‘warriors’, ‘messengers’, ‘enemies’, ‘captains’, ‘sentries’, ‘sentinels’, ‘knights’ and ‘scouts’. The properties department is filled with ‘weapons’, ‘mail-shirts’, ‘helmets’, ‘horns’, ‘hauberks’, ‘daggers’, ‘bows’, ‘shields’ and ‘swords’. ‘Marches’, ‘combat’, ‘attacks’, ‘salutes’ and ‘sorties’ are the dramatic business in a setting of ‘battlements’, ‘strongholds’, ‘towers’, ‘castles’ and ‘camps’.

It may be enquired what other language Lewis could have used to tell a war-story. The question is worth asking. Simply because the book deals largely with military events need not mean that he is deliberately attempting to create a Martial atmosphere. We must look at the text more closely to demonstrate donegalitarian intent.

Three lists are illuminating for the item which appears first. In the list of things which the children find in the treasure chamber, the first item mentioned is the ‘suits of armour’ (28). In the list of

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⁴ Cf. ‘It has been assumed without discussion that if you . . . want to understand some ‘ideology’ (such as medieval chivalry. . . ), you must listen not to those who lived inside it, but to sociologists’: ‘Meditation in a Toolshed’, The Coventry Evening Telegraph, 17/7/45, 4; reprinted EC 607-610: 608.

⁵ LB 169.


memories which the children have of the Golden Age, the first thing they recall is 'the battles' (30). In the list of subjects which Caspian is taught, the first is 'sword-fighting' (54).

Historical references are also telling. Lucy tells Trumpkin that his account of Narnian history is 'worse than the Wars of the Roses' (41); Peter mentions the 'Crusaders' (34). We learn that Caspian's distant ancestor was 'the Conqueror' (46).

These lists and references (which could easily have been different without affecting the plot) suggest that Lewis had his eye on creating a Martial atmosphere and, indeed, the very word 'martial' appears twice in *Prince Caspian*, the only one of the seven Chronicles in which it occurs at all. Reepicheep is described as a 'martial' mouse (73) and Miraz frets over his 'martial policy' (156). In something of a Martial pun, 'marshals' are appointed to oversee the lists (157-159).

The Martial temperament is one of 'sturdy hardiness', according to *The Discarded Image*; the Martial visage is 'hard and happy', according to 'The Planets' (line 65). This 'hard virtue of Mars' appears frequently throughout *Prince Caspian*. Peter looks 'hard' at Lucy (20); the soldiers escorting Trumpkin to his death have faces which are 'bearded and hard' (35); we meet three badgers called the 'Hardbiters' (73); when the children are lost in the woods they find that retracing their steps was 'hard work, but oddly enough everyone felt more cheerful' (119); Aslan tells Lucy 'it is hard for you [to wake the others] . . . it has been hard for us all' (125); Peter's army at the end of the battle are found 'breathing hard . . . with stern and glad faces' (174).

More significantly certain characters visibly become Martial as the story progresses: Caspian begins 'to harden', sleeping 'under the stars' and living off open country (76); the children, 'jingling in their mail', begin to look and feel more like Narnians and less like schoolchildren (92, 116); the 'hard' ground (32, 33) and 'the air of Namia' work on Edmund so that 'all his old battles came back to him' (93); he and Peter have become 'more like men than boys' (135) by the time they march off to the How. The iron has entered their soul, as is to be expected, for these characters are responsive to the Martial influenza, to that same 'magic in the air' (30) which has saved Susan's bowstring from perishing.

The boys do not simply harden, they become knightly. In *Prince Caspian* knightliness is one of the key, recurring images: we hear of 'knights-errant' (17); in the ruins of Cair Paravel we see 'rich suits of armour, like knights guarding the treasures' (28); Peter is 'Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Lion' (151); Edmund is 'Knight of the Noble Order of the Table' (152), a 'very dangerous knight' (155); Caspian is knighted and then instantly knights Trufflehunter, Trumpkin and

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"Originally a marshal was someone who looked after horses (mares), with no connection to Mars. That a field-marshal should now be a military rank is a linguistic coincidence. Lewis notes the etymological confusion ("the mistaken philological connection" *DI* 106) which linked 'martyr' and 'Martem', and this may partly lie behind his 'marshal'.

"DI* 106.

"*The Adam at Night*, CP 59-60, line 23."
Reepicheep (178); even the chess piece discovered at the start of the story is a ‘chess-knight’.

This War of Deliverance is a good, medieval, knightly conflict, formalised ‘by the art of heraldry and the rules of chivalry’; hence the shining armour, the banners, the ornamented shields, the elevated language of Peter’s challenge.

For Peter is the model knight, able to hew Sopespian in pieces (slashing his legs from under him and walloping off his head with the backswing of the same stroke, 167), but gentle enough to kiss the furry head of the badger (149). He has physical courage (risking his body in the single combat) but also pays attention to forgotten and seemingly unimportant traditions (the Bears’ hereditary right to be Marshals, 158). He is sensitive to his army’s morale (cheering up Wimbleweather by appointing him to the parley, 152); adroit in decision-making (his handling of the bumptious Reepicheep is extremely deft, 159); and self-effacing towards Caspian (148). He demonstrates the acme of knightliness in refusing to attack Miraz when he is down; this to the frustration of Edmund: ‘Oh, bother, bother, bother. Need he be as gentlemanly as all that? I suppose he must. Comes of being a Knight and a High King’ (166). This is that ‘knightly behaviour, in which morality up to the highest self-sacrifice and manners down to the smallest gracefulness in etiquette were inextricably blended by the medieval ideal’.

That ideal was, for Lewis, like Augustine, chiefly a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. War (just war) exists to maintain or to recover peace: it is a tool. ‘Achievement comes not unhelped by [Mars]’, as ‘The Planets’ has it. Lewis paints this into his Narnian canvas through direct use of astrology. Glenstorm tells Caspian, ‘The time is ripe. I watch the skies . . . Tarva and Alambil have met in the halls of high heaven’ (72). This refers to the conjunction witnessed by Dr Cornelius and Caspian in Chapter 4 when Tarva, the Lord of Victory, salutes Alambil, the Lady of Peace: ‘Their meeting is fortunate and means some great good for the sad realm of Narnia’ (49). It is as the protagonists come under the influence of Tarva (who seems intended as the Namian Mars) that they are able to salute Alambil (who is probably the Namian Venus), for victory is the appointed consummation of battle and military might is valued chiefly for the peace it establishes.

Peace is held before our eyes in other contexts too. When the children are lost in the woods, ‘A fine armour is almost part of the personality of the knight who wears it’ and fine or shabby appearance can amount to ‘an almost spiritual significance’, EL 279. Cf. Sopespian’s exclamation about Edmund: ‘What mail he wears! None of our smiths could make the like’, PC 153.

There is not space here to compare the single combat of PC with the one in TWHF, but it is worth noting how the ‘blond insolence’ of ‘The Planets’ finds its way into TWHF: Orual’s antagonist Argan has ‘straw-coloured hair’ (226) and a ‘lazy insolence’ about his first passes (227); the Fox looks on with a ‘face set like iron’ (227).

Also known as Aravir: see LWW 145, 146; PC 135; VDT 84, 87.
squabbling over which way to go, Edmund remarks (wiselier than he intends), ‘There’ll be no peace till we [follow Lucy]’ (129). And when, at the end of the story, the Telmarines variously whimper and crow, Aslan silences them with the word, ‘Peace’, adopting ‘the low voice which was nearest to his growl’ (184). The harshness of military Mars helps recreate that peace which silvan Mars wishes to prevail. This brings us to the second major Martial theme comprising the book.

At first glance, one might think that Alarnbil (Venus) is responsible for the scenes involving the burgeoning ivy and the Bacchanalian revelry in Chapters 11 and 14. But these elements, though superficially close to the spirit of Venereal fertility, are actually another outing for Mars Silvanus, whom Lewis drew upon so extensively in Out of the Silent Planet. ‘Dryads and Hamadryads and Silvans’ (161) come to the combat between Peter and Miraz in Chapter 14. The inclusion of ‘Silvans’ (who never appear elsewhere in the Chronicles) is only the most obvious manifestation of an aspect of Martial influence which, in fact, is present throughout the whole story.

When the children first arrive in Narnia they are deposited ‘in a woody place - such a woody place that branches were sticking into them and there was hardly room to move’ (12). Peter exclaims, ‘I can’t see a yard in all these trees’ and only with difficulty do they manage to extricate themselves from the thicket. The wood is ‘thick and tangled’ and when they try to follow the stream they have to ‘stoop under branches and climb over branches’ and blunder through ‘great masses of stuff like rhododendrons’. And when they finally get through to the ruins of the castle there is a long explanation about the orchard, which mentions Pomona (goddess of fruit trees and gardens) and they find that ivy covers the doorway to the treasure chamber.

Trees and vegetation of all kinds are everywhere in Prince Caspian. Caspian and Dr Cornelius cannot clearly see the conjunction of Tarva and Alambil for the interposition of a tree (49); Cornelius repeatedly mentions waking the trees (50, 52); Caspian is brought to Trufflehunter’s cave by the intervention of a falling tree (61); Trufflehunter laments that they cannot ‘wake the spirits of these trees’ (73) for ‘once the Trees moved in anger, our enemies would go mad with fright’ (74); Aslan’s How now stands in the middle of ‘the Great Woods’ (81) and there Caspian’s army must flee; Lucy tries to wake the trees in Chapter 9, but fails; in Chapter 10 the children’s progress is hampered by the fir wood, but it provides them with cover when they have to run from the arrows of Miraz’s sentries; later in Chapter 10 Lucy, at night-time, finds the trees awake in the presence of Aslan; in Chapter 11 the trees stir at the sound of his roar and then join in the riotous procession of Bacchus (also known as ‘Bromios, Bassareus, and the Ram’, 137) and Silenus.

The theme reaches its climax in Chapter 14 when the ‘Awakened Trees’ plunge through the ranks of Peter’s army and pursue the Telmarines, like Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane. At this moment, Mars Gradivus and Mars Silvanus unite:

Have you ever stood at the edge of a great wood on a high ridge when a wild south-wester broke over it in full fury on an autumn evening? Imagine that
sound. And then imagine that the wood, instead of being fixed to one place, was rushing at you; and was no longer trees but huge people; yet still like trees because their long arms waved like branches and their heads tossed and leaves fell round them in showers.”

At the sight of this onslaught, the Telmarines ‘flung down their weapons, shrieking, ‘The Wood! The Wood! The end of the world!’ and are then pursued to the river where they find their escape route destroyed: sprouting ivy has pulled down the bridge. The restrictive, government-inspected school is likewise destroyed by ‘a mass of shimmering green’ (171), a child-abuser is turned into a withered tree (172). In the final chapter, at night, the trees come forward, throwing off spare strands and fingers, to form a great woodland bonfire (179), cleansing themselves, as it were, of the battle and restoring Narnia to its proper, ‘divinely comfortable’ state.

The divinity supplying this comfort is the god of March whose festival (the Feriae Marti) began on the first of that month. In ancient Rome, Bacchanalian festivities followed on the sixteenth and seventeenth, just after the Ides of March (the fifteenth) on which, famously, Julius Caesar was assassinated. Given the Bacchanalian revelry recorded in this story (136-138, 168-174) and given the fact that Miraz is betrayed and stabbed in the back by his own men, the connections with Mars grow ever more evident.

But we will not (indeed are not able to) trace every last detail to Mars”. A few remaining, noteworthy Martial elements may be summarised briefly:

a) Iron makes an appearance in the story. The treasure chests in the ruined castle are ‘strengthened with iron bars’ (28)”.

b) Of the creatures particularly associated with Mars (the wolf, the woodpecker and the horse), all three appear in Prince Caspian. The wolf, who seems to betoken only the evil use of Martial influence”, makes a prominent showing in Chapter 12, in the form of the verminous werewolf. Lewis wrote elsewhere that lycanthropy is always a possibility for those knights in whom the inner animal ‘has, all along, lived untamed and uncorrected inside that chivalry’, like Williams’s Lancelot*. Arrows thocking into wood sound ‘like the stroke of a woodpecker’ (117). Caspian’s horse is named ‘Destrier’ (OED: ‘a war-horse, a charger”).

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* PC 167-168.
* Of Chaucer’s Compleynt of Mars Lewis wrote, ‘the astronomical allusions are, I confess, too hard for me’, AOL 170. Likewise, this author cannot explain the Martial significance of the names Tarva or Alambil, nor even those of Caspian and Miraz. However, ‘Camillo the Hare’ suggests Camilla, Virgil’s warrior princess; and Hoggleswich the hedgehog suggests Trollope’s Barsetshire hamlet of the same name, whose perpetual curate, Mr Crawley, is a prickly character and determined martyr.
* Interestingly, the chests are made of oak, Jupiter’s special wood. Oak strengthened with iron suggests kingship reinforced with knighthood; thus the second book is discreetly linked to the first. Trumpkin’s helmet, significantly, is copper, not iron (92), to show that he is not yet in tune with Aslan’s Martial spirit.
* Aslan has rid Narnia of them (144); Peter remembers killing one (30).
* AT 159.
c) Mars is known as Mirikh to the Turks; it means "Torch". The children try to make sticks into 'torches' (27), but cannot do it. Edmund happens to have been recently given an electric torch for his birthday, and this comes to their aid (27, 28, 29, 32, 92). The last sentence of the book is: 'Bother!' said Edmund. 'I've left my new torch in Narnia' (190). Like the Jovial robes left behind in The Lion, Edmund’s Martial torch links the planetary influence experienced in Narnia with the children's life back in England.

ii) the Martial Logos

Perhaps the most obvious message conveyed by means of the Martial poema of Prince Caspian is what Lewis communicates quite explicitly in Mere Christianity, namely that 'the idea of the knight - the Christian in arms for the defence of a good cause - is one of the great Christian ideas'. Writing in the aftermath of a war which had threatened the whole of Christian Europe with Nazi tyranny, Lewis had obvious reason to champion this tradition of gallantry. In the second volume of the Narniad, he aims to acquaint (and to delight) the reader with what it feels like to live inside that chivalric tradition. His purpose is not to point out any deficiencies it might have had; rather, he says, as it were, to the reader, 'Instead of stripping the knight of his armour you can try to put his armour on yourself.' He is attempting to provide his audience with imaginative access to the discipline and the freedom from anxiety which arise out of participation in the Martial spirit. This is the principal logos conveyed by his Narnian ‘War of Deliverance’.

Deliverance by means of war is, apparently, an unavoidable necessity. Peaceful protest is not an option because Narnia has degenerated into a tyranny under Miraz. Elsewhere, however, Lewis opines that "necessity" was always "the tyrant’s plea". He has in mind a number of tyrants, or commentators upon tyrants, including Livy, Cromwell, Milton, and Pitt, who observed how the claim of necessity could be used to excuse any kind of behaviour, however brutal and cruel. Knowing this, how did Lewis hope to make out that the ‘necessary’ War of Narnian Deliverance might be anything other than a tyrannical evil itself?

Abusus non tollit usum. The claim of necessity and actual necessity are two different things. However often tyrants falsely claim it, necessity itself remains where it was. That being the case, how are we to characterise real necessity? Lewis wishes to call it ‘the Necessity of Chivalry’, as he

Lewis seems to have acquired a smattering of Turkish from his reading of Lane’s translation of The Arabian Nights: see letter to Carol Jenkins, 22/1/52 (Wade Center) where he reports that ‘Aslan’ is ‘Turkish for Lion’.

MC 104.

PPL 64.


‘Necessitas ultimum et maximum telum est’ (Necessity is the last and strongest weapon), Titus Livy, Annales IV, 28.

‘Twas a cruel necessity’ (the beheading of Charles I). Yet Cromwell also said, in a speech to Parliament in 1654, ‘Necessity hath no law. Feigned necessities, imaginary necessities, are the greatest cozenage men can put upon the Providence of God, and make pretenacies to break known rules.’

‘So spake the Fiend, and with necessity, The tyrant’s plea, excused his devilish deed’, John Milton, Paradise Lost, IV, 393.

‘Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants’, William Pitt the Younger, speech on the India Bill, 1783.
does in an article of that name published in August 1940". If we are to avoid tyranny we must have chivalrous soldiers who, like Theseus in 'The Knight's Tale', know how to make a 'vertu of necessite' (3042). In his article, Lewis repeatedly emphasises that the knightly ideal brought together 'two things which have no natural tendency to gravitate towards one another. It brought them together for that very reason.' He writes: 'The knight is a man of blood and iron' but also 'a gentle, modest, unobtrusive man'; 'he is fierce to the nth and meek to the nth.' Though he 'can deal in blood and iron' he can also be "meek in hall'". It is 'the knight' who 'combines both characters'. To Lewis the knightly ideal was not an archaic curio but a living reality, 'practical and vital'; he was no less enamoured of it in his adulthood than he had been as a boy before he saw active service". Some of his contemporaries - the R.A.F. pilots 'to whom we owe our life from hour to hour' - were modern equivalents of the medieval knight; and their successors must be bred up if men are to escape from a world 'divided between wolves who do not understand, and sheep who cannot defend, the things which make life desirable'.

Martial hardness, then, is not to be confused with heartlessness or the gratification of lust for physical power. Rather, properly understood, it is that strength which, on the one hand, gives backbone to the milksop and, on the other hand, reins in machismo. Within these two extremes, war service, if it is necessary, may be entered into with 'a kind of gaiety and wholeheartedness'".

This wholeheartedness may explain why Hollindale and Sutherland think they have found in Narnia a 'glorification of conflict and retribution, [a] legitimizing of cruelty". Lewis would have agreed with the first part of their diagnosis if it means no more than an unapologetic acceptance of and proper respect for heroism in the service of retributive justice". The brave knight who risks life and limb for the sake of the oppressed deserves to be honoured, and if this honour happens to be easily corrupted by propagandizing politicians, no matter. Again, abusus non tollit usum.

However, Lewis would have rebutted the allegation of cruelty with vigour. Chivalry imposes important restraints on the practice of war so as to avoid unnecessary (i.e. cruel) violence; and Prince Caspian memorably depicts the kind of unrestrained warring spirit which he regarded as unacceptable". Further attempts to avoid a jingoistic tone that glories in slaughter are made by a clear acknowledgment of the fearfulness attendant upon physical risk (Chapter 14), by Peter's

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"He was proud of his maternal grandmother, a Warren, through whom 'the blood went back to a Norman knight whose bones lie at Battle Abbey' (SBJ 9). Lewis, who knew himself to have been born 'under Jupiter', may also have attached significance to the fact that his birthday, 29th November 1898, fell on a Tuesday, Mars's day of the week.

"MC 105. Reepicheep, it will be remembered, is 'a gay and martial mouse', PC 73; Malacandra makes people 'gay, light, nimble, and alert', THS 325.


"Lewis held that the retributive element in punishment was the sine qua non of justice; see 'The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment', 20th Century: An Australian Quarterly Review, Vol. III, No. 3 (1949) 5-12; reprinted EC 698-709.

"The hag and the werewolf are its representatives (142-149). Cf. 'In times of terror - when, for example, the Assyrians were pressing on', the ancient Jews 'were tempted, since the Lord seemed deaf, to try these appalling deities who demanded so much more and might therefore perhaps give more in return', ROP 55.

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averting his eyes from the corpses of his enemies (148), and by his determination to honour even the traitor Nikabrik with appropriate burial (149).

Lewis aimed to strike a balance between propaganda on the one hand and protest on the other. No doubt chivalry is a failure, but it is not such a failure as pacifism. Wars are evil, but not so evil as allowing aggressors to have their way. As he put it in his *magnum opus*, 'We have discovered that the scheme of 'outlawing war' has made war more like an outlaw without making it less frequent and that to banish the knight does not alleviate the suffering of the peasant.'

The cry of the suffering peasantry (the Narnians who live in hiding) reaches to heaven and Aslan’s great responsive war-cry in Chapter 11 (‘The Lion Roars’) is Lewis’s attempt to indicate that divine power is on their side and that there is such a thing as a just war:

Aslan, who seemed larger than before, lifted his head, shook his mane, and roared. The sound, deep and throbbing at first like an organ beginning on a low note, rose and became louder, and then far louder again, till the earth and air were shaking with it. It rose up from that hill and floated across all Narnia. Down in Miraz’s camp men woke, stared palely in one another’s faces, and grasped their weapons. Down below that in the Great River, now at its coldest hour, the heads and shoulders of the nymphs, and the great weedy-bearded head of the river-god, rose from the water. Beyond it, in every field and wood, the alert ears of rabbits rose from their holes, the sleepy heads of birds came out from under wings, owls hooted, vixens barked, hedgehogs grunted, the trees stirred. In towns and villages mothers pressed babies close to their breasts, staring with wild eyes, dogs whimpered, and men leaped up groping for lights. Far away on the northern frontier the mountain giants peered from the dark gateways of their castles.

This is the most militaristic moment in Aslan’s role in the story. Although he is clearly the commander-in-chief, who requires Lucy’s absolute obedience (124ff), takes the boys’ salute (134), and instructs Peter to knight Caspian (178), he is otherwise not directly involved with the war. He

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* See letter to the Editor of *Theology*, 27/2/39 (CLII 252).

* See letter to Stephen Schofield, 23/8/56 (Schofield, op. cit. 194).

* EL 153.

* PC 135.
holds back from the battle and does not ‘come roaring in and frighten all the enemies away - like last time’ (125). There are two good donegalitarian reasons for thisii.

First, Mars is different from Jupiter: knightliness is not the same as kingliness. The king must be ‘first in every desperate attack and last in every desperate retreat’; therefore, qud Jupiter, Aslan tackles the Witch directly. The knight, on the other hand, is a soldier among soldiers, and in the military chain of command, discipline is everything; every man must do his duty and the General is, in this sense, no more important than the Private: each must stick to his post. Hence we see Aslan and his underlings equally ‘taking their places in the ordered rhythm of the universe’. Quod Mars, Aslan commands: that is his obedience to the military order. He marshals and inspires his troops, but does not, on this occasion, enter the front line.

Second, knightliness is evident as much in gentleness as in hardness. When Peter chooses not to exploit his advantage after Miraz trips during the single combat Edmund concedes, ‘I suppose it is what Aslan would like’ (166). Aslan is thus cleverly brought into the combat, even in his absence. And he is absent, of course, because he is busy expressing and participating in that very aspect of Martianity which Martial hardness exists to protect - laughter and festivity as symbolised by the Bacchanalian romp. Lewis is attempting to show that, even as Aslan braces his troops for war, he restrains violence from turning into cruelty because he is working towards the pleasures of peace. Peter’s forbearance in the monomachy shows that he comes from, and is going back to, a world in which fertility and fun, dancing and drinking are ends in themselves, and in which war may be a necessary means to such ends.

There is, however, at least one unfortunate consequence of making PC unlike ‘last time’. The need to avoid repeating LWW explains one of the main problems of PC, the unsatisfactory dramatic trajectory of the eponymous character. Peter tells Caspian, ‘I haven’t come to take your place, you know, but to put you into it’ (148) but there is no coronation scene at the end of the book. Coronation (which provided a suitable climax to the previous story, with its Jovial theme) is inappropriate to the Martial donegality, and therefore we are merely told in passing that Caspian ‘was now King’ (182). (Incidentally, this reinforces the point made in Chapter Four about the letter Lewis wrote to Anne Jenkins: if the ‘restoration’ theme mentioned in that letter were truly the fundamental governing idea of the book, surely Lewis would have provided a scene in which Caspian was triumphantly restored to his throne.) That there is no coronation instils - or rather compounds - a damaging doubt as to who is the main character of the story. Already, Caspian has been relegated to the role of spectator at the single combat and prevented from avenging his father himself, because he is ‘wounded’ (150). Adding to the sense that Caspian is passive is the fact that it is Trumpkin, rather than Caspian, who tells the Pevensies the prince’s history. Caspian seems to be little more than a puppet, moved about by other characters: Dr Cornelius, Glenstorm, Nikabrik, Peter. As well as these problems, PC has a halting plot, with an overlong back-story (chs. 4-7) and abrupt cutting between different plot-lines in Chapter 14. Furthermore, the Telmarines are both uninteresting and confusing: the good ones want to stay in Narnia, but of those who want to leave some are ‘decent’, some cowardly; too many distinctions among a group of characters who are so minor. But most seriously, the martyrdom motif is not thrown into sufficient relief. Peter’s knightly courage, Lucy’s witness, and Caspian’s own story do not come to a truly crucial point; they are resolved too easily. In the other books the cruxes are more clearly defined, usually by tears: in LWW they flow at the death of Aslan; in VDT they flow at the undragoning of Eustace and the attempted abdication of Caspian; in SC pain is a necessary part of overcoming the witch’s enchantment and tears flow for the death of Caspian; in HHB Shasta cries when he meets Aslan in the mountain-pass; in MN Digory and Aslan weep for his mother; in LB Tirian and the others weep for the loss of Narnia. In PC we do not feel enough real pain or grief on the part of Peter or Lucy, and certainly not on the part of Caspian, who, though passive, is hardly shown to suffer at all. Lucy becomes ‘tremulous’ (129) when she witnesses to Aslan, and Peter recognises that he might not win the combat (165), but that is it. Manlove is surely correct to hold the view that, in comparison with the other books, PC represents a ‘weakness of inspiration’ (The Chronicles of Narnia: The Patterning of a Fantastic World (New York: Twayne, 1993) 44. Lewis reports that it sells If much less well than the other six stories: see letter to Kathleen Raine, 7/11/63 (Bodleian Library).

ii HHB 187; cf. MN 129.
Thus we see that the growing vines and the swaying trees - the Mars Silvanus images - are present to balance and orientate the Mars Gradivus theme. Knights win their spurs and do their bloody, necessary work to the greater glory of God and in service of their fellow creatures - and to that extent war is its own justification regardless of its outcome. But in the larger picture Mars Gradivus is only a means to an end; his work is undertaken in order to preserve or regain a state in which all creatures, not only knights in the lists, may give glory and honour to God:

Pale birch-girls were tossing their heads, willow-women pushed back their hair from their brooding faces to gaze on Aslan, the queenly beeches stood still and adored him, shaggy oak-men, lean and melancholy elms, shock-headed hollies (dark themselves, but their wives all bright with berries) and gay rowans, all bowed and rose again, shouting, ‘Aslan, Aslan!’ in their various husky or creaking or wave-like voices."^63

But there is another, more profound, reason why Mars Gradivus has a limited range of influence. Although the knightly ideal is a high one, it is not the highest aspect of the Martial character. ‘To the perfected Christian the ideal of honour is simply a temptation. His courage has a better root, and, being learned in Gethsemane, may have no honour about it. But to the man coming up from below, the ideal of knighthood may prove a schoolmaster to the ideal of martyrdom. Galahad is the son of Lancelot.’^64 Martyrdom is the summit of Martial achievement and in Prince Caspian Lewis gives us three martyrs, that is, three characters who witness to the truth and suffer for it: Caspian’s Nurse^65, Dr Cornelius^66, and Lucy.

Lucy’s story is the most developed. Twice she tries and fails to receive the Martial spirit, - once when she misses what the trees are saying in Chapter 9, and once, later in the same chapter, when she allows her vision of Aslan to be overruled. In Chapter 10, however, she has a full encounter with Aslan. He says, ‘It is hard for you, little one . . . It has been hard for us all in Narnia before now’ (125), - clearly a reference to his death in the previous book. Lewis cannot depict Aslan’s own martyrdom in Prince Caspian because it has already been dealt with, under the rubric of Jupiter, the priest-king, in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, and ‘things never happen the same way twice’ (125). But the key word in his comforting of Lucy - ‘hard’, - indicates that, for the purposes of the present story, we are to understood that earlier sacrifice as a Martial as well as a Jovial event^67. The focus then shifts to Lucy and to her own adoption of his Martial spirit:

Lucy buried her face in his mane to hide from his face. But there must have been magic in his mane. She could feel lion-strength going into her. Quite suddenly she sat up.

‘I’m sorry, Aslan,’ she said. ‘I’m ready now.’
‘Now you are a lioness,’ said Aslan. ‘And now all Narnia will be renewed.’^68

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^63 PC 136.
^64 ‘Christianity and Culture’, Theology, Vols. XL and XLI (March-December 1940); reprinted EC 71-92: 80.
^65 PC 44, 174.
^66 Ibid. 78ff.
^67 For ‘all the planets are present in each’ (THS 316). Cf. Williams’s doctrine of coinherence in the houses of the zodiac: ‘each is in all’ (AT 149).
^68 Ibid. 125-6.
Lucy wakes the others:

It is a terrible thing to have to wake four people, all older than yourself and all very tired, for the purpose of telling them something they probably won’t believe and making them do something they certainly won’t like. ‘I mustn’t think about it, I must just do it,’ thought Lucy."

This is the turning-point in the story. Lucy does her duty, witnesses to what she has seen, and turns the company about so that, eventually, even Susan, the most anaemic of the children, can receive the Martial spirit. At first, Susan had resisted; then she had followed reluctantly, having been told (by Trumpkin) to ‘Obey’ (129). Her reluctance slowly evaporates as she does just that, taking Mars’s ‘weight of obedience’ upon her shoulders, accepting his discipline and the consequent ‘freedom from anxiety’:

‘You have listened to fears, child,’ said Aslan. ‘Come, let me breathe on you. Forget them. Are you brave again?’

‘A little, Aslan,’ said Susan."

Thus Lewis gives us, within the Martial donegality, a version of that image used by the Greek Fathers (St Basil among them) of the iron in the fire gaining fiery properties as man acquires the spiritual qualities of the Holy Spirit by living in Him. Like the dwarves at their smithy forging armour out of ‘red-hot metal’ (71), Aslan tempers the children with his own Martial quality, that combination of strength and gentleness, that capacity both to hew down and to build up, that ability, above all, to enjoy a kind of unshakeable gaiety which comes from faithful obedience.

The miles christianus has as his great weapon ‘the shield of faith’ (Eph. 6:16), by which he may ‘turn to flight the armies of the aliens’ (Heb. 11:34). Lewis refers to these scriptural sources in his discussion of Spenser’s ‘knight of faith’ and they help explain why he so emphasizes Peter’s shield in the single combat (164f). Faithful obedience is the chief virtue which Aslan imparts to his followers under the aegis of Mars. It is a virtue of which MacDonald, Lewis’s ‘master’, wrote:

Do you ask, “What is faith in Him?” I answer, the leaving of your own way, your objects, your self, and the taking of His and Him . . . and doing as He tells you. I can find no words strong enough to serve the weight of this necessity - this obedience.""
necessity's son'. Mars, the 'unknown god' of *Prince Caspian*, turns Lucy and the others into witnesses or warriors or woodlanders or a mixture of all three. As the apostle Paul had once proclaimed to the men of Athens the person of Jesus Christ 'in whom we live and move and have our being'\textsuperscript{114}, so, in this second Chronicle, Lewis does something similar from his own Mars Hill.

\textsuperscript{114} Acts 17: 28.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Sol

Broadening eastward, clear and cloudless

To the modern mind, raised on a belief in the Solar System, it seems odd that the medieval Sun should have featured as merely one among seven planets. It seems odder still that, of the four superlunary planets which were considered beneficent in their influence, Sol should not even have ranked as Fortuna Minor, let alone Fortuna Major. Has not the Sun always been known to be the most dominant of the heavenly bodies? How could it not accordingly have had the dominant role in the myth of the planets? Lewis acknowledges this oddity in The Discarded Image:

Sol is the point at which the concordat between the mythical and the astrological nearly breaks down. Mythically, Jupiter is the King, but Sol produces the noblest metal, gold, and is the eye and mind of the whole universe.

It is one of those peculiarities of human imagination that the Sun, worshipped by Egyptians, Japanese, and Native Americans alike, treated throughout world literature as an archetype of the good, the beautiful and the true, and proposed as the astronomical centre of the universe eighteen hundred years before Copernicus, should have a status in the European myth of the heavens below that of Jupiter and even that of Venus.

Sol's confused status does not restrict Lewis's imaginative practice. It should now be becoming evident that Lewis is using each of the seven planets to symbolize divine qualities, whatever the astrological status of the planet in question. As we saw in the previous chapter, Lewis is prepared to use Mars (Infortuna Minor) to image certain things about the divine nature. And as we shall see in Chapter Eleven, he is prepared even to use Saturn (Infortuna Major) for the same purpose. That being so, Sol need present no problems. And, in any case, although Sol may not rank as one of the two fortunas, still 'the Sun is an image of the Good for Plato and therefore of God for Spenser'. Indeed, long before Plato, the Psalmist had found it natural to pass from Solar imagery into a eulogy on the Law of the Lord. Lewis had good precedents for heliotic theological imaginings and was of the view (with Edwyn Bevan, to whose Symbolism and Belief he is frequently indebted for his understanding of imagery) that the very shape of the human mind dictated such a response to the

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1 ‘The Planets’, CP 27, lines 46-47.
2 DI 106.
4 AOL 342.
5 Psalm 19 has, in sunlight, ‘the best image’ for the Law found anywhere in the psalms (ROP 56). ‘As [the Psalmist] has felt the sun, perhaps in the desert, searching him out in every nook of shade where he attempted to hide from it, so he feels the Law searching out all the hiding-places of his soul’, ROP 57; cf. 70. The equation of God/Christ with the sun or the sun’s illuminating power is a scriptural commonplace: e.g. Ps. 84:11; Mal. 4:2; 2 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 21:23; 22:5.
Sun. He wrote that ‘God is, or is like, light . . . for every devotional, philosophical, and theological purpose imaginable within a Christian, or indeed a monotheistic, frame of reference’. Similarly, he believed that Solar gold, of itself, could never be a symbol of evil ‘to any human poet’.

Lewis’s own heliotic imagination seems to have been fired early in life when he came across the words:

I heard a voice that cried,
Balder the beautiful
Is dead, is dead . . .

Instantly, Lewis records, he was transported into a realm of desire so strong that its intensity was almost sickening. What he does not mention is that Balder is the Norse equivalent of Helius (the Greek forerunner of Sol); he was the god of light, son of Odin and Frigg, as Helius was the son of Hyperion and Theia. Lewis’s youthful passion for ‘Balder and the sunward-sailing cranes’ sparked an interest in Solar deities which endured throughout his life. As late as 1961 he was still arguing that Balder’s similarity to Christ worked in the latter’s favour. And for a while Lewis was also interested in Balder poetically. He appears, for instance, in the final stanza of Dymer, alongside Saturn (see below, Chapter Eleven), but thereafter morphs into Sol in Lewis’s poetry, part of the general drift in Lewis’s imagination towards an acceptance of the seven Ptolemaic planets as his controlling symbol-system. This chapter traces that growing responsiveness to Sol in scholarship, poetry and fiction and shows how a Solar donegality informs the third book in the Narniad, The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’.

1. Sol in Lewis’s scholarship

Before we look at Sol in Lewis’s poetry it will be well to familiarize ourselves with his academic understanding of the planet. Having pointed out that ‘Sol produces the noblest metal, gold, and is the eye and mind of the whole universe’, Lewis goes on to complete his summary of the medieval and renaissance view of the Sun as follows:

1 ‘Dante’s Similes’, paper read to the Oxford Dante Society, 13/2/40; reprinted SMRL 64-77: 71.
3 SBJ 20. The quotation is from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s ‘Tegnér’s Drapa’, a lament (drapa) in the Old Norse style on the death of the Swedish poet Esaias Tegnér, from The Seaside and the Fireside, lines 1-3.
6 ROF 89.
[Sol] makes men wise and liberal and his sphere is the Heaven of theologians and philosophers. Though he is no more metallurgical than any other planet his metallurgical operations are more often mentioned than theirs. We read in Donne’s *Allophones and Idios* how soils which the Sun could make into gold may lie too far from the surface for his beams to take effect (61). Spenser’s Mammon brings his hoard out to ‘sun’ it. If it were already gold, he would have no motive for doing this. It is still hore (grey); he suns it that it may become gold. Sol produces fortunate events.\(^\text{13}\)

Of the seven sentences in that summary, five deal with Sol’s aurifying influence. Whether or not Lewis was right so to emphasize this metallurgical power is not our concern; we are interested in his theological imagination, rather than his historical-critical judgements. But we certainly find that his own poetic practice is in accordance with those judgements. When we examine the use to which Lewis put Solar symbolism in his poetry, it is the Midas-touch or the philosopher’s stone effect which is almost invariably the dominant image.

2. Sol in Lewis’s poetry

Sol finds his way into several of Lewis’s poems, but we shall concentrate our attention upon those four where his metallurgical influence is on display:\(^\text{14}\):

a) ‘The Planets’:

Far beyond her [Venus]
The heaven’s highway hums and trembles,
Drums and dindles, to the driv’n thunder
Of SOL’s chariot, whose sword of light
Hurts and humbles; beheld only

\(^\text{13}\) DI 106. Cf. DI 26-27; EL 12.
\(^\text{14}\) We shall therefore omit:

i) ‘Descend to Earth, Descend, Celestial Nine’, a heroic narrative poem inspired by Wagner which dates to 1912-13 (see Lewis, W.H. ‘The Lewis Papers: Memoirs of the Lewis Family, 1850-1930’ (unpublished: Wade Center, Wheaton College, IL) Vol. 3, 321-36; reprinted King, Don W. *CS Lewis, Poet: The Legacy ofhis Poetic Impulse* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2001) 245-265). The Rhine maidens give Alberich, king of the Nibelung, a vision of the Rhinegold, hoping thus to direct his attention away from them, but they foolishly disclose the gold’s dread power:

Whoe’er the treasure keeps and wears the RING
Shall rule the world, an everlasting king. (1,84-92)

ii) ‘To G.M.’: *The Spectator* CLXIX (9/10/42) 335; revised and reprinted as ‘To a Friend’, *CP* 118-119, lines 10-11.

iii) ‘On Being Human’: *Punch* CCX (8/5/46) 402; revised and reprinted *CP* 48-49, lines 9-11: ‘the meaning of / Arboreal life, how from earth’s salty lap / The solar beam uplifts it’.

iv) ‘Solomon’: *Punch* CCXI (14/8/46) 136; revised and reprinted *CP* 60-61, lines 10-12: ‘Like the unbearable noon-day in the glare of its power, / So solemn and so radiant was Solomon to behold, / Men feared his immense forehead and his beard of gold’.

v) ‘The Turn of the Tide’: *Punch* CCXV (1/11/48) 237; revised and reprinted *CP* 63-65, where Sol is said to be home to ‘Monsters in the Sun’ (line 71). These monsters are salamanders, in whom Lewis had a persistent interest. Cf. ‘The Salamander’: *The Spectator* CLXXIV (8/6/45); reprinted *CP* 86-87; and letter to Valerie Pitt, 1/3/49 (CLII 919).

Of eagle’s eye. When his arrow glances
Through mortal mind, mists are parted
And mild as morning the mellow wisdom
Breathes o’er the breast, broadening eastward
Clear and cloudless. In a clos’d garden
(Unbound her burden) his beams foster
Soul in secret, where the spoil puts forth
Paradisal palm, and pure fountains
Turn and re-temper, touching coolly
The uncomely common to cordial gold;
Whose ore also, in earth’s matrix,
Is print and pressure of his proud signet
On the wax of the world. He is the worshipp’d male,
The earth’s husband", all-beholding,
Arch-chemic eye.

The non-metallurgical imagery of these lines must be noted as well as the metallurgical; it may be usefully paralleled by the Discarded Image summary, as follows: Sol engenders ‘mellow wisdom’ (‘he makes men wise’); unbinds burdens (‘he makes men ... liberal’); fosters ‘soul in secret’ (‘his sphere is the Heaven of theologians’); clears mists from the mind (‘his sphere is the Heaven of ... philosophers’). The metallurgical imagery itself is given the best part of six lines: Sol turns the ‘uncomely common to cordial gold’; his ‘ore’ is the ‘print and pressure of his proud signet / On the wax of the world’; his eye is ‘arch-chemic’. These images are here merely descriptive of Sol’s astrological character, but they are taken and applied for theological ends in:

b) ‘A Pageant Played in Vain’":

Watching the thought that moves
Within my conscient brain,
I learn how often that appearance proves
A pageant played in vain.

Holding what seems the helm,
I make a show to steer,
But winds, for worse and better, overwhelm
My purpose, and I veer.

Thus, if thy guidance reach
Only my head, then all
Hardest attempt of mine serves but to teach
How oddly the dice fall.

To limbs, and loins, and heart,
Search with thy chemic beam,
Strike where the self I know not lives apart,
Beneath the surface dream.

See SIL 48 for Lewis’s discussion of Spenser’s treatment of Sol’s progenitive power, and its Aristotelian source.
" Cf. ‘Liber is ‘free’, not a slave’ (SIW 113). For more on the meanings of ‘liberal’, see section 4 i) below.
" CP 110. The last three stanzas of this poem first saw print in a slightly different form as ‘Break, Sun, my Crusted Earth’ in Fear No More: A Book of Poems for the Present Time by Living English Poets (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940) 72. The title of that volume is apt for this chapter, alluding as it does to Shakespeare’s Cymbeline IV, ii, 258: ‘Fear no more the heat of the sun’. 132
Break, Sun, my crusted earth,
Pierce, razor-edged, within,
Where blind, immortal metals have their birth,
And crystals clear begin.

Thy spirit in secret flows
About our lives. In gloom,
The mother helping not nor hindering, grows
The child within the womb.

The Sun here is a deity (‘thy chemic beam’, ‘thy spirit’) and the poem, though not displaying Lewis’s talents at their best, is interesting on several counts. First, for its sailing imagery in stanza 2: we shall see below how Lewis’s Solar donegality is embedded in a story of a sea voyage. Second, for the use of the word ‘strike’ in the fourth stanza, a verb with astrological significance". Third, for the unknown ‘self’ in the same stanza and the ‘secret spirit’ in the final stanza. Here Lewis touches briefly on that matter which is a main theme of this thesis: the way that the spiritual life of man exceeds conscious awareness. And its fourth interesting feature is the one which most concerns us at the moment, its metallurgical imagery: the searching ‘chemic beam’, the penetrative Sun bringing ‘blind, immortal metals’ to birth. It is noteworthy that Lewis writes ‘metals’ not ‘metal’. This perhaps suggests that Sol is being given a proprietorial power, able to command not just gold, but the metals of all the different planets. Such a role is certainly ascribed to him in:

c) ‘Noon’s Intensity”:

Till your alchemic beams turn all to gold
There must be many metals. From the night
You will not yet withdraw her silver light,
And often with Saturnian tints the cold
Atlantic swells at morning shall enfold
The Cornish cliffs burnished with copper bright;
Till trained by slow degrees we have such sight
As dares the pure projection to behold.
Even when Sol comes ascendant, it may be
More perfectly in him our eyes shall see
All baser virtues; thus shall hear you talking
And yet not die. Till then, you have left free,
Unscorched by your own noon’s intensity
One cool and evening hour for garden walking.

In the first eight lines the poet is waiting for Sol to transmute all metals into the noblest. He mentions Luna’s silver, Venus’s copper and ‘Saturnian tints’ (i.e. streaks of lead) as subjects fit for aurification. Then in line 9 the poet wonders whether Sol’s ascendancy might not in fact metamorphose those ‘baser’ metals into gold, but rather perfect them without transmuting them.

" See Lewis’s Arden edition of Hamlet in the library of Magdalene College, Cambridge. Lewis has underlined I, i, 162: ‘no planets strike’ and also marked the editor’s note on the word ‘strike’: ‘blast, esp. of planetary influence. Coriolanus, II, ii, 117: ‘struck Corioli like a planet’. Furness quotes Florio’s Dict. “Assiderare: to blast or strike with a planet.” Cf. his own use of ‘moonstruck’, SL 112; also the probable word-play in ‘From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place’, ‘Meditation in a Toolshed’, The Coventry Evening Telegraph, 17/1/45, 4; reprinted EC 607-610: 607. And again in ‘There is a striking difference between this Model . . . and the Christian picture’, DI 120.

" CP 128.
This is that theme which Lewis elsewhere calls 'Transposition': the taking up of a lower medium and raising it to a new significance by incorporation into a higher medium. However, the poem gives no clear signal as to whether Sol will transmute or transpose, and it ends on an equally ambivalent note. The 'cool and evening hour for garden walking' which is 'free' and 'unscorched' presents an attractive image of restfulness and temperance. On the other hand, it connotes God's 'walking in the garden in the cool of the day' (Gen. 3:8) and Adam and Eve's hiding in shame; in this sense it is an image of fearfulness and resistance. The ambivalence is a Herbert-like note, recognising human inertia alongside pious desire.

'Noon's Intensity' remained unpublished during Lewis's life and it is not known when it was written, but it looks as though it might be a revisitation of subjects dealt with in two of The Pilgrim's Regress poems, namely 'Caught' (where the poet's reaction to 'noon's long-drawn Astonishment' is even more reluctant) and the next poem of metallurgical significance which we have to consider:

d) 'Scazons':

Walking to-day by a cottage I shed tears
When I remembered how once I had walked there
With my friends who are mortal and dead. Years
Little had healed the wound that was laid bare.

Out little spear that stabs! I, fool, believed
I had outgrown the local, unique sting,
I had transmuted wholly (I was deceived)
Into Love universal the lov'd thing.

But Thou, Lord, surely knewest thine own plan
When the angelic indifferencies with no bar
Universally loved, but Thou gav'st man
The tether and pang of the particular,

Which, like a chemic drop, infinitesimal,
Plashed into pure water, changing the whole,
Embody and embitters and turns all
Spirit's sweet water into astringent soul,

That we, though small, might quiver with fire's same
Substantial form as Thou - not reflect merely
Like lunar angels back to Thee cold flame.
Gods are we, Thou hast said; and we pay dearly.

As in 'Noon's Intensity', the poet touches on how Sol might or might not 'transmute' loved things into 'Love universal'. He concludes that an aspect of being human is to place value in particulars, and suggests that that very understanding of particularity is a gift from Sol (a 'chemic drop') which works its magic, turning the sweet waters of the 'Spirit' (the discarnate Spirit which angels consist of) into human 'astringent soul' (a quibble on 'Sol'; cf. 'his beams foster / Soul in secret' in 'The

\* 'Transposition', sermon preached in Mansfield College, Oxford, 28/5/44; revised and reprinted EC 267-278.
\* PR 186; revised and reprinted CP 129-130.
\* PR 249; revised and reprinted CP 132.
Planets’). Thus God transposes man’s local loves without annihilating them in the process. This particularity in universality is what differentiates men from angels. Angels, according to the penultimate line, are ‘lunar’, reflecting God’s light straight back to him with undiscriminating immediacy. But the poet’s love does not merely reflect back, like a moon; it reflects internally also, like (as Lewis puts it elsewhere) ‘a dewdrop’. Again we see the interplay between Sol and water in his imagination.

3. Sol in That Hideous Strength

In That Hideous Strength Sol receives far less attention than any of the other six planets. Sol does not descend upon St Anne’s in Chapter 15, and in this he is no different from Luna; but, unlike Luna, Sol (or Arbol, as Lewis calls him) makes only a very minor contribution to the imagery in the rest of the story. One explanation of this near-absence is that Lewis has deliberately incorporated Sol into Jupiter, reflecting the near-breakdown in the medieval concordat between the mythical and the astrological. (That certainly seems to be the case with the depiction of Ransom, as we shall see presently.) Another possible explanation is that the virtual omission of Sol is a structural flaw in the work, one of the reasons why Lewis came close to despairing of it.

All the appearances of Solar influence in Lewis’s poetry are positive depictions. In That Hideous Strength, however, Solar imagery - like so much in that book - polarises into the morally good and the morally bad.

Ransom has a few flecks of Sol augmenting his general depiction as a Jovial character. We are told that he has ‘gold hair’ and a ‘gold beard’ (142). Jane likens him to Solomon, and ‘the bright solar blend of king and lover and magician which hangs about that name’ (143) steals back upon her mind. His ‘voice also seemed to be like sunlight and gold. Like gold not only as gold is beautiful but as it is heavy’ (143).

The deployment of Solar imagery for negative purposes is also brief, but more significant. At Bracton College we are shown into ‘the Soler, the long upper room on the south of Lady Alice [Quadrangle]’ (23). It ‘is very hot in the Soler on a sunny afternoon’ (26) and it is there, as the Bursar drones hypnotically about ‘money matters’, that the Fellows’ stipends take on a quality.

*This observation courtesy of Andrew Cunco. Lewis would have known of the connection between the spiritual and metallurgical uses of alchemy. Alchemy, according to Burckhardt, was ‘the art of the transmutations of the soul. In saying this I am not seeking to deny that alchemists also knew and practised metallurgical procedures such as the purification and alloying of metals; their real work, however, for which all these procedures were merely the outward supports of “operational” symbols, was the transmutation of the soul. The testimony of the alchemists on this point is unanimous.’ Burckhardt, Titus. Alchemy (London: Penguin, 1972) 23.

* Cf. ‘French Nocturne’, SIB, poem ii; reprinted CP 168, line 16 (of the Moon): ‘And she’s a stone that catches the sun’s beam’.


* See letters to E.R. Eddison, 29/4/43 (CLII 571); Owen Barfield, 17/5/43 (CLII 574); Laurence Harwood, 22/7/44 (CLII 634).
antithetical to Bragdon Wood. The suggestion is that the Fellows' greed is turning Solar influence to ill effect. Their love of money is the root of all the evil that follows in the book as they think more and more of the 'luciferous' use of Bragdon Wood and less of the 'luciferous', to use Francis Bacon's terms for the alternative uses of science.

This short scene in the Soler thus helps establish one of the larger themes of That Hideous Strength, the abuse of Nature through scientific manipulation. It is the same theme which Lewis addressed in The Abolition of Man (the philosophical counterpart to That Hideous Strength) where he notes that the chief trumpeter of the era of applied science, Bacon, wanted knowledge not for its own sake but for its 'fruit': like Marlowe's Faustus, 'It is not truth he wants ... but gold and guns and girls.' The truly liberal (and Solar) motive was lacking from his thought, as the novel makes clear in its mention of Bacon alongside Agrippa and Paracelsus in Chapter 9. The only reason Bacon did not line up with these magicians was because their experiments 'attained not to greatness and certainty of works'.

Lewis argues that magic and science were consanguineous: 'One was sickly and died, the other was healthy and throve. But they were twins. They were born of the same impulse.' He denies that he is attacking science: 'No doubt those who really founded modern science were usually those whose love of truth exceeded their love of power.' But he is struck by the 'unhealthy neighbourhood' and the 'inauspicious hour' in which modern science appeared. It is a theme he returns to in English Literature in the Sixteenth Century where he opines, in a long passage on astrology and the scientific revolution, that 'Bacon and the magicians have the closest possible affinity.' And as with Bacon, so with his successors, such as Boyle and Newton who were both alchemists. Although Lewis nowhere develops this line of thought in considered detail, it evidently drummed a beat in the background of his mind as he pondered the progress of the scientific enterprise from the sixteenth century up to the modern day, including Darwin en route. In his essay 'Christian Hope - Its Meaning for Today' he wonders whether the origins of the Darwinian myth may be traced 'to the German idealists and thence (as I have heard suggested) through Boehme back...'

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* See THS 7.
* AOM 46.
* THS 201.
* AOM 46.
* Ibid. 46-47.
* EL 13.

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* See Boyle, Robert. The Sceptical Chymist (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1949). Lewis's copy of this work in the Wade Center is well-marked, underlined and annotated, including the following passage: 'And though gold is, of all metals, that, whose mercury [i.e. essence] chymists have most endeavoured to extract, and which they do the most brag they have extracted; yet the experienced Angelus Sala, in his spagyrical account of the seven terrestrial planets (that is the seven metals) affords us this memorable testimony, to our present purpose; “Quanquam (saies he) etc. experientia tamen (quam stultorum magistram vocamus) certe comprobatit, mercurium auri adeo fixum, maturum, et arcte cum reliquis ejusdern corporis substantiis conjungi, ut nullo modo retrogressi possit” (101) [“And yet nevertheless experience (what we call the teacher to dunces) has demonstrated that the essence of gold is so securely, vigorously, and tightly joined together with the remaining elements of the same body that it is in no way capable of retrogression”]. Lewis's underlining. See also Princep, Lawrence. The Aspiring Adept: Robert Boyle and his alchemical quest: including Boyle's 'lost' Dialogue on the transmutation of metals (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).
* "The fact of the matter is, Newton was an alchemist, and his major interest in chemistry, in his earlier years, centred on the possibility of transmuting metals... Why should Newton not be an alchemist? All his contemporaries, even Boyle, Locke, and Hooke were." More, Louis Trenchard. Isaac Newton, A Biography (New York: Scribner, 1934) 158f.
to Alchemy. Is the whole dialectical view of history possibly a gigantic projection of the old dream that we can make gold? We do not have space to explore these ideas in their own right, but it is worth noting their existence in Lewis’s thinking. The connection in his imagination between Solar influence (improperly received) and the will to power helps explain certain aspects of his mature treatment of this planet’s character in the third and most accomplished of the Narnia Chronicles.

4. Sol in The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’

i) the Solar Poeima

In contrast to his somewhat elliptical treatment of Sol in That Hideous Strength, Lewis’s Narnian treatment of ‘the eye and mind of the whole universe’ is obvious, indeed the most obvious of the seven Narnian donegalities*. In The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’ the Solar influence governing the story could be divined from the title alone, for this is a tale about a journey towards the rising sun. As is the case in most of the other books, the prevailing planetary spirit becomes progressively more intense as the story proceeds, but only in this story is the planet actually located and identified as the destination of the plot: ‘the very eastern end of the world’ (20), ‘the utter East’ (21). Reepicheep, whose literal ‘orientation’ helps motivate the quest, swears he will ‘sink with his nose to the sunrise’ (162) if it is the last thing he does.

In constructing this picaresque romance, Lewis had many sea-voyage stories to draw upon, such as Homer’s Odyssey, the Irish tradition of immram, the Anglo-Saxon poem The Seafarer, the voyage of St Brendan and Mandeville’s Voyage and Travails. Of sun-voyage stories there are fewer sources, but it seems likely that one model was Paradise Lost. In his Preface Lewis notes how:

Towards the end of Book III Milton takes Satan to visit the sun. To keep on harping on heat and brightness would be no use; it would end only in that bog of superlatives which is the destination of many bad poets. But Milton makes the next hundred lines as Solar as they could possibly be.†

Lewis points out how Milton proceeds from gentle warmth, to penetrating virtue, to a pun on Galileo’s sun-spots, to alchemy and ‘archchemic properties’, to shadowlessness, to the world’s eye, and God’s own singular eye. He then observes: ‘This is not, of course, the sun of modern science; but almost everything which the sun had meant to man up till Milton’s day has been gathered together and the whole passage in his own phrase, ‘runs potable gold’.‡

In Lewis’s own attempt to deploy images ‘as Solar as they could possibly be’, he gives us ‘drinkable light’ (174) as his version of ‘potable gold’, and follows the Miltonic example by not harping on heat and brightness. He hardly mentions heat at all. Brightness is adroitly handled, chiefly by the device of contrasting the increasing light with occasional plunges into darkness. The storm in Chapter 5, the night-time salvation of Eustace in Chapter 7, the Dark Island in Chapter 12 and the overnight vigil in Chapter 13 punctuate the growing brilliance so that the final three chapters of uninterrupted light do not feel de trop, but rather the deserved reward of dedicated seekers after luminosity. Sol, who is ‘banischer of nicht’, exerts his influence climactically in the magnificent sunrise on Ramandu’s island when he expels the last vestiges of darkness once and for all: ‘And as Edmund said afterwards, ‘Though lots of things happened on that trip which sound more exciting, that moment was really the most exciting’’ (156). Thereafter, there is only light. As the voyage progresses we read: ‘every morning when the sun rose out of the sea the curved prow of the Dawn Treader stood up right across the middle of the sun. Some thought that the sun looked larger than it looked from Narnia, but others disagreed’ (101). Later, ‘there was no mistaking it’ (156). And later still, ‘the sun when it came up each morning was twice, if not three times, its usual size’ (166). Ultimately, Sol is ‘beheld only / Of eagle’s eye’: ‘if their eyes had not by now grown as strong as eagles’ the sun on all that whiteness - especially at early morning when the sun was hugest - would have been unbearable’ (180).

Just as Milton and his medieval forebears emphasized Sol’s metallurgical power, so does Lewis. It is only Sol, among all his planetary donegalities, whose metal-making power is actually shown in operation. The subject is given a whole episode to itself in Chapter 8 when the royal party discovers a pool on an island. At the bottom of this pool lies a life-size figure of a man, apparently made of gold:

It lay face downwards with its arms stretched out above its head. And it so happened that as they looked at it, the clouds parted and the sun shone out. The golden shape was lit up from end to end.

The adventurers wonder whether they can dive for it and drag it out, though Edmund reckons that if it is of solid gold it will be too weighty to salvage. He lowers a spear into the water to test its depth

**Images of sweat and melting would be out of place and might also call to mind Icarus, an unhelpful example. Also Lewis, a ‘polar bear’ by constitution, was no friend to the heat. But there are some references: the air becomes ‘warmer day by day’ (55); the nights are ‘very warm’ (145); the sun is ‘not too hot’ (174).**

**The underlining is one of Lewis’s many markings in his copy of Henryson’s poetry now in the possession of the Wade Center. Henryson, Robert. ‘The Testament of Cresseid’, Yhe Poems of Robert Henryson, ed. W.M. Metcalfe (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1917) 151, line 199.**

**Ramandu’s daughter is reminiscent of Aurora, and the table with the Stone Knife connotes the statue of Memnon her son on the banks of the Nile. Ancient writers record that when the first rays of the rising sun fell upon this statue, a sound could be heard to issue from it like the snapping of a harp-string.**

**Cf. ‘The brightness of his face, quhen it was bair, / Nane micht behald for peirsing of his sicht’. Henryson, op. cit. 151, lines 206-7.**

**Significantly, this hill-top pool is the source of the ‘eastern’ stream where Drinian had wanted to water the ship. But he is over-ruled: he anchors the ship off the ‘western’ stream (95), and it was ‘a good thing he did’ (‘Sol produces fortunate events’). In other words, the western stream (the one opposite the direction of sunrise) had no such dangerous metallurgical powers.**

**VDT 98.**
and the spear becomes so heavy that he has to drop it; the others observe that it has turned the same colour as the statue. Edmund then notices that the tips of his boots have turned to gold and he shouts out sharply, 'Get back! Back from the water. All of you. At once!' He explains: 'That water turns things into gold. It turned the spear into gold, that's why it got so heavy. And it was just lapping against my feet (it's a good thing I wasn't barefoot) and it turned the toe-caps into gold. And that poor fellow on the bottom - well, you see.' The golden statue is the dead body of one of the lost lords, Restimar, killed by aurification. Caspian tests the alchemical properties of the water by dipping a spray of heather into the pool. 'It was heather that he dipped; what he drew out was a perfect model of heather made of the purest gold, heavy and soft as lead' (100).

The heather's leadenness is not just a metallic simile. To be sure, the golden spray is like lead in its weight and malleability, but, at the astrological level, there is a darker meaning. Lead is the metal of Saturn, Infortuna Major, who brings about calamity and death. As soon as we have heard that the golden heather is like lead (and that Edmund's boots have similarly turned leaden, 99), we know that this pool is a dangerous place:

'The King who owned this island,' said Caspian slowly, and his face flushed as he spoke, 'would soon be the richest of all the Kings of the world. I claim this land for ever as a Narnian possession. It shall be called Goldwater Island. And I bind you all to secrecy. No one must know of this. Not even Drinian - on pain of death, do you hear?'

'Who are you talking to?' said Edmund. 'I'm no subject of yours. If anything it's the other way round. I am one of the four ancient sovereigns of Narnia and you are under allegiance to the High King my brother.'

'So it has come to that, King Edmund, has it?' said Caspian, laying his hand on his sword-hilt.

'Oh, stop it, both of you,' said Lucy. 'That's the worst of doing anything with boys. You're all such swaggering, bullying idiots - oooh! - ' Her voice died away into a gasp. And everyone else saw what she had seen.

Across the grey hillside above them - grey, for the heather was not in bloom - without noise, and without looking at them, and shining as if he were in bright sunlight though the sun had in fact gone in, passed with slow pace the hugest lion that human eyes have ever seen. In describing the scene Lucy said afterwards, 'He was the size of an elephant,' though at another time she only said, 'The size of a cart-horse.' But it was not the size that mattered. Nobody dared to ask what it was. They knew it was Aslan."

The imagery of colour in that last paragraph is variously suggestive. In one way, the greyness of the hillside suggests leadenness again, and therefore a genius loci which turns Solar influence to ill effect ('there is a curse on this place,' says Reepicheep, and he renames it Deathwater Island). In a second way, the greyness is reminiscent of Spenser's Mammon" whose hoard is still 'hore (grey); he suns it that it may become gold". From another point of view the heather is grey because, botanically, it is not in bloom: it will only bloom if the sun continues to shine on it. But Lewis's
primary concern is not with the literal sun: 'the sun had in fact gone in'. He is concerned with the one of whom the Sun is an image, the golden lion. 'Nobody dared to ask what it was. They knew it was Aslan,' - a clear echo of John’s Gospel*. This is the first time in the story that Aslan has appeared* and he almost instantly vanishes. This episode is a very good example of Lewis's skill in blending romance, medieval astrology, literary and Biblical allusion, and his own 'suppositional' allegory. The powers of co-ordination and translation required to achieve such a sophisticated imaginative mix without overwhelming the narrative - indeed without making the narrative seem anything other than entirely natural and consistent - should not be underestimated.

Before we leave the subject of metallurgy we must note that it is not confined to Chapter 8; the engolding influence of Sol is evident in other places too. The ship's flag bears the picture of a 'golden lion' (48) and inside the stern cabin there is a 'flat gold image of Aslan' (18, 182). In all the other six Chronicles, Aslan's image - on shields and banners* - is Jovial red; but in this story the special power of Solar alchemy succeeds in turning it gold.

And Sol's metallurgical operations have clearly been having their effect on the ship itself: she is largely covered in gold leaf: 'Her prow was gilded . . . The sides of the ship - what you could see of them where the gilded wings of the dragon ended - were green' (9); 'The look-out man [stood] on a little shelf inside the gilded dragon's neck' (25); '[Behind the tiller] the dragon's tail rose up, covered with gilding' (26). The ship itself could not be made of solid gold or it would sink; but its gilding suggests that the sun's influence has been at work. And with that, we leave the subject of Solar transmutation and turn to the Sun's other qualities.

Sol is 'the sphere of philosophers'. Boethius's De Consolatione Philosophae was, for Lewis, one of the most influential books ever written in Latin; he thought that 'to acquire a taste for it is almost to become naturalised in the Middle Ages". Boethius's treatment of Fortuna, which has its greatest legacy in Dante's Inferno (VII, 73ff), is 'Stoical and Christian alike, in full harmony with the Book of Job and with certain Dominical sayings"'; and it is clearly upon this tradition that Reepicheep is drawing when he offers comfort to the endragoned Eustace in Chapter 7:

He would explain that what had happened . . . was a striking illustration of the turn of Fortune's wheel, and that if he had Eustace at his own house in Narnia . . . he could show him more than a hundred examples of emperors, kings, dukes, knights, poets, lovers, astronomers, philosophers, and magicians, who had fallen-------- from prosperity into the most distressing circumstances, and of whom many had recovered and lived happily ever afterwards.14

* John 21:12: 'None of the disciples dared ask him, 'Who are you?' They knew it was the Lord.'
* His appearance to Eustace is relayed in reported speech and is therefore an appearance as it were 'off-stage'.
* Aslan's image on Peter's shield in LWW is red, 'as bright as a ripe strawberry', appropriate for Jupiter. However, the image is also red on Rilian's shield at the end of SC (164), where Lewis might have made it silver, and on the banner carried by Lord Peridan in HHB (149), where he might have made it mercury-coloured. The redness suggests Jupiter's reign not just in his own sphere, but as king over the whole universe, his wisdom being that which 'governs the stars'.
* DI 75.
* VDT 81-81.
Both with his mention of 'philosophers' (not a word which reappears in the Narniad) and in his Boethian philosophy, Reepicheep shows himself to be a lover of wisdom. Since Sol 'makes men wise' this is no more than we should expect. We find the desire for wisdom occurring also in Coriakin's hope that one day the 'monopods' or 'duffers' may be 'governed by wisdom instead of this rough magic' (an allusion to the 'rough magic' of Shakespeare's Prospero, himself an alchemist). More generally, we find clarity of mind being symbolised in the advance towards the sunrise. 'The Planets' speaks of a 'broadening eastward / Clear and cloudless' and in the Dawn Treader the 'unclouded' skies (156), the 'clear' and 'clearer' waters (166-167), the powerful sense of a kind of spacious intensity which the travellers encounter as they journey further east, these things become objective correlatives of a growing spiritual wisdom and profundity.

Sol 'makes men .. liberal' and liberality is a theme played in various keys throughout the book. By 'liberal' Lewis means a great many things; it is a word whose history he had minutely studied.

At one level, it means generosity. Caspian, that 'golden-headed boy' (14), is conspicuously generous: he provides ale for the old salts (53), rum for the ship's company after the fight with the Sea Serpent (94), 'grog all round' following their escape from the Dark Island, and he promises 'gold or land enough' to make the sailors rich (163) if they will accompany him to the utter East. More significantly, he helps bring about the release of the slaves on the Lone Islands by offering a cask of wine to the slovenly guards at Narrowhaven, forgiving Gumpas his debt and reimbursing both Lord Bern and the Calormene traders. Thus generosity is put in the service of 'freedom', for 'Liberales are the sort of people who ransom prisoners'.

At another level, liberality appears in the sense of 'liberal study', the pursuit of knowledge which, as Newman wrote, 'stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel ... refuses to be informed (as it is called) by any end'. Lewis, as a staunch defender of liberal education, is keen to keep alive the idea that 'free study seeks nothing beyond itself and desires the activity of knowing for that activity's own sake. That is what the man of radically servile character ... will never understand. He will ask, 'But what use is it?'

'True', replied Reepicheep. 'Use, Captain? If by use you mean filling our bellies or our purses, I confess it will be no use at all. So far as I know we did not set sail to look for things useful but to seek honour and adventure.'

'Thus Drinian is rebuked for asking 'what manner of use' it would be to plough into the amorphous blackness of the Dark Island; his question betrays an illiberal, utilitarian trait in his character.
And at a third level, liberality is associated in Lewis’s mind with the meaning ‘gratis, not to be paid for’**, the opposite of cupidity. We see this sentiment lauded thrice in literal terms (as Pug in Chapter 4, Eustace in Chapters 6 and 7, and the whole royal party in Chapter 8, learn something of what it means) and it is modulated into spiritual terms in the final chapter. Caspian’s desire to abdicate and seize Aslan’s country by his own will is a kind of simony, a determination to pay for spiritual enlightenment, even at the price of his own life; it is akin to what Austin Farrer perceptively calls ‘the ultimate refinement of covetousness’**. Caspian is restrained from this course of action first by the near-mutiny of the ship’s company, then by a painful encounter with Aslan: ‘it was terrible - his eyes’ (a nod, perhaps, to God’s ‘Eyes’ of Paradise Lost III: 650). Sol makes his subjects open to the spirit of gratuity, symbolized here by the current which carries the voyagers across windless seas, and by the ‘fate’ (185, 186) which directs their actions.

Borne up by this Solar generosity of spirit the children tread the dawn:

[U]p came the sun . . . [T]hey could look at the rising sun and see it clearly and see things beyond it. What they saw - eastward, beyond the sun - was a range of mountains . . . No one in that boat doubted that they were seeing beyond the End of the World into Aslan’s country.*

Lewis is here borrowing Charles Williams’s Sarras, the land of the Trinity, seen ‘on a sea-site / in a light that shone from behind the sun’**. The glimpse is only fleeting: ‘As the sun rose the sight of those mountains outside the world faded away’ (185). But the vision is not the climax of the voyage for there is something even better yet to experience, the kiss of a golden lion on their foreheads before the backdrop rends and they find themselves in that other (and far less appealing) eastern place, ‘the back bedroom in Aunt Alberta’s home in Cambridge’.

Aunt Alberta thinks Eustace has become commonplace and tiresome and that - in the very last words of the book - ‘it must have been the influence of those Pevensie children’ (189). Lewis is here having a private joke at the expense of Aunt Alberta and her understanding of ‘influence’:

If influence occurs in an explicitly astrological passage we shall not go wrong; but unless we have our whole imagination so impregnated with the old point of view that reference to it has become habitual, we shall almost certainly fail to respond to the metaphorical uses of influence (say, in Milton). In our own language the metaphorical use of this word is the only one, and the metaphor is thoroughly dead. In the older writers is it glitteringly alive."

With her barrenly modern imagination, Aunt Alberta is unable to see that the change in Eustace has been brought about not by the influence of his cousins, but by the influence of Sol.

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*SIW 124.
* VDT 183-185.
* AT 99, 103, 197; cf. M 112; LTM 31.
ii) the Solar Logos

In analysing the Solar *poema* we have already touched on elements of the Solar *logos*, Lewis’s theological message. This is inevitable, since the distinction between *poema* and *logos* is far from absolute and, in the case of Sol, whose sphere is the Heaven of theologians and philosophers, the boundary is even more indistinct than usual. Indeed, *The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’* is so full of *logos* that we cannot here attempt a comprehensive discussion. We shall confine our treatment to two things: the appearances of Aslan and Lucy’s reading of the magician’s book.

Aslan appears seven times in the course of the story. Each time he becomes a little more Solar.

His first appearance is to Eustace. Lewis distances the episode by presenting it in retrospect: Eustace tells Edmund about his encounter with the lion after the event, and Aslan’s words are given in reported speech. The meeting has occurred at night and therefore there is no sunlight, except at one remove, via the moon: ‘there was no moon last night, but there was moonlight where the lion was’ (84), ‘there was always this moonlight over and round the lion wherever we went’ (85). This emphasis on moonlight is appropriate for a Solar Christophany which is presented in indirect speech, for moonlight is ‘sunlight at second hand’*. Sol, who ‘hurts and humbles’ according to ‘The Planets’, has both these effects upon Eustace as he is undragoned: ‘It hurt worse than anything I’ve ever felt’ (86); ‘it hurts like billy-oh’ (86); ‘and by the way, I’d like to apologize’ (87). As Eustace is relating all this to Edmund, dawn arrives: ‘though they could not see the sunrise because of the mountains on their right, they knew it was going on because the sky above them and the bay before them turned the colour of roses’ (87-88). Aslan’s Solar nature is introduced very gently and skilfully in this scene.

In Aslan’s second appearance, on Deathwater Island (which we have already looked at above), he is slightly more Solar. Though the sun has gone in, he shines ‘as if he were in bright sunlight’ (100). He says nothing as he passes majestically by, and the royal party look at one another ‘like people waking from sleep’ (an early outing for the imagery associated with dawn).

His third and fourth appearances occur on the Island of the Duffers. Lucy, who is searching Coriakin’s book of spells**, sees a picture of Aslan in the book which ‘was painted such a bright gold

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*For further discussion see my ‘Where Dreams Don’t Come True: How To Read *The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’*, address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 10/3/98 (Lewis Society recordings archive).

** ‘Christianity and Culture’, a series of articles first published in *Theology*, Vols. XL and XLI (March-December 1940); reprinted EC 71-92: 82.

Coriakin is a fallen star, expelled from the heavens and sent down to Narnia as a punishment. (Cf. the pseudographical Book of Enoch, 18:13-16, the narrative concerning the imprisonment of certain stars which had ‘transgressed the commandment of the Lord’.) His book consists of an orderly list of spells, one for each medieval planet, and many more for the stars in the *Stellatum* beyond them. The first is a Lunar spell: it is a cure forwarts, which may be achieved by washing hands ‘in moonlight in a silver basin’ (117). The moon’s sphere, of course, was nearest earth, which is why it comes first. Sol’s sphere was fourth nearest, and the fourth spell in Coriakin’s book is a spell for taking a swarm of ‘golden bees’ (117). It is less clear how the second and third relate respectively to Mercury and Venus.
that it seemed to be coming towards her out of the page' (120). His face is stern and she hastily decides against uttering a spell to make herself beautiful beyond the lot of mortals. Aslan's face fades and she continues turning over the pages until she finally reaches the spell she is looking for, the spell 'to make hidden things visible'. Lucy is not expecting the spell to have any effect except on the monopods and is so she is surprised suddenly to find Aslan with her in the room, this time in bodily, not just pictorial, form; she buries her face in his 'shining mane' and says it was kind of him to come: 'I have been here all the time,' said he, 'but you have just made me visible' (123). Since Aslan is Sol, the god of light, the effect Lucy has unwittingly wrought is similar to that which Robin had wished for in 'The Man Born Blind' (see Chapter Three, section 2 above): the seeing of light itself, rather than simply the seeing of other things by means of it. She Contemplates what she was previously only Enjoying.

Aslan's fifth appearance is a further variation on the Alexander technique. When the 'Dawn Treader' is trapped in pitch blackness, lost in that 'Dark Country' which Mandeville situates en route to Paradise, Lucy - who is standing aloft on the fighting-top - prays a desperate prayer for help. A 'tiny speck of light' becomes visible and 'a broad beam of light fell from it upon the ship' (143). We then read:

Lucy looked along the beam and presently saw something in it. At first it looked like a cross, then it looked like an aeroplane, then it looked like a kite, and at last with a whirring of wings it was right overhead and was an albatross. It circled three times round the mast and then perched for an instant on the crest of the gilded dragon at the prow. It called out in a strong sweet voice what seemed to be words though no one understood them. After that it spread its wings, rose, and began to fly slowly ahead, bearing a little to starboard. Drinian steered after it not doubting that it offered good guidance. But no one except Lucy knew that as it circled the mast it had whispered to her, 'Courage, dear heart,' and the voice, she felt sure, was Aslan's, and with the voice a delicious smell breathed in her face.

In a few moments the darkness turned into a greyness ahead, and then, almost before they dared to begin hoping, they had shot out into the sunlight and were in the warm, blue world again."

Lucy looks 'along the beam'; she practises Enjoyment. There is no part of her left over or outside the act. And in that act of seeing, her eyes gradually see more and more. The two-dimensional cross develops motive power as an aeroplane; it then turns from a mere machine into a kite borne aloft on the wind, before becoming something organic, Coleridge's image of Christ, an albatross, the bird with the widest wing-span, which soars the longest and can fly by night. The suggestiveness of these images cannot be adequately dissected here. The most important element, theologically, is that Aslan is found in a shaft of sunlight: his status as a Solar deity is becoming clearer and clearer.

His sixth appearance is relatively minor, a lull before the full dawn. He comes alive before Caspian in 'the flat gold image' inside his cabin and we only hear about it briefly afterwards. As with his

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* DL 144.
* VDT 143.
effect on Eustace, Aslan ‘hurts and humbles’ Caspian, leaving him white-faced and tearful. It is through moments such as these that Lewis prevents his Christ-figure from degenerating into no more than a cute little sunbeam. Sol, he reminds us, is terrible as well as life-giving; blinding and tyrannous as well as warming and enlightening.

And it is this divinely paradoxical nature which is evident in Aslan’s seventh and final appearance, at the Very End of the World. The sun is now so proximate that it is ceasing to be golden and is becoming albescent. Lewis introduces this new colour scheme in connection with a mysterious sight which turns out to be miles and leagues of lilies: ‘whiteness, shot with faintest colour of gold, spread round them on every side’ (179). Later, the children see ‘something so white on the grass that even with their eagles’ eyes, they could hardly look at it’ (186). But they have been ‘trained by slow degrees [to] have such sight / As dares the pure projection to behold’. They behold a Lamb. With ‘a sweet milky voice’ he invites the children to come and have breakfast, another allusion to John’s Gospel”. As the Lamb speaks ‘his snowy white flushed into tawny gold and his size changed and he was Aslan himself, towering above them and scattering light from his mane’ (187). This is the final metallurgical operation of the book, the transformation of the white-gold Lamb into the scintillating Lion. His Solar character could hardly be more explicitly conveyed. Sol ‘comes ascendant’. and in him more perfectly the reader sees all ‘baser virtues’, including less precious metal (namely the silver of “The Silver Sea”’) and less completely Solar images of Aslan (cross, aeroplane, kite, albatross, lamb). Lewis’s search for ‘that elusive Form’, the thing in Sappho’s phrase ‘more gold than gold’,” has reached its climax.

It might be asked why Lucy’s vision of the cross in the sunbeam is not the climax. What theological rationale is governing Lewis’s use of Solar imagery so as to relegate the cross to such a minor position several chapters before the finale? Do Lewis’s ‘solar ethics’ - to borrow a term from Don Cupitt - have sufficient regard for the categories of the incarnation and the passion of the Christ-figure? A similar question could be asked with respect to Lucy’s reading of Coriakin’s book and the spell she utters for the ‘refreshment of the spirit’. This spell is more like a story than a spell. It is the loveliest story that Lucy has ever read, and she forgets that she is even reading it, - she seems to be living it, not reading it: it is the story of a cup and a sword and a tree and a green hill. She asks Aslan, ‘Shall I ever be able to read that story again . . . ? Will you tell it to me, Aslan? Oh do, do, do.’ The answer she hears is: ‘Indeed, yes, I will tell it to you for years and years.’”

Since this story is clearly the Gospel (good spell) story, one might ask why it comes in Chapter 10 and not at the end of the book. The ‘loveliest story’ - about the eucharistic cup, the sword that

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* John 21:12.
* The ‘Silver Sea’ might seem an odd name for Lewis to settle on (179), but we must remember that ‘all the planets are represented in each’ (THS 316); also the choice of name is part of his adroit handling of the donegality so that the story does not run aground on excessive golden imagery but keeps something in reserve for the final encounter with Aslan. There are also some other silvers earlier in the book (15, 75, 125, 155).
* GMD xxxix.
* VDT 124. Cf. ‘I shall be telling you all the time’ (187).
pierces Mary's heart, the tree of salvation and Calvary's green hill 'without a city wall' - would appear to have been downgraded, rather like 'the cross' in the beam of light. Why is Lewis so chary of foregrounding the Christ-event?

One reason, of course, is that he has already foregrounded it in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. But another, more pertinent, reason is that he is deliberately attempting to ballast his Solar imagery with scriptural particularities before he cuts it free in the closing chapters of the book. One of the dangers of Solar theological imagery is that it tends towards Docetism. As Lewis argues elsewhere, although the Solar monotheism of Akhenaten's Hymn to the Sun (1400 B.C.) seems better, in one way, than primitive Judaism, it does not follow that 'Akhenatenism' would have been the best first step in the history of divine revelation. Akhenaten was astonishingly advanced; he did not identify God with the Sun in a strictly heliolatrous way but understood the visible disc as only a divine manifestation. This early Egyptian religion, 'a simple, enlightened, reasonable Monotheism', looks much more like developed Christianity, in one way, than those first documents of Judaism in which Yahweh appears to be little more than a tribal deity. But, Lewis concludes:

If Man is finally to know the bodiless, timeless, transcendent Ground of the whole universe not as a mere philosophical abstraction but as the Lord who, despite his transcendence, is "not far from any one of us", as an utterly concrete Being (far more concrete than we) whom Man can fear, love, address, and "taste", he must begin far more humbly and far nearer home, with the local altar, the traditional feast... It is possible that a certain sort of enlightenment can come too soon and too easily. At that early stage it may not be fruitful to typify God by anything so remote, so neutral, so international and (as it were) so interdenominational, so featureless, as the solar disc. Since in the end we are to come to baptism and the Eucharist, to the stable at Bethlehem, the hill of Calvary, and the emptied rock-tomb, perhaps it is better to begin with circumcision, the Passover, the Ark, and the Temple. For "the highest does not stand without the lowest". Does not stand, does not stay; rises, rather, and expands, and finally loses itself in endless space. For the entrance is low: we must stoop till we are no taller than children in order to get in."

It is Lewis's intention in The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' to typify the divine figure by the Solar disc, to emphasize his transcendence and universality, his power to illuminate the mind and free the fingers from grasping gold. Aslan here is very different from the furry beast who battles or romps cheek-by-jowl with the children in the first two books. He floats in and out of this story in intense moments of conversion, prayer, reproof, spiritual illumination and mystical ecstasy; he has a poetic, Johannine existence, which is constantly at risk of being lost in endless space like 'the ultimate refinement of Golden poetry, Gold 'to ayery thinnesse beate', without weight, ready to leave the earth". But this is a risk that Lewis has to take in order to fulfil his donegalitarian purpose. The 'tether and pang' of the concrete particularities mentioned in the magician's book (cup, sword, tree, hill), just like the metamorphosing objects seen in the beam of light (cross, plane,
kite, bird), provide a needed counterweight to this aureate teleology. These very solid and mundane things appear in advance of the finale not because Lewis is wanting to conclude with a Docetic message, but precisely because he recognises the Christological dangers implicit in his Solar imagery: it needs to be pegged and freighted and prevented from soaring aloft prematurely. For although 'a certain sort of enlightenment can come too soon', it is, in this case, the sort of enlightenment which the story is deliberately designed to communicate. It comes soon enough and richly demonstrates the power of an inspired imaginative reason.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Luna

A drizzling glamour enchants us

Although Jupiter has the highest place, Mars the earliest origin, and Sol the easiest fit in Lewis’s theological imagination, Luna makes more appearances in his writings than any of them. This is owing partly to the fact that she is closest to Earth and ‘rules the night’ (she is clearly the most prominent of the nocturnal six as far as human observers are concerned) and partly to her many and various significations (she is the most polysemous of the planets and, indeed, inconstancy is perhaps her most distinguishing feature). The frequency of her manifestations in Lewis’s writings also reflects her general literary ubiquity which, of course, she shares with Sol; but, unlike Sol, Luna—in Lewis’s view—tended to suffer at the hands of poets. As a consequence he adopted something of a protective stance towards her literary reputation, taking issue with writers who treated her badly and approving writers who treated her well. In this chapter we will see what it meant to Lewis in his scholarship, in That Hideous Strength, in his poetry, and in The Silver Chair, to be ‘filled all through with virtue of the moon’.

1. Luna in Lewis’s scholarship

Luna provides Lewis’s imagination with a potent symbol of ambiguity. Her association with this quality comes from her astronomical position on the borders of the realm of mutability. Lewis summarises her situation thus:

1. The Planets’, CP 26, lines 4-5.
4. See, e.g., ‘A Confession’, CP 15, lines 15-20: ‘I’ve never known / The moon look like a hump-backed crone – / Rather, a prodigy even now / Nor naturalized, a riddle glaring from the Cyclops’ brow / Of the cold world, reminding me on what a place / I crawl and cling, a planet with no bulwarks, out in space.’ Cf. letter to Kay Farrer (3/2/54): ‘I am outraged . . . when you describe the moon “like the white face of an idiot lost in a wood” . . . this is simply Eliotic: for (a) It illustrates what we’ve all seen by what most of us have not seen, (b) It denigrates, in the leering modern mode, the high creatures of God. If I were your directeur you’d learn Psalm 136 by heart. Not safe, either, to be rude to goddesses’ (Wade Center). See also his comments on unliterary readers and ‘their stereotyped reactions to moonlight’ (EIC 33-34) and his analysis of two Lunar passages by Lyly, one ‘frigid’ and one ‘really suitable to the tale of a man who loved the moon’ (EL 316).
5. E.g., he enjoyed Wells’s The First Men in the Moon (letter to his father, 28/2/09, CLI 11) and would repeat to himself ‘for sheer pleasure’ Lodge’s line, ‘Daughter of Jove and sister to the Sunne’ (EL 489). The interest continued to the end of his life. In a conversation recorded in his Cambridge rooms in 1962, we find Lewis enquiring as to whether Kepler’s Somnium (1634), which tells of a young man’s journey to the Moon where he exchanges ideas with the Moon-men, the Selenites (from Selene, the Greek goddess of the Moon), will soon be translated (“The establishment must die and rot . . .”). C.S. Lewis Discusses Science Fiction with Kingsley Amis’, SF Horizons, No. 1 (Spring 1964) 5-12; reprinted as ‘Unreal Estates’ EC 530-538: 530). Cf. letters to Arthur Greeves, 18/7/16, (CLI 215); 12/10/16 (CLI 233)

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At Luna we cross [...] the great frontier [...] from aether to air, from 'heaven' to 'nature', from the realm of gods (or angels) to that of demons, from the realm of necessity to that of contingency, from the incorruptible to the corruptible. Unless this 'great divide' is firmly fixed in our minds, every passage in Donne or Drayton or whom you will that mentions 'translunary' or 'sublunary' will lose its intended force. We shall take 'under the moon' as a vague synonym, like our 'under the sun', for 'everywhere', when in reality it is used with precision. When Gower says

We that dwelle under the Mone
Stand in this world upon a weer*

(Confessio, Prol. 142)

he means exactly what he says. If we lived above the Moon we should not suffer weer (doubt, uncertainty). When Chaucer's Nature says

Ech thing in my cure is
Under the Moone that mai wane and waxe

(Canterbury Tales, C 22)

she is distinguishing her mutable realm from the translunary world where nothing grows or decreases. When Chaucer says 'Fortune may non angel dere' in the Monk's Tale [...] he is remembering that angels inhabit the aetherial realm where there is no contingency and therefore no luck, whether good or bad.  

Given the Moon's position between these two realms she can become a symbol of either. And so we find Lewis treating her now as a thing of beauty, now as a thing of ridicule ('moonshine' is a common Lewisian term for idle nonsense); she is the watery planet whose own surface is bone dry; she lights up the darkness and as such is a picture of faith, but she likewise permits night-time activity and as such betokens the occult and unnatural. Her association with such contradictory

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* The lunar divide comes from Aristotle: see 'Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages', originally given as two lectures at the Zoological Laboratory, Cambridge, July 1956; reprinted SMRL 41-63: 42, 56; cf. DI 28, 32.

* The influences do not work upon us directly, but by first modifying the air. As Donne says in The Extasie, 'On man heaven's influence works not so But that it first imprints the air'... Hence when a medieval doctor could give no more particular cause for a patient's condition he attributed it to 'this influence which is at present in the air'. If he were an Italian doctor he would doubtless say questia influenza. The profession has retained the useful word ever since, DI 110.

* He quotes Gower more fully in AOL 202: 'The hecnc wot what is to be done, / Bot we that duelle under the mone / Stonde in this world upon a weer.'

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qualities arises not just from her position at the Ptolemaic boundary of air and aether, but also from her own behaviour: she sometimes disappears altogether, and when she is visible she wanders rapidly about the night sky, changing shape and size and colour.

As a result of this unstable behaviour, Luna has another influence, closely related to uncertainty:

In men she produces wandering, and that in two senses. She may make them travellers so that, as Gower says, the man born under Luna will ‘seche manye londes strange’ [...] In this respect the English and the Germans are much under her influence [...] But she may also produce ‘wandering’ of the wits, especially that periodical insanity which was first meant by the word lunacy, in which the patient, as Langland says [...] is ‘mad as the mone sit, more other lasse’[16]. These are the ‘dangerous, unsafe lunes’ of the Winter’s Tale (II, ii, 30); whence (and on other grounds) lunes in Hamlet (III, iii, 7) is an almost certain emendation for [...] Folio’s unmetrical lunacies[17]. Dante assigns the Moon’s sphere to those who have entered the conventual life and abandoned it for some good or pardonable reason.[18]

Lewis’s summary of Luna in The Discarded Image is about three times longer than any of his other planetary summaries, but oddly this imbalance is not reflected in his scholarship in general. Indeed, there is only one other notable appearance of the Moon in his academic writings, and that in connection with Luna’s metal, which, of course, ‘is silver’[19]. Lewis takes Derek Traversi to task for incorrectly identifying Spenser’s Diana as Britomart, when, if there had been any realistic alternative, it ought to have been Belphoebe. In choosing between Diana and Belphoebe, Traversi could have got his identification right simply by looking at the material of the buskins worn by the characters in question: ‘Silver is a Lunar metal, and therefore appropriate for Diana. Belphoebe, on the other hand, is a daughter of the sun, and accordingly wears golden buskins.’[20] Lewis’s point illustrates the importance he attached as a critic to ‘iconographical’ attention, a focus which, as this thesis aims to demonstrate, also serves to unlock his own practice as a poet and writer of fiction. It is to his treatment of Luna in his longest work of fiction that we now turn.

2. Luna in That Hideous Strength

Luna, like Sol, does not participate in the descent of the gods in Chapter 15 of That Hideous Strength. However, unlike Sol, Luna has a large role to play elsewhere in the novel despite this

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[16] Cf. ‘σελήνος ξυμένους’ (lunatics), Matt. 4:24. Lewis had food for thought on this topic from his meeting with W.B. Yeats. In a letter to Greeves, 7/6/21, he reports how Yeats ‘talks very well and not unlike his own printed prose: one sentence came almost directly out of ‘Per Amica Silentia Lunae’ [...] ‘Ah yes - So-and-so: he went in for magic too, but his brain wasn’t strong enough and he went mad’ - ‘at that time I was going through what are known as Lunar meditations’ (CLI 565). In 1926 Lewis read J. Storer Clouston’s 1909 novel The Lunatic at Large (see AMR 400).[17] See ‘De Audiendis Poetis’ (SMRL I-17: 8) for more on lunacy in Hamlet and why ‘Hamlet’s lunacy will not be noticed in England’.[18] DI 109.[19] Ibid.[20] Sil 62.
absence. The two main Lunar characteristics which Lewis draws on are boundary status and maddening influence.

The boundary position of Luna is central to the plan of the N.I.C.E. who are under the impression that "nothing from outside could pass the Moon's orbit" (352). Wither's dark Masters (the Macrobes) have assured him of the existence of "a barrier which made it impossible that powers from Deep Heaven should reach the surface of the Earth" (352). But these Masters, it transpires, have been "completely out in their calculations", and the descent of the gods takes them and their human pawns by surprise.

Merlin is equally surprised, for although he was once conversant with the planets, it was only with their earthly wraiths, not their heavenly originals². In conversation with Ransom, he refers to "the Seventh Law" (290) which decrees that Maleldil "will not send down the Powers to mend or mar in this Earth until the end of all things". He wonders, therefore, whether the last days are now coming to pass³. Ransom says he does not know, adding: "Maleldil may have made it a law not to send down the Powers. But if men by enginry and natural philosophy learn to fly into the Heavens, and come, in the flesh, among the heavenly powers and trouble them, He has not forbidden the Powers to react. For all this is within the natural order." And because Weston has indeed learnt to fly beyond the Moon, the whole enterprise of the N.I.C.E. - that of building a tower to the heavens and making a name for themselves like the men of Shinar in Genesis 11 - turns out to be self-defeating.

"The wicked man had brought about, even as Judas brought about, the thing he least intended... Our enemies had taken away from themselves the protection of the Seventh Law. They had broken by natural philosophy the barrier which God of His own power would not break" (290-291).

This looks as though Lewis might be opposed to universal exploration and the progress of science, a charge which was levelled at him by the biologist and biochemist, Professor J.B.S. Haldane⁴. Lewis did indeed have a reluctance to see man conquering space, for he considered it an historical fact that

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² "There is no Oyarsa in Heaven who has not got his representative on Earth. And there is no world where you could not meet a little unfallen partner of our own black Archon, a kind of other self. That is why there was an Italian Saturn as well as a Heavenly one, and a Cretan Jove as well as an Olympian. It was these earthly wraiths of the high intelligences that men met in old times when they reported that they had seen the gods. It was with those that a man like Merlin was (at times) conversant. Nothing from beyond the Moon ever really descended", THS 316-317.

³ Ransom is forewarned of these last days when Tor tells him that he and the Oyarsa of Malacandra "shall fall upon your moon, wherein there is a secret evil, and which is as the shield of the Dark Lord of Thulcandra - scarred with many a blow. We shall break her. Her light shall be put out", Per 196-7; cf. Matt. 24:29. For references to her boundary status see Per 8, 18, 135.

conquest invariably brought suffering to the conquered." But this attitude is not the sum total of his thoughts on the matter. Ransom speaks thus, from a different perspective:

'Sulva is she whom mortals call the Moon. She walks in the lowest sphere. The rim of the world that was wasted goes through her. Half of her orb is turned towards us and shares our curse. Her other half looks to Deep Heaven; happy would he be who could cross that frontier and see the fields on her further side.'

With these words Ransom (and, we may conclude, Lewis) acknowledges a proper place for translunary exploration. By being kidnapped and taken to Mars in *Out of the Silent Planet* and then deployed to Venus in *Perelandra*, Ransom has in any case quite innocently traversed the Lunar divide and, as a result, has been enabled to draw down the powers of Heaven to Earth and thus save Thulcandra from danger. ‘For now there was one man in the world - even myself - who was known to the Oyéresu and spoke their tongue’ (290). Ransom becomes a ‘bridge’ (291) across which the saving influences of the translunary realm may pass.

When considering Luna, the members of the N.I.C.E. are interested only in her accursed face, the bloodless, sterile side of her character which dominates Chapter 8, ‘Moonlight at Belbury’. Filostrato flings back the curtains to show Mark the Moon:

“There is a world for you, no?” said Filostrato. “There is cleanliness, purity. Thousands of square miles of polished rock with not one blade of grass, not one fibre of lichen, not one grain of dust. Not even air. Have you thought what it would be like, my friend, if you could walk on that land? No crumbling, no erosion. The peaks of those mountains are real peaks: sharp as needles, they would go through your hand. Cliffs as high as Everest and as straight as the wall of a house. And cast by those cliffs, acres of shadow black as ebony, and in the shadow hundreds of degrees of frost. And then, one step beyond the shadow, light that would pierce your eyeballs like steel and rock that would burn your feet. The temperature is at boiling point. You would die, no? But even then you would not become filth. In a few moments you are a little heap of ash; clean, white powder.”

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Lewis did not live to see Neil Armstrong’s small step and so it is impossible to say whether he would have regarded it as a giant leap for mankind. His prognostications of space travel were invariably pessimistic. He thought the Moon would be ‘contaminated’ by human contact (letter to Sister Penelope, 21/10/46, CLII 743); cf. ‘Will We Lose God in Outer Space?’, *The Christian Herald*, Vol. LXXXI (April 1958) 19, 74-76, reprinted as ‘Religion and Rocketry’, EC 231-236. See also ‘Heaven, Earth and Outer Space’, *Decision*, II (October 1963) 4, reprinted as part of ‘Cross-Examination’, EC 551-557. At a “sentimental, or perhaps aesthetic” level he objected to the colonisation of the Moon: “The immemorial Moon - the Moon of the myths, the poets, the lovers - will have been taken from us for ever. Part of our mind, a huge mass of emotional wealth, will have gone. Artemis, Diana, the silver planet belonged in that fashion to all humanity: he who first reaches it steals something from us all’; ‘Onward, Christian Spacemen’, *Show*, III (February 1963) 57, 117, reprinted as ‘The Seeing Eye’, EC 52-53: 63. However, he acknowledged that only “a dull clod” could look at the moon through a telescope without asking what it must be like to live there (‘On Science Fiction’, address to the Cambridge University English Club, 24/11/55, reprinted EC 450-456: 453). One who knew Lewis well remarked that ‘it was a pity that [he] could not have lived a few more years until the moon landing. He was very interested in the stars and moon and liked a trip to the observatory. How thrilled [he] would have been if he could have seen the rock and dust brought back from the moon!’ Fred W. Paxford, ‘He Should Have Been a Parson’ in Graham, David (ed.). *We Remember C.S. Lewis: Essays and Memoirs* (Nashville TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001) 119-128: 126f.

* THS 273.
* Ibid. 175f.
Williams calls this passage ‘brilliant’ and describes the whole depiction of the anti-natural, anti-organic phenomenology of evil in That Hideous Strength as one of the book’s great virtues, ‘enormously good’.

It is certainly a theme which had occupied Lewis’s mind for some time (at least a decade, in fact), for this aim of the N.I.C.E. - to reduce the body to nothing, to resolve the belly and chest into a purely cerebral head, - is the same as that of the Northern characters in The Pilgrim’s Regress. Where the Regress symbolised the opposition of organic and inorganic by means of ‘South’ and ‘North’, in That Hideous Strength it is symbolised by the two sides of the Moon.

Ransom acknowledges the disembowelling effect of the earthward-face of the Moon when he tells Merlin how ‘on this side [of Sulva], the womb is barren and the marriages cold. There dwell an accursed people, full of pride and lust. There when a young man takes a maiden in marriage, they do not lie together, but each lies with a cunningly fashioned image of the other, made to move and to be warm by devilish arts, for real flesh will not please them, they are so dainty (delicati) in their dreams of lust."

Jane is later accused of being ‘dainty’ (315). Daintiness is Lewisian short-hand for the human impulse to despise the body. In The Pilgrim’s Regress John, having been told he is ‘too dainty’, is reminded that Christ did not abhor the Virgin’s womb, ‘and if that Lady was a maid though a mother, you need not doubt that the nature which is, to human sense, impure, is also pure.’ Here in That Hideous Strength, Luna is not only the symbol, but the very location, of the battleground between these two perspectives on the body. Filostrato tells Mark:

‘Her surface is not all as you see. There are still surface-dwellers - savages. One great dirty patch on the far side of her where there is still water and air and forests - yes, and germs and death. [The inorganic race] are slowly spreading their hygiene over the whole globe. Disinfecting her. The savages fight against them. There are frontiers, and fierce wars, in the caves and galleries down below. But the great race presses on. If you could see the other side you would see year by year the clean rock - like this side of the Moon - encroaching: the organic stain, all the green and blue and mist, growing smaller.’

The N.I.C.E. have wrenched away one aspect of Natural Law - the desire for physical purity - and swollen it to madness in isolation from the rest. For though virginity is a good thing (315), it is not the only thing. There is also the body, which has been honoured by its Christological assumption, and which must not be deprecated. Filostrato scorns the fertile side of the Moon as nothing more than ‘tarnished silver’ (176). He and his fellow members of the N.I.C.E. are interested only in her near side - ‘not the voluptuous Moon of a thousand southern love-songs, but the huntress, the untameable virgin, the spear-head of madness’ (194) - and therefore they are given their hearts’ desire and become truly mad. As Grace Ironwood predicts, their overemphasis on the head produces ‘lunacy’ (196): ‘pure lunacy’ (329) when Frost and Wither genuflect before the tramp.

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* Williams, Rowan. ‘That Hideous Strength: A Reassessment’, address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 5/10/88 (Lewis Society recordings archive).
* PR 232.
* THS 273-4; cf. 172-3.
* THS 176.
On the other hand, the company of St Anne's come under Sulva's voluptuous influence, that of 'a thousand southern love-songs'. It is a note no sooner struck than it is taken up by Luna's sister Venus who 'comes more near the Earth than she was wont to - to make Earth sane' (378). With these words Ransom contradicts Dimble's earlier quotation from Othello (376): it is not madness, but purest sanity which the heroes enjoy as they make love at the end of the story. For Luna marks not only the boundary between sanity and madness, but also the boundary between two different kinds of goodness, the virginal and the voluptuous. The symbolism here is admittedly somewhat blurry - eliding one aspect of the Lunar influence into the Venereal, but it just about succeeds in keeping its head.

3. Luna in Lewis's poetry

Luna appears in at least seven of Lewis's poems. She never dominates a whole poem, but is merely added in as one symbolic ingredient among many. Nor does Lewis seem to favour one aspect of her influence over the others; he selects from the wide range on offer as occasion requires. In 'French Nocturne', her earliest appearance in his poetry, she is a 'False, mocking fancy', where 'fancy' is a specifically Lunar trait. In 'To G.M.' and 'Two Kinds of Memory' it is the dry, mineral aspect of her nature which the poet draws upon. In 'On Being Human' it is her boundary status. In 'The Turn of the Tide' her inconstancy.

The two most extensive treatments of Luna are found in 'The Queen of Drum' and 'The Planets'. In the former we find a long Lunar episode (V, 121-220) in which the Queen is 'filled all through with virtue of the moon'. The passage features silver (146, 170, 190, 198); water ('lakes',...
‘rivers’, ‘smooth like liquid’, ‘like the moon herself, / Lapped in a motion which is also rest’); ambiguity (‘The queen whose shafts destroy and bless’); a range of goddesses (Hecate, Titania, Artemis, Diana ‘the pure Huntress riding low’); and deception (the ‘thornbush, milky white’ which is mistaken for ‘a giant’s head’). As with much of Lewis’s early poetry, the range of reference is impressively wide, but the atmospheric unity is weak.

In ‘The Planets’, where Lewis relies less on the scatter-gun approach, we are given the following description:

Lady LUNA, in light canoe⁴¹,
By friths and shallows of fretted cloudland
Cruises monthly; with chrism of dews
And drench of dream, a drizzling glamour,
Enchants us - the cheat! changing sometime
A mind to madness, melancholy pale,
Bleached with gazing on her blank count’nance
Orb’d and ageless. In earth’s bosom
The shower of her rays, sharp-feathered light
Reaching downward, ripens silver,
Forming and fashioning female brightness,
- Metal maidenlike. Her moist circle
Is nearest earth.⁴²

Here there is obviously a key-note: wateriness. In just thirteen lines we are presented with the substantive images of canoe, friths, shallows, chrism, dews, shower and moisture, and active images of cruising, drenching, and drizzling. And it is this watery aspect which is at the forefront in his Narnian expression of Lunar qualities in The Silver Chair.

4. Luna in The Silver Chair

1) the Lunar Poema

In his fourth donegalitarian work, Lewis takes up many of the Lunar ingredients examined above - boundary-status, madness, water and doubt, - and stirs them into a fascinating theological broth. Before we draw conclusions as to his message, we must look carefully at the form of the messenger, and it is his use of the image of water which we will examine first.

Lewis clearly has the Moon’s drenching, drizzling, dewy effects in mind throughout The Silver Chair. It is a theme introduced on the very first page of the first chapter where we meet a girl

⁴¹ John Betjeman wrote in a letter to Lewis of 13/12/39: ‘I don’t see how anyone who has looked at the moon can think of it as ‘cruising monthly’ in a light canoe.’ See Betjeman, John. Letters, Vol. I, 1926-1931, ed. Candida Lycett Green (London: Methuen, 1994) 251. His dismissal of the image is attributable more to his enduring vendetta against his former tutor than to considered poetic judgement, and the letter may never in fact have been sent.

⁴² "The Planets" lines 1-13 (CP 26).
called Jill Pole\textsuperscript{44} who is crying on a ‘damp little path’ (11). She is joined by Eustace (whom we know from the previous book) who sits down on ‘grass that was soaking wet’ (12). We also read of drops that ‘dripped off the laurel trees’ (13), that ‘drip off the leaves’ (15) and of ‘drops of water on the grass’ (18). Nothing of significance to the plot comes of these images, but they are beginning to create a definite atmosphere\textsuperscript{44}.

In the second chapter, water has a more obvious role to play, in connection with Jill’s tears and the stream from which she is desperate to drink. After Jill has slaked her thirst Aslan blows her down into Narnia, and in his breath she can move as freely ‘as you can in water (if you’ve learned to float really well)’ (31); she is blown into the ‘wet fogginess’ of a cloud\textsuperscript{44} and emerges from it with ‘her clothes wet’ (33); she is then splashed by a wave of the sea ‘drenching her nearly to the waist’ (34); the chapter ends with her exclamation, ‘How wet I am!’

It would be tedious to detail every other mention of water and wetness in the book, but it is worth noting Jill’s baths in Chapters 3 and 8, her ‘wet pillow’ (103), the frequent ‘rain’ (49, 50, 80, 103, 104, 125), Caspian’s ‘watery’ eyes (35), the fountain where Rilian’s mother met her death, the marshes in Chapter 5 with their ‘muddy water’, their ‘countless channels of water’; and, above all, the suggestively named marsh-wiggle, Puddleglum\textsuperscript{44}.

Puddleglum belongs to a race who do ‘watery’ work (199) and he himself is repeatedly described as a ‘wet blanket’ (93, 129, 197). A ‘flood’ (61) features among the disasters he imagines have struck the land; he says his firewood ‘may be wet’ (65); his pipe-smoke trickles out of his bowl like ‘mist’ (66); he mentions the river Shribble and its lack of bridges (68); predicts ‘damp bowstrings’ (71); snores like a waterfall (71); wonders if rain is on its way (80). His drunkenness in Chapter 7 is a further manifestation of Luna, both because it causes confusion and because it comes from liquidity.

Once Puddleglum has joined Jill and Eustace on their quest they ford the Shribble (which makes Jill wet to the knees), pass ‘countless streams’ on Ettinsmoor and are ‘never short of water’ (76); they see a river ‘full of rapids and waterfalls’ (76) and become ‘sick of wind and rain’ (83). On their way to Harfang they endure ‘nasty wet business’ (87) and everyone ‘got wet’ (88), ‘too wet by now to bother about being a bit wetter’ (89). They are rowed by the gnomes of Bism in a boat on an

\textsuperscript{44} Her name is significant. ‘Jill’ is a form of ‘Gillian’, from ‘Julian(a)’, a name very popular in the Middle Ages, especially in the diminutive forms Gill and Jill. Gillot or Jillet became a designation for a changeable or flighty girl, whence probably jilt. ‘Pole’ comes from the Old English pol, meaning pool, and denotes someone living near a pool or pond. ‘Jill Pole’ might therefore be translated ‘changeable water’.

\textsuperscript{45} It is worth noting that this atmosphere affects England as much as Narnia. In LWW, PC and VDT there is nothing clearly Jovial or Martial or Solar about the episodes set in England. But in SC and MN the English scenes are respectively Lunar and Venereal. (There are no scenes set in England in HHB; and in LB the English scenes are brief and either visionary or couched in reported speech.) This may account for why Lewis thought he had got better at the books as the series went on; see letter to Pauline Baynes, 24/5/56 (Bodleian Library).

\textsuperscript{46} Lewis may be glancing at Paradiso II, 31, where Dante the Pilgrim is enclosed by a cloud in the Moon’s circle. Later in SC (196) Puddleglum’s burnt foot is healed by a centaur named Cloudbirth. Centaurs are born of Nephele, a cloud-woman (see Purgatorio XXIV, 123).

\textsuperscript{47} The name comes from the work of John Studley, a versifier and translator of ‘the Drab Age’, treated in EL 255-256. Studley renders ‘Tacitae Stygis’ (from Seneca’s Hippolytus, line 625) as ‘Stygian puddle glum’. This diction may or may not have been ‘low’ in Studley’s day, but Lewis finds that it cannot now be read without a smile.
underground sea; the enchanted Rilian’s words are ‘like cold water down the back’ (134), but later they are glad to find real ‘water for washing’ (140). Eventually a ‘flood’ does indeed come to destroy, but it is the witch’s kingdom, not Narnia, which is inundated (162ff). When we see the last of Puddleglum he is still pointing out that bright mornings bring on ‘wet afternoons’ (206).

From the instability of water we move to the spatial and mental instability which derive from Lunar influence. The three adventurers’ search for Rilian, a search which is fitful and hapless, suggests both kinds of wandering⁷. In Prince Rilian himself these effects are even more clearly depicted. We hear of the ‘wanderings’ (56) he underwent when seeking his mother’s murderer and we see the same impulse when he dallies with the possibility of exploring Bism. And with regard to wandering of the wits, we are told that he is ‘like a man out of his wits’ (57) and that there comes an hour each night ‘when my mind is most horribly changed’ (136) by a ‘fury’, a ‘frenzy’, ‘ravings’. During that hour he turns into ‘a lunatic’ (145). Once he has been disenchanted he describes himself and his rescuers as ‘we four wanderers’ (192).

Luna inspires men to ‘seche manye londes strange’, and in The Silver Chair there are a total of five different lands, more than in any other Chronicle⁸: England, Aslan’s Country, Narnia, the Underworld, and Bism. But more significant than their number is the geographical arrangement of the four sub-created worlds: they comprise a quadruple-decker universe. Here we see how Lewis has built Luna’s boundary status⁹ into the architectonics of his story. The difference between Aslan’s country and Narnia is clearly modelled on the Lunar divide; it is Lewis’s version of Deguileville’s earlier Christian dramatization of the same thing⁹. Robert Houston Smith writes: ‘The contrast between the purity of the atmosphere in Aslan’s country and the thickened, miasmic vapors of Narnia is particularly redolent of the [medieval] Model.’¹¹ He does not pursue this lead and reflect upon the further divide between Narnia and the witch’s kingdom (where the air is even thicker), nor the third such divide, between the Underworld and the land of Bism. This succession of divisions, and the reversal back through them, means that the story is constructed like the letter V.

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**Chapters 1 & 2**
(England and Aslan’s Country)

**Chapters 2 - 9**
(Narnia)

**Chapters 9 - 14**
(Underland, with a glimpse down to Bism)

**Chapters 15 - 16**
(Narnia)

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* The quest is different from the quests in the other books: Puddleglum, Jill and Eustace are looking for a person rather than a place, and they do not know where he is located. In LWW and PC the main journey of the story is to Aslan’s How; in VDT to the Utter East; in HHB to Narnia and the North; in MN to the western garden and back again. There is no quest in LB.
* VDT is its nearest rival with four: England, Narnia (i.e., Narnian territories: the Islands which Caspian claims kingship over), the Country-under-Wave, and Aslan’s Country.
* He described it as being among ‘those great contrasts which have bitten deeply into my mind . . . Handramit and Harandra, air and ether, the low world and the high’, SBJ 125.
* See DI 199.
We are told of ‘the freshness of the air’ in Aslan’s country which makes Jill think ‘they must be on the top of a very high mountain’ (19), even though ‘there is not a breath of wind’ (20). Looking down, Jill and Eustace see distant white things beneath them which at first could be taken for sheep, but are actually clouds. The ‘real bottom’ is further below those clouds than the children are above them.

Aslan gives Jill the signs and warns her about her coming adventures: ‘Here on the mountain the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there’ (30)”. This turns out to be the case: Eustace does not realise that the old man he has seen departing on a ship is the same Caspian whom he had once known as a young king; the adventurers do not perceive that the trenches they encounter in Chapter 7 are really letters cut into the rock. Ignorance (47), forgetfulness (49), rain, wind and snow all play their part in befuddling their minds and Jill gives up repeating the signs to herself. Confusion leads to confusion until in Chapter 10 (‘Travels without the Sun’) they fall down into Underland, having built a ‘barrier’ (119) between themselves and Narnia. Jill feels she is being ‘smothered’ (125); the place is ‘suffocating’ (128); they begin to wonder whether ‘sun and blue skies and wind and birds had not been only a dream’ (130). As they are repeatedly told, ‘Many fall down, and few return to the sunlit lands’ (122, 126, 128, 129, 132)5. Under the enchanting music and scent and warmth engineered by the witch they begin to lose all remembrance of the Overworld, until Puddleglum, ‘talking like a man who hasn’t enough air’ (152) recalls the stars and the sun but, intriguingly, not the Moon.

The Moon - that is, the Narnian Moon” - does not feature as frequently in the story as one might at first expect. But this is because, in the central section of the book, Lewis is wanting to remove all sense of height and space: continually to be taking our mind’s eye to the heavens would frustrate this purpose”. In Chapter 4, Glimfeather carries Jill by moonlight (50) to the Parliament of Owls“, but by the time the meeting is over ‘the moon had disappeared’ (60) and it does not properly reappear for eleven chapters. As the heroes approach Harfang, they see lights which, significantly, are ‘not moonlight’ (84), and it is in Jill’s dream, rather than waking reality, that ‘the moon shone

1 Cf. Satan’s surprised discovery (Paradise Lost II, 939f) of ‘the nature of the air, “neither sea, nor good dry land”’ in Nicolson, Marjorie Hope. Voyages to the Moon (New York: Macmillan, 1948) 55. Lewis underlined these words in his copy of Nicolson now in the Wade Center.

* Lewis is taking the catalepsy motif and fusing it with the lunary divide. Cf. Aeneid VI, 126: ‘Facilis descensus Averni . . . Sed revocare gradum superasque vadere ad auras, / Hoc opus, hic labor est’ (The descent to Avernus is easy . . . But to recall your steps and escape to the upper air - this is the toil, this the labour).

* We are told in PC that the Narnian Moon ‘is larger than ours’ (PC 120); it features in all the Chronicles except MN.

* There is a similar sparing and chiasmic use of the sun. We are greeted by a) a ‘blaze of sunshine’, like ‘the light of June day [pouring] into a garage when you open the door’ (18). Then b) images of weak or fading sunlight: Jill is blown west into the sun, which had been overhead but now is ‘getting lower’ (32), producing ‘sunset light’ (35); Glimfeather arrives but is ‘not quite myself till the sun’s down’ (39); the sun had set and the air was growing cool (43), leaving ‘the red remains of the sunset’ (43); we see ‘a morning sun’ (63), ‘pale winter sunlight’ (72), a ‘sunless river’ (76), a ‘sunless sky’ (86), another morning scene in which ‘the sun was shining’ on wet snow (104), ‘pale sunlight’ (116). Then c) complete sunlessness for nearly eighty pages while the adventurers are underground. Then back to b) ‘morning sunlight’ (194) and ‘winter sunshine’ (198). And finally back to a) ‘a great brightness of midsummer sunshine’ (201).

* A pun on Chaucer’s ‘Parlement of Foules’. Owls hate ‘broad, blazing sunlight’ (55).

158
bright' (104). Only after the adventurers have escaped from Underland, are they again allowed to see 'moonlight' (185), a 'moonlit night' (186). And when Jill and Eustace clamber 'out from the blackness into the moonlight' and see 'the moon and the huge stars overhead' (190), they find that they can't 'quite believe' any longer in the existence of Underland, that sub-sublunary world.

Although the Moon itself does not appear between Chapters 4 and 15, from Chapter 9 onwards (i.e. from the descent into the witch's realm) the Lunar influence already at work in the story is intensified in at least one respect. We have already read of pale hills (63), pale sunlight (72, 116), and of Puddleglum's face 'so pale that you could see the paleness under the natural muddiness of his complexion' (112). Now, almost everything becomes 'melancholy pale', as 'The Planets' has it. Melancholia is most evident in the faces of the witch's slaves: 'every face in the whole hundred was as sad as a face could be . . . so sad that . . . Jill almost forgot to be afraid of them' (124, cf. 131, 164); even the famously pessimistic Puddleglum is impressed by their dolefulness. And the adjective 'pale', which is how Lewis glosses Henryson's 'haw''', is found attached to almost every available noun: pale Earthmen (123), pale sand (128), pale lanterns (129), pale beaches (129), pale lamps (179), pale light (184, 185, 189), Eustace's face is 'pale and dirty' (188), Rilian's face is 'as pale as putty' (141); a Lord 'with a pale face' (199) welcomes Caspian home who is himself 'very pale' (200); Aslan touches the 'pale faces' (201) of Jill and Eustace.

Lewis's use of 'silver' is more evenly spaced throughout the book than his use of 'pale'. He supplies 'a row of shields, bright as silver' at Cair Paravel (35); a 'silver mail shirt' for Caspian (35); a 'silver ear-trumpet' for Trumpkin (41); a lamp in Jill's castle room that hangs by 'a silver chain' (43). During her flight on Glinifeather Jill sees 'one patch of watery silver' (50); the Porter at the Giants' Castle complains that 'the silver [cutlery, salt cellars, etc] will keep on getting over here' (95); in the Underworld 'a pure silver light' (128) rests upon Father Time; the witch has 'soft silver laughs' (153); Bism has 'real silver', different from the 'dead silver' (177) of the superficial mines; Rilian's black shield has turned 'bright as silver' (164) upon his disenchantment and he re-clothes himself in 'silver mail' (199); the dying Caspian is welcomed home by 'a flourish of silver trumpets' (199). The eponymous 'silver chair'' (that 'vile engine of sorcery') is mentioned thrice (140, 145, 148). As with The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader' and The Last Battle, the identity of this story's presiding planet could be divined from the title alone.

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"Cynthia (that is, Luna) is 'haw', according to the 'Testament of Cresseid'. Lewis underlined the word and wrote 'pale' in the margin of his copy (now in the Wade Center). Henryson, Robert. The Poems of Robert Henryson, ed. W.M. Metcalfe (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1917) line 257, page 153.

There are many more detailed points of Lunar influence which might be analysed - such as Jill’s huntedness* and the names of the witch’s horses**, - but there is not space here to complete a full survey. Before we move into exegesis of these images, it is worth observing one final aspect of Lunacy that helps explain an episode in the book which Goldthwaite*** and Holbrook**** have condemned: the corporal punishment administered at the end of the story to the bullies of Experiment House. This episode too has its efficient cause in the Moon. In the Dantean scheme which linked the seven planets with the seven medieval arts, the Moon was associated with grammar**. Grammar, in the form of grammars, came to mean magic, and from grammars, by a familiar sound-change, came glamour; hence the ‘drizzling glamour’ mentioned in ‘The Planets’. As a pedagogue and disciplinarian, Grammar did not spare her charges the rod, and Lewis daily saw a statue of her, ‘with her birch’, looking down on the cloisters of Magdalen****. When Jill plies her crop, and Eustace and Caspian the flat of their swords, on the little hitlers of Experiment House****, Luna is exerting her influence most palpably. Since this is a school where bullies are deemed ‘interesting psychological cases’ (11) and the cane is frowned upon, it is no surprise that, as a consequence of her school’s brush with Grammar, the Headmistress should be found ‘behaving like a lunatic’ (205), nor that she then resigns to take up a job as a school-inspector, and finally becomes a Member of Parliament.

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* Diana, the huntress, is associated with Luna because moonlight allows night-time hunting. Jill becomes ‘like a hunted animal’, as long as the pack was after her, she must run till she dropped’ (118). Cf. the Queen of Drum who, after offering herself to the Moon, runs faster ‘Than when the toilsome chase began’ (V, 142).

** They are called Coalblack and Snowflake (163, 165, 166, 175) and come in part from Lyly’s moonstruck fish which ‘at the waxinge of the Moone is as white as the druen snowe, and at the wayning as blacke as burnt coale’ (EL 316) and in part from Cynthia’s ‘two steeds, th’one black, the other white’ (The Faerie Queene, VI, ix). Lewis marked Seznec’s mention of these Speculosian horses in a marginal note on page 293 of his copy of Seznec, Jean. The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art, trans. Barbara F. Sessions (New York: Pantheon, 1953) now in the Wade Center.

*** ‘What we see him doing at the end of The Silver Chair is really quite stunning. I cannot imagine a betrayal of one’s faith more complete than this last picture of Christ at the playground, putting weapons into the hands of children ... It can hardly obtain that the recipients of this schoolyard justice are themselves bullies or that no one actually gets gut-stuck in the melee [sic].’ Goldthwaite, John. The Natural History of Make-Believe: A Guide to the Principal Works of Britain, Europe and America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 241-242.

**** ‘“Experiment House” ... is presumably a school developed on humanistic, rational, non-Christian principles. Aslan lends a positive attack on this school: he specifically directs a process of physical assault ... [T]he implication is that it is acceptable to use the flat of a sword on “cowards and children” if one hates their methods of education ... It would be interesting to hear those who condemn C.S. Lewis on his straight Christianity, on this method of dealing with enemies, even supposing them to be as mean and bullying as Lewis does.” Holbrook, David. The Skeleton in the Wardrobe, C.S. Lewis’s Fantasies: A Phenomenological Study (Lewisburg: Associated University Presses, 1991) 23-24; his italics. Holbrook appears to think that the bullies have a reality outside the story, that Lewis might be wrong in ‘supposing’ them to be bullies. But Lewis does not suppose them to be bullies: he knows that they are, because he has invented them as such. They do not have ‘methods of education’ which he hates; rather they are beneficiaries of an educational philosophy which forbids discipline and so permits the victimisation of younger and weaker children by older and stronger ones. Lunar Grammar enters the scene to punish this cruelty and correct it, tempering the punishment on account of the victimisers’ age and character. Lewis’s own recollections of the administration of corporal punishment at school (see SBJ 27f) indicate that he did not include this passage lightly.

***** ‘DI 187. Lewis notes how ‘Dante in the Convivio most carefully mortises the Arts into the cosmic framework’ (DI 186). Dante’s scheme matches Luna with Grammar, Mercury with Dialectic, Venus with Rhetoric, Sol with Arithmetic, Mars with Music, Jupiter with Geometry, Saturn with Astronomy. Lewis mentions only three of these connections in DI and, apart from Grammar in SC, does not appear to follow Dante in this respect in the Narniad. Caspian’s inability to count to seven in VDT perhaps reflects Sol’s tendency to baffle us with numbers; and there is more mention of Astronomy in LB than in any of the other books; but that is the most one can say. There is no Geography in LWW (it ‘naturally makes little impact on literature’, DI 196); there is Music in PC, though not noticeably more than elsewhere; the emphasis on words in HHH comes as much from Mercury direct as from the connection with Dialectic; and although there is plenty of loveliness in MN (Rhetoric ‘is the loveliest of all other disciplines’, DI 186), it is not obviously of the Rhetorical kind.

****** DI 186.

**** Modelled on Dartington Hall which Lewis regarded as madly innovative. See letter to I.O. Evans, 25/10/53 (Wade Center). Cf. letter to his brother, 31/12/39 (CLLI 314).
ii) the Lunar Logos

Luna presents Lewis with a peculiar problem apropos the communication of a theological message. Luna is different from the other six planets in that she borders the realm of mutability and to some extent shares its imperfections: ‘the rim of the world that was wasted goes through her. Half of her orb is turned towards us and shares our curse’ (THS 273). This is a different problem from the one presented by the two infortunas, Mars and Saturn. Here, with Luna, Lewis has to express something ‘about Christ’ using a symbol which is not good per se (as all six translunary planets are), but partially corrupt. How can Aslan be depicted as the incarnation of such a spiritual symbol?

The answer is by having him assume the good, upper half of Luna’s qualities, and the opposite of the bad, lower half. We will address his assumption of the good, upper half later in this section; his assumption of the opposite of the lower half will be addressed immediately. Rather than Aslan taking on Lunar doubt and insanity and so on, he is shown to be literally above all that, and to be opposed to it. As Como notes, ‘Only in Aslan’s country - where all harms are healed - are the highest claims, especially that of certainty, affirmed.” The lower half of the Luna world is not one which he can embody or in which he can appear in very truth, for the whole point of the lunary divide is that, below that line, very truth is not to be had. The only way Aslan can manifest himself in this realm of uncertainty is through the four Signs, delivered before certainty has been left behind, and in the brief revelatory dream which Jill has in Chapter 8.

It might be contended that Aslan does appear in Narnia in propria persona, for in Chapter 16 he suddenly turns up behind Jill, ‘so bright and real and strong that everything else began at once to look pale and shadowy’. But when we examine the passage carefully, we find that his arrival is somewhat different. Jill has apparently summoned Aslan by saying, ‘I wish I was at home’, and instantly a deep voice from behind her says, ‘I have come.’ But ‘I have come’ is not, logically, a granting of Jill’s wish. We are meant to understand that Jill is now ‘at home’ because she is in the presence of Aslan. And where is the location of this ‘home’? Jill, not perceiving what has happened, repeats her wish, asking, ‘May we go home now?’ (201). Aslan replies: ‘Yes. I have come to bring you Home.’ The capital ‘H’ and the verb ‘bring’, rather than the expected ‘take’, help to make Lewis’s point that home can be no other place than where the Christ-figure is. Aslan does not descend from his lofty Mountain and arrive at his destination in Narnia like a traveller moving through space; rather he brings his whole Mountain-home with him. To make doubly sure that we realise it is Jill’s location which has changed, not Aslan’s, Lewis adds this clarification:

Then he opened his mouth wide and blew. But this time they had no sense of flying through the air [as in Chapters 1 and 2]; instead it seemed that they remained still, and the wild breath of Aslan blew away the ship and the dead King and the castle and the snow and the winter sky. For all these things floated off into the air like wreaths of smoke.”

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SC 201.
Jill and Eustace find that the lowly realm of inspissated air is replaced by the higher realm of heavenly aether; the 'smoke and stir' of Narnia evaporate under the 'great brightness of midsummer sunshine' on the Mountain of Aslan. As soon as Aslan arrives, so does his lunary (or, rather, upper lunary) country.

Christologically, then, it would seem that *The Silver Chair* is a thin story. Aslan never incarnates himself in Narnia, nor does anyone express a hope that he might become present or remember a time when he was. The children only encounter him before they enter Narnia and after they leave it. In this respect, the Lunar donegality appears to be incompletely Christian and indeed, at one point Lewis does seem deliberately to be echoing an Old Testament, pre-incarnation understanding of the awareness of God. When Aslan tells Jill, 'remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs' (30), the attentive reader cannot fail to hear the Judaic Shema in the background: 'And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.'

How then is *The Silver Chair* 'about Christ'? Why does Lewis makes no apparent attempt to overcome Ussing's ugly ditch, bridging the eternal verities to the world of historical contingency? Is the tale an example of Lewis's supposed 'neo-Platonism', his tendency to revert to an Idealist kind of philosophy which overlooks, as Farrer maintains, 'the full involvement of the reasonable soul in a random and perishable system'? Is the Creed on display here no more than Vaughan's proto-romantic hope: 'My soul, there is a country, far beyond the stars'? We know that Lewis 'would be at Jerusalem'. We know that he believed this world to have 'some refreshing inns' but that 'Our Father... will not encourage us to mistake them for home.' Is the theology of this Chronicle not rather Manichaean and escapist than fully Christian? Where is the serious doctrine of good creation and of redemption through incarnation?

These questions approach *The Silver Chair* from the wrong angle. If we allow the *poiema* of the story to set the agenda, rather than trying to fit the story to a grid of doctrinal categories that we presume to be relevant, we will see that the theological issue at stake is not how to 'bring Christ down', but how to imitate Christ’s faithfulness to the Father in a place of uncertainty. For though Aslan does not descend, Jill and Eustace do; they are, as it were, 'incarnated' into Narnia: their task

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* See Milton's *Comus*, line 5: 'above the smoke and stir of this dim spot'. Lewis, of course, knew the line, and the reference to 'wreaths of smoke' (SC 210) is an allusion to it. See his 'A Note on Comus', *The Review of English Studies*, VIII, No. 30 (1932) 170-176; reprinted SMRL 175-181: 180; cf. SBJ 125. He conducted a correspondence with B.A. Wright about *Comus*, entitled 'Above the Smoke and Stir', in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1945.
* Henry Vaughan: 'Peace', lines 1-2.
* SBJ 190, alluding to Walter Hilton's *The Scale of Perfection*, II.
* POP 103.
is to remain anchored to the Mountain of Aslan and not to 'go native' down where the air is thick. Lessing's ditch is seen, importantly, from the upper side, with the story beginning and ending in the place of certitude and truth, beyond the pale; all the vicissitudes through which the heroes pass in the middle act are to be seen from that perspective. Will the missio dei be fulfilled or not?

In some respects, it is not. After the descent into Narnia, the Lunar imagery allows Lewis to present the the clouding effects of 'weer' on the imaginations of the three adventurers, for example when the witch paints for them a picture of warm baths and square meals at Harfang. The entertaining of this picture in their minds' eyes (82, 83, 84, 85, 88, 91, 92) leads them into danger. It is a nod towards the blinding effects of 'false imagination' in the sphere of Dante's Moon'.

This pattern is repeated in the second 'incarnation' of the story, when the adventurers descend even further, to the Underworld. Will they hold true to Narnia (and the Country above Narnia) or will their heads be turned by the witch's magic? Rilian is a sad case of a man who has already been enchanted. His depiction owes something to Dante's pool-enamoured swain", and, as Myers correctly notes: 'That he is dressed like Hamlet symbolizes his doubt and uncertainty.'" Hamlet, for Lewis, was the archetypal lunatic, a man "with his mind on the frontier of two worlds . . . unable quite to reject or quite to admit the supernatural".

Like Feuerbach or Freud or Marx, the witch argues that the supposed higher realities are merely extrapolations of particular Underworld images (sun from lamp, lion from cat), that the (as it were, translunary) world of Narnia does not really exist: 'you can put nothing into your make-believe without copying it from the real world, this world of mine, which is the only world' (155). Rilian wins provisional freedom for himself by recalling 'the bright skies of Overland . . . the great Lion . . . Aslan himself' (144); then his rescuers undergo a similar test. Battling against the sweet smell from the fire, the soft thrumming of the music and the gentle words of the witch, Eustace recalls 'the sky and the sun and the stars' (150). But he is overpowered, admitting there 'never was such a world' (152). Then Puddleglum remembers the heavens again: 'I've seen the sun coming up out of the sea of a morning and sinking behind the mountains at night. And I've seen him up in the midday sky when I couldn't look at him for brightness' (152). 'What is this sun that you all speak of?' asks the Queen (153), 'There never was a sun.' 'No. There never was a sun,' said the Prince, and the Marsh-wiggle, and the children' (154). The Moonwitch will acknowledge no Solar supremacy: her light must be self-sustaining, not derivative. Her egocentricity is the mirror image of Christ's submission to the Father, which was a favourite Christological theme with Lewis". The
heroes must, in imitation of Christ, retain faith in the one who dwells in the country far beyond their air. ‘My food is to do the will of him who sent me’ (John 4:34); ‘The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing’ (John 5:19); ‘The Father is greater than I’ (John 14:28). The task for the heroes is to demonstrate this kind of faithful humility and to beat down the temptation to believe that there is nothing higher than themselves.

Alister McGrath observes how, in The Silver Chair, Lewis ‘plants a series of powerful images in our imaginations, and leaves them there, to bear their theological fruit’1. He suggests that ‘the reader is left with a faint sense of smugness’ as the witch’s sophistry is deflated2. It is true that there is a vein of Socratic irony running through Chapter 12 which might, if focussed on, provoke a sense of superiority. But then, it is partly Lewis’s point that the perspective of the Overlanders is superior. The Overlanders know both the higher and the lower realm; the witch knows (or pretends) that there is only the lower realm.3

However, Lewis’s message is not simply that the witch is wrong and the rescuers right: it also has to do with how right belief can be maintained in a hostile environment. The narrator is not present in Chapter 12 to remind the reader of ‘the truth’. Rather, the reader is left seeing the scene through the eyes of Rilian, Jill, Eustace and Puddleglum, all of whom are - temporarily at least, - persuaded of the witch’s point of view. Empathising with these characters, the reader is left not so much with a faint sense of smugness as with a strong sense of fear, that they may really be overwhelmed by the witch’s ‘false, mocking fancy’4. It is not through their superior insight that the heroes win the day5, but through courage, through sacrifice. Philosophizing and rhetoric cannot settle this dispute (though Puddleglum’s speech, like something out of Maldon or Ragnorok, is undeniably stirring) because the witch’s logic is impeccable, as far as it goes. Only action is sufficient to counter it. Active sacrifice (stamping on the fire) turns out to be the solution to uncertainty, and physical exertion (killing the serpent5) the path to freedom. Lewis is dramatising the sort of realisation which immediately preceded his own conversion: ‘Enough had been thought, and said, and felt, and imagined. It was about time that something should be done.’6

It is through a painful deed that Puddleglum brings home to himself an awareness of the true order of his universe. In this respect, the message of The Silver Chair is best understood in connection

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2 Ibid. 249.
3 Cf. ‘With whatever sense of unworthiness, with whatever sense of audacity, we must affirm that we know a little of the higher system which is being transposed’: ‘Transposition’, sermon preached in Mansfield College, Oxford, 28/5/44; revised and reprinted EC 267-278: 274.
5 Although their arguments against the Witch are important. Lewis thought that he was reworking ‘Anselm and Descartes . . . I have simply put the ‘Ontological Proof’ in a form suitable for children’, letter to Nancy Warner, 26/10/63 (private collection).
6 That the serpent was a witch is taken by Spufford to mean that she was essentially a woman like other women, and this in turn as evidence of Lewis’s ‘misogyny’: see Spufford, Francis. The Child that Books Built (London: Faber & Faber, 2002) 102. But her woman’s form is only an appearance of the witch, who is in essence a serpent. Rilian is relieved that ‘the foul Witch took to her serpent form at the last. It would not have suited well either with my heart or with my honour to have slain a woman’ (SC 158f).
with Lewis’s ideas about ‘first and second things’, which is a popularisation of ideas about hierarchy and equality derived from Milton, Shakespeare and ‘of nearly all literature before the revolutionary period’. According to these ideas, if first things are put first, second things will naturally follow: if second things are put first, then not only will the first things be lost but also, eventually, the second things for whose sake they were sacrificed.

When Puddleglum insists on the objective reality of the sun, in the face of Lunacentric demands, he is fulfilling his duty to give ‘first things’ priority. As a result, the heroes get to enjoy both first things and second things. Not only do they return to Overland, they take possession of Underland too: ‘The opening in the hillside was left open, and often in hot summer days the Narnians go in there with ships and lanterns and down to the water and sail to and fro, singing, on the cool, dark underground sea’ (206). Lewis ends The Silver Chair by inviting his readers, if ever they visit Narnia, ‘to have a look at those caves’. Now that they are defumigated of ‘weer’ they are good and worthwhile places for everyone to see. Despite the fact that Jill and Eustace can’t ‘quite believe’ any longer in the existence of the Underworld, it still exists and its continued existence is to be acknowledged and utilised. It is an objective correlative of the Wellsian myth of the Cave-Man, which Lewis rejected but which he found to be imaginatively valuable, in its place: ‘I shall always enjoy it as I enjoy other myths. I shall keep my Cave-Man where I keep Balder and Helen and the Argonauts: and there often revisit him’. For when the true God arrives, then, and only then, ‘the half-gods can remain’. Half-gods, recognised as such, have their own proper excellence. We do not have ‘to throw away our silver to make room for the gold’. ‘It is lawful to rest our eyes in moonlight - especially now that we know where it comes from, that it is only sunlight at second hand.’

Just as the silver Underworld can be retained if golden Narnia is put first, so, mutatis mutandis, silver Narnia can be retained if the golden Mountain of Aslan is put first. Puddleglum goes on living in Narnia. Jill and Eustace, however, are whisked up to the Mountain, a comparatively golden place. Silver, interestingly, makes no appearance there, while gold is mentioned on four occasions, three of them in reference to Aslan.

In what sense, then, is Aslan the incarnation of Luna? If there is no description of silver in his country, how can he be a Lunar god? If there is gold in his country, has he not rather turned into a Solar god?

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**Footnotes:**

1. ‘First and Second Things’ is Lewis’s title for an essay first published as ‘Notes on the Way’, Time and Tide, Vol. XXXIII (27/6/42) 519-20; reprinted EC 653-656.
2. PPL 73.
4. FL 109.
5. Ibid. 122.
6. ‘Christianity and Culture’, a series of articles first published in Theology, Vols. XL and XLI (March-December 1940); reprinted EC 71-92: 82.
7. Aslan’s ‘golden voice’ (26); ‘the Lion himself a speck of bright gold’ (31); ‘golden gravel’ (201); Aslan’s ‘golden back’ (204).
Aslan's country is to be understood as 'the upper half' of the Moon's sphere and therefore open to that brightness which illuminates the heavens where 'day never shuts his eye". The few mentions of gold convey the modulation in tone necessary to indicate that, while we are still in the sphere of the Moon, we have crossed the lunary divide and are now facing the sun. Aslan's country is, as it were, located on what Filostrato would call the 'patch on the far side of [Luna] where there is still water and air and forests'. As Ransom puts it: 'Her other half looks to Deep Heaven; happy would he be who could cross that frontier and see the fields on her further side.' And although there is no silver mentioned on this further side, there are other Luna qualities - good Luna qualities, - most notably water.

Aslan's first words in the book are said to the tearful Jill, 'If you're thirsty, you may drink' (26); he says this over 'the delicious rippling noise' of a stream which is driving Jill 'nearly frantic' with thirst. The scene between them recalls the meeting of Christ and the woman at the well (John 4:4-30) in which he offers her 'living water . . . whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never thirst'. Aslan gives Jill no assurance that he will not eat her up if she stoops down to drink, but she conquers her uncertainty and does so: 'It was the coldest, most refreshing water she had ever tasted. You didn't need to drink much of it, for it quenched your thirst at once' (27).

In the final chapter of the book, this stream is again the focus of the action. Here it has become a baptismal Lethe, a 'fair fresh stream' in which the dead king Caspian rests 'with the water flowing over him like liquid glass. His long white beard swayed in it like water-weed' (201f). Jill's eyes again fill with tears, because Aslan has become 'so beautiful' and the funeral music 'so despairing' (201); Aslan and Eustace weep too as they look down at the dead body of the King. Eustace is told to 'go into that thicket and pluck the thorn that you will find there'; he then has to drive the thorn into Aslan's paw so that Caspian may be resurrected by his blood. Paul Fiddes comments: 'Many biblical echoes of salvation are awoken by this incident - among them the pierced hands of Christ, the ram caught in a thicket, the waters of death and the waters of baptism - but a new myth is being created which has a power of its own".

However, although there is an appropriately Lunar emphasis on 'waters' in the depiction of Aslan's country, has Lewis not undercut his own insistence on the lunary divide? How can despairing music be heard above the 'rim of the wasted world'? How can Christ's blood stream in the firmament? Sacrifice is a response to sin, is it not? But according to the Ptolemaic system, there is no sin or evil above the orbit of the Moon. How then can it be present on the Mountain of Aslan?

In Lewis's Christology, sacrifice is not only a response to sin, but also, and more importantly, a response to love. Christ, as Lewis puts it,
gives Himself in sacrifice; and that not only on Calvary. For when He was
crucified He “did that in the wild weather of His outlying provinces which He had
done at home in glory and gladness”. From before the foundation of the world He
surrenders begotten Deity back to begetting Deity in obedience . . . From the
highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated and, by that abdication, becomes
the more truly self, to be thereupon yet the more abdicated, and so forever.”

Death of a kind and rebirth of a kind are to be found in the immanent Trinity, not just in the
economic, in Lewis’s view, and therefore Aslan can bleed and resurrect even on the far side of his
Lunar Mountain. His self-giving for the life of Caspian is not just a soteriological function,
conditioned by the needs of the realm of mutability, but part of the eternal and perfect essence of
his life as the Emperor’s Son. His translunary submissiveness is the ideal form of sacrifice in which
Jill and Eustace and Puddleglum have fitfully participated during their sublunary quest.

In this Lunar deity there is a ‘sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life’ because the
Son is eternally surrendering to and being exalted by His Father. Lewis accepted the Nicene and
Athanasiian Creeds with their insistence on the co-eternity of the Son with the Father, but believed
that the essential equality of divine being among the Persons of the Trinity was not incompatible
with an ordi entis therein”. Christ, within the Godhead, is (so to speak) silver, as the Father is
golden. ‘We do not disparage silver by distinguishing it from gold””. Likewise, Lewis believed, we
do not disparage begotten love by distinguishing it from begetting love. And, indeed, because the
Son is perfectly silver he is also, within the mystery of the Trinity, perfectly golden because
‘comparative evaluations of essentially different excellences are in my opinion senseless’”. For in
addition to his belief in all the subordinationist texts mentioned above, Lewis also believed that
Christ and the Father ‘are one’ (John 10:30), that ‘the Father is in me and I am in the Father’
(John 10:38), that ‘He who has seen me has seen the Father’ (John 14:9). This explains why
Aslan, though located on the silver Moon, is described as ‘golden’: he is perfectly receptive to that
higher (but no more divine) light coming forth from the Emperor, ‘the Father ‘with rayes direct
shining full on the Son””.

Patient receptivity is the role of every rank below the Father, first within the uncreated Trinity of
coequal Persons”, second within creation itself. Every level in the cosmic hierarchy is required to
become bright like ‘a mirror filled with light””, or like ‘a body ever more completely uncovered to

\[\text{References}\]

POP 140. The quotation is from George MacDonald’s Unspoken Sermons: Third Series, 11, 12.


See letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 21/12/41 (CLII 503). The locus classicus of this doctrinal position is 1 Cor. 15: 27-28: ‘For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.’

FL 61.

DI 20. This is not to imply that Lewis thought the Son and Father were not of the same divine essence; it is to imply
that the begetter Father is, quia begetter, enacting divinity in a manner essentially opposite from and reciprocal to that
of the begotten Son.

PPL 79; cf. Paradise Lost, VI, 719.

‘Originality’ in the New Testament is quite plainly the prerogative of God alone; even within the triune being of God
it seems to be confined to the Father: ‘Christianity and Literature’, EC 416.

MC 129.
the meridian blaze of the spiritual sun"165. The Moon, as Lewis put it in an early poem, is 'a stone that catches the sun's beam"166, but the Narnian Moonwitch with her chthonic silver chair will not have it so, desiring to invert the hierarchy and undermine Narnia through 'an envious fever / Of pale and bloodless emulation'19. Her rebellion against the higher ranks goes hand in hand with tyranny over the lower ranks, for she cannot achieve her objective of ruling Narnia except by enslaving the inhabitants of Bism, the country beneath Underland. Such anti-hierarchical action, though temporarily successful, 'cannot succeed' in the long run; 'it has made the very nature of things its enemy"168.

In Lewis's view, 'the greatest statement of the Hierarchical conception' comes in the speech of Ulysses in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*:

> Its special importance lies in its clear statement of the alternative to Hierarchy. If you take 'Degree' away 'each thing meets in mere oppugnancy', 'strength' will be lord, everything will 'include itself in power'. In other words, the modern idea that we can choose between Hierarchy and equality is, for Shakespeare's Ulysses, mere moonshine"169.

For Lewis too.
CHAPTER NINE

Mercury

Meeting selves, same but sundered

It was pointed out in Chapter Five that Lewis liked to regard Jupiter as his personal presiding deity, but Mercury would have been almost as apt a choice, for Lewis had been extraordinarily favoured by that Intelligence whom, in ‘The Planets’, he calls the ‘Lord of language’; both as a speaker and as a writer Lewis was uncommonly articulate. However, despite these talents, despite the fact that he saw Mercurial as well as Jovial strains in his paternity, and despite his opinion that Mercury shared with Jupiter a special need of rehabilitation, Lewis claimed no special relationship with the planet of the second sphere. Rather, he confesses that the Mercurial essence is almost beyond his grasp:

> It is difficult to see the unity of all [Mercury’s] characteristics. ‘Skilled eagerness’ or ‘bright alacrity’ is the best I can do. But it is better just to take some real mercury in a saucer and play with it for a few minutes. That is what ‘Mercurial’ means.⁴

It is a nice irony that Mercury, the god of clerks, should elude Lewis’s clerkly attempts to communicate his nature. Not that he abandoned his efforts to do so. In his scholarship, fiction and poetry we see Lewis chasing those characteristics which constitute the Mercurial personality until he captured a donegalitarian account in The Horse and His Boy.

1. Mercury in Lewis’s scholarship

Mercury runs throughout Lewis’s works of scholarship, but we do not have space to address every

⁴ ‘The most articulate being I have ever known,’ was the verdict of George Watson; see his ‘The Art of Disagreement: C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)’ The Hudson Review (Summer 1995), 231. Emrys Jones has described him as being ‘unfailingly eloquent on every single occasion I met him’; he ‘used words with lexicographical precision’ (Lewis Foundation Summer Colloquium, Oxford, 18/7/02). For further evidence of his remarkable fluency see Leo Baker’s ‘Near the Beginning’, in Como, James T., C.S Lewis at the Breakfast Table and Other Reminiscences (London: Collins, 1980) 6-7; also Laurence Harwood’s address, ‘Memories of my Godfather’, to the Oxford Lewis Society, 4/3/97 (Lewis Society recordings archive). The young Lewis was ‘an intolerable chatterbox’ (SBJ 15); and as an adult he confessed (letter to his father, 29/7/27, CLI 713) that ‘I love to “ride the cork on the ocean of eloquence”’ and that ‘Talking too much is one of my vices’ (letter to Mary Willis Shelburne, 15/4/56, LAL 52). In addition to modern English he knew Middle English, Anglo-Saxon, Old Icelandic, Italian, French, Latin, Greek, and some German.
⁵ At the age of 16 he was described by his tutor as ‘the most brilliant translator of Greek plays I have ever met’ (Green, Roger Lancelyn & Hooper, Walter. C.S. Lewis: A Biography, revised & expanded edition (London: HarperCollins, 2002) 28); a year later he was being compared to Addison, Landor and Macaulay (Lewis, W.H. ‘The Lewis Papers: Memoirs of the Lewis Family, 1850-1930’ (unpublished, Wade Center) V, 74). His writing skill was recognised by the award of the Chancellor’s English Essay Prize at Oxford in 1921, by the Gollancz Memorial Prize (for AOL) in 1937, and by the Carnegie Medal (for LB) in 1956. His pen was swift. By the time of his death he had published 38 titles, about 200 essays or articles, 72 poems, 2 short stories, 40 book reviews, 64 letters, and edited or prefaced 11 other volumes; his juvenilia, diaries and unpublished correspondence ran to thousands of pages.
⁶ SBJ 38.
⁷ ‘While we find no difficulty in grasping the character of Saturn or Venus, Jove and Mercury almost evaded us’, DI 109.
⁸ Ibid. 108.
Mercury produces quicksilver. Dante gives his sphere to beneficent men of action. Isidore, on the other hand, says this planet is called Mercurius because he is the patron of profit (mercibus praeest). Gower says that the man born under Mercury will be ‘studious’ and ‘in writinge curious’,

    bot yit with somdel besinesse
    his hert is set upon richesse.

(Confessio, VII, 765)

The Wife of Bath associates him especially with clerks. In Martianus Capella’s De Nuptiis he is the bridegroom of Philologia - who is Learning or even Literature rather than what we call ‘philology’. And I am pretty sure that the Words of Mercury contrasted with ‘the Songs of Apollo’ at the end of Love’s Labour’s Lost are ‘picked’, or rhetorical prose.

Of all these characteristics, the one which appealed best to Lewis is that first mentioned: quicksilver. He considered Mercury’s metal to be a most instructive and significant image, as we will see if we look at the earliest reference to Mercury in Lewis’s published writings, which comes in his essay ‘The Personal Heresy in Criticism’⁷. Here he provides a detailed account of Mercury’s influence in action. Taking a passage from Keats’s ‘Hyperion’ which includes the lines

Those green rob’d senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars...

he proceeds to give the following analysis:

In the [...] line (‘green-rob’d senators) the whole idea of republican Rome [...] is called up, in order that these senators may bring the sudden flavour of their silence and grandeur out of Plutarch and Livy, and that this, set for a moment beside the trees, may make them a little different [...] With ‘branch-charmed by the earnest stars’ the sources are more complex. ‘Charmed’ brings in the idea of magic. There, again, we [...] have dipped [...] into the storehouse of public history. But this is instantly modified by the word ‘branch’. Here we are thrown back on sense. We have seen the trees with branches stretched up in intense stillness towards the stars. We have imagined or been told of people compelled by magical charms to stand as still as trees. Lay the two side by side and add the word ‘earnest’ - which is exactly the point where the sensible image and the idea of insensible ‘magic’ merge beyond hope of distinction - and the whole, like meeting drops of quicksilver, becomes a single perception.

¹ Chaucer had an interest in Mercury which Lewis kept under scrutiny. In his copy of Bennett’s edition of The Knight’s Tale (now in the Wade Center), Lewis has marked Bennett’s note to lines 527ff about the vision of Mercury which Chaucer adds and thus ‘links his characters with the gods more closely than Boccaccio had done’. Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Knight’s Tale, ed. J.A.W. Bennett (London: Harrap & Co., 1954) 121.
² In Lewis’s copy of Love’s Labour’s Lost, now in the library of Magdalene College, Cambridge, is the following underlining: ‘The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo’ (V, ii, 919-920). Lewis annotates it: ‘MERCURY & APOLLO. Hart explains ‘the best prose is harsh after verse’. Eloquence v. Poetry almost certainly right.’ Cf. letter to John Chapman, 29/8/56 (Wade Center).
⁴ PH 20-21.
Our interest in this passage has nothing to do with Lewis’s actual reading of Keats or with his case against ‘the Personal Heresy’. Our focus is on his use of a metaphor drawn from Mercury as a tool for analysing Keats’s *poema*. For Lewis, there was life in the old god yet. Mercury was not a dried up mythological cliché to be swept aside in order to make room for that new-forged armoury of scientific-sounding terminology - ‘plurisignation’, ‘steno-language’, ‘iconology’, ‘intentionality’ - which language theorists were developing at this time. Rather, the god of quicksilver remained a current and vibrant metaphor for the poetic synthesis of disparate materials. Under the living and active rubric of Mercury, Lewis praises Keats ‘because the poet has found the proper scraps of ordinary seeing which, when put together, will unite into a new and extraordinary seeing’.

Not that such unities are stable or permanent. The fusing action of Mercury is only temporary and is just one half of an influence which is continually joining and parting. Lewis found in Mercury what Albertus found in Phantasy, the faculty of *componendo et dividendo*, separating and uniting. This may explain why Mercury is associated with kleptic activity (he is ‘the god of theft’): those littered under Mercury are snappers up of unconsidered trifles for property, when stolen, leaves its owner and is united to the thief and then is typically divided up, fenced and resold, before - sometimes - being regained by its original possessor. *Componendo et dividendo* is also applicable to the linguistic side of Mercurial action. Under Mercury, the meanings and spellings of words bifurcate and ramify but equally intertwine and overlap. *Studies in Words*, that tracery of semantic matrices and interstices, demonstrates Lewis’s concentrated scholarly interest in these phenomena. His work as a whole manifests a general interest in the same things. He was an arch-definer whose oeuvre is strewn with the written equivalent of ‘*Distinguol!*’ (his habitual cry in conversation and debate), but he had also a fascination for particular strains or families of words and for the miscellaneous conjugation represented by homophones, homonyms, synonyms, and onomatopoeias.

It is worth noting how, when Lewis invoked Mercury in ‘The Personal Heresy’, his stylistic form expressed the content of his sentence; this is another dimension to Mercury’s melding power. Lewis’s final sentence runs: ‘Lay the two side by side and add the word ‘earnest’ - which is exactly the point where the sensible image and the idea of insensible ‘magic’ merge beyond hope of distinction - and the whole, like meeting drops of quicksilver, becomes a single perception.’ This is
a deliberately fugal sentence, in which the idea of two things becoming one is formally conveyed thrice:

1) 'side...side...add'
2) 'sensible...insensible...merge'
3) phrastically in the culmination of 1) and 2) in 'the whole...like meeting drops...becomes'

This desire to unite form and content into 'a single perception' is found throughout Lewis's corpus. When he describes Shelley's *Witch of Atlas* as a 'mercurial poem' it would appear that he had just this kind of splicing in mind. Shelley's poem has a formal 'lightness and liquidity', it is 'Mozartian', 'playful'. But its matter too is Mercurial, featuring both a winged hermaphrodite (blessed with 'the soul of swiftness') and its eponymous witch who is herself a great match-maker:

Friends who, by practice of some envious skill,  
Were torn apart - a wide wound, mind from mind!  
She did unite again with visions clear  
Of deep affection and of truth sincere.

The witch of Atlas and *The Witch of Atlas* separately and together evince Mercurial power. In *That Hideous Strength*, to which we now turn, Lewis attempted, among other things, to portray the abuse of this power in the speech of the villains where ultimately neither form nor content retains Mercury’s presence.

### 2. Mercury in *That Hideous Strength*

Although it has been argued above (Chapter Five, section 3 iii) that Jupiter is the most important planetary influence present in *That Hideous Strength*, it must be recognised that Mercury also plays a major part. Mercury is the most obviously agential planet at work in this third volume of the trilogy; his articulacy is what overcomes the dumbness oppressing Thulcandra, 'the silent planet'. The abuse of language is the presenting symptom, so to speak, of the N.I.C.E.'s 'devilry' (7), and its centrality as a theme is expressed by the title of the book which is taken from the sixteenth century writer, David Lyndsay, describing the Tower of Babel. When Busby remarks that 'we all have our different languages' (37) he is saying more than he realises, and when he adds 'we all really mean'

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See letter to Pitter, 24/7/46 (CLII 724) about uniting form and content in his poetry; cf. our comments about the poem 'Reason' above, Chapter Two, section 2 ii). In his fiction, the paragraph in Per (202) beginning 'And now, by a transition which he did not notice' is an example of the same thing. In his apologetics, LTM is the prime example, where the epistolary relationship with Malcolm reflects the prayer relationship with God; cf. letter to Gieves, 24/12/30 (CLI 945). In his scholarship it is most obviously evident in the *con amore* passage about Richard Hooker in EL 462f, beginning, 'The style is, for its purpose, perhaps the most perfect in English'. As Lewis says of Hooker's phrase-making, so it may be said of his own: 'The structure mirrors the real movement of his mind.'

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*Note:* The quote is from *Shelley, Dryden and Mr. Eliot*, R 1-34; reprinted SLE 187-208: 201.

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*See EL 104; the Tower's shadow (the "shadow of that hideous strength") is said to be more than six miles in length. The tower planned by the N.I.C.E. is to be so tall that it 'would make a quite noticeable addition to the skyline of New York' (THS 23; cf. 288). Lyndsay, in his *Squire Meldrum* (see EL 103), links Mercury with the colour blue, which perhaps explains why Ransom lives in 'the Blue Room' at St Anne's and why Jane is eventually dressed in blue, which is indeed "her colour" (362). Ransom's Jovial, and Jane's Venereal, character are not uninfluenced by Mercury.
the same thing’ he says the opposite of what the novel shows to be the case. One of Lewis’s purposes is to indicate how words which are formally identical may yet have diametrically opposed meanings, depending on the spiritual state of the speaker. Compare, for instance, the various uses throughout the novel of the terms ‘head’ and ‘damn’.

The first time we discover that Mercury will be involved in addressing this difference is when Dimble prepares what he is going to say to Merlin. As he utters ‘the Great Tongue’ it seems as though the words spoke themselves through him from some strong place at a distance - or as if they were not words at all but present operations of God, the planets, and the Pendragon. For this was the language spoken before the Fall and beyond the Moon and the meanings were not given to the syllables by chance, or skill, or long tradition, but truly inherent in them as the shape of the great Sun is inherent in the little waterdrop. This was Language herself, as she first sprang at Maleldil’s bidding out of the molten quicksilver of the star called Mercury on Earth, but Viritrilbia in Deep Heaven.

Mercury supplies ‘truly inherent’ meaning, meaning united to the warp and woof of the words which convey it. The company of St Anne’s are open to having their tongues quickened by this Mercurial spirit, this creature of Maleldil: the members of the N.I.C.E. are not. The latter see language merely as an instrument. Wither wields it to avoid committing himself to any definite proposition. After several pages of his euphemisms, hesitations, obfuscations and circumlocutions it comes as a relief to hear, in answer to Jane’s question, Camilla’s blunt ‘Yes’ (61). And this dichotomy between the two approaches to language continues throughout the book.

‘There is no such thing as Man - it is a word. There are only men,’ says Filostrato (178). His nominalism is philosophically twin with that logical positivism which is one of Lewis’s least disguised spitoons in the book (353). Filostrato can only conceive of words as labels for

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**Footnotes:**

61 The head of St Anne’s is Ransom (‘he really is a Head’ 116; cf. 114, 115, 117) who is also known as ‘the Director’ and who claims to have no authority over his household except that which is delegated to him from Maleldil. His household consists of a variety of men and women from different classes and of different ages; it has room for the sceptical MacPhee, as well as for bears, jackdaws and mice. The N.I.C.E., on the other hand, seems at first to be headed up by a ‘Deputy Director’, Mr Wither, but we are not sure to whom he is deputy. We hear of Jules, the official (or at any rate, the nominal) director. In reality its ‘Head is no figurehead’ (174; cf. 175, 177, 179, 181, 184, 185). Rather, the organisation is presided over by a literal ‘Head’ (15), the guillotined head of the criminal, Alcasan. Eventually, however, it turns out that even this is not the truth: Alcasan’s head is merely the tool of the Macrobes, the evil spirits who need to possess a minimum of corporeality in order to operate on earth. They cannot tolerate variety or dissent, but require homogeneity: hence the use of animals for nothing more than vivisection, the murder of the sceptical Hingest, and the decapitation of Filostrato and Straik as the first-fruits of their campaign. Thus, although both the heroes and the villains are led by ‘Heads’, the same term means utterly different things to each party.

62 Jane says, ‘Damn the Dimbles’ and then unsays it (45); Mark, when instructed to trample on a crucifix, replies, ‘I’m damned if I do any such thing’ (337); both Cosser (59) and Feverstone (356) say, ‘I’m damned.’ Although none of these four characters has a belief in damnation at the time of these utterances, Jane’s and Mark’s words are consistent with the usage of a traditional Christian believer, while Cosser’s and Feverstone’s remarks are not, and therefore it is little surprise that the first pair end up saved and the second pair condemned. The same may be said of Wither’s ‘God bless my soul’ (332; cf. 238).

63 Lewis invented the name ‘Viritrilbia’ for its ‘vibrating, tintillating quality’, appropriate, he thought, ‘for the subtlety of Mercury’; see letter to Mrs Hook, 29/12/58 (L 476). Astronomically, Mercury is the lightest and swiftest of the planets. It weighs 0.055 units of Earth mass (Venus 0.815; Mars 0.107; Jupiter 318.0; Saturn 95.2) and rotates round the sun once every 88 days (Venus 225 days; Mars 687 days; Jupiter 12 years; Saturn 29 years).

64 THS 228-229.
empirically perceptible units of experience. He has no time for deductive thinking or for unseen realities from which specifics derive and in which they participate. Lewis appears to be particularly interested in tracing this line of thought to the great renaissance thinker, Francis Bacon, whom he believed had introduced a contempt for all knowledge that is not utilitarian. Not that Bacon was a strict nominalist or materialist; he had inherited, in a Christianized from, Platonic dualism. But his interest in the sublunary realm, Lewis thought, was mechanistic and instrumental; he helped formulate the idea of 'laws of nature' by analogy with jurisprudence, and it may be for this reason that Bracton College has a 'Bacon Professor' who still studies Law (17). Bacon sought knowledge 'for the sake of power' and, in this respect, had 'the closest possible affinity' with the magicians of his day; hence Lewis's mention of Bacon in the same breath as Paracelsus and Agrippa (201).

One of the means by which Bacon tried to achieve this power was by reducing nature to her mathematical elements; another was by regulating language so as to remove errors resulting from linguistic confusions (idola fori). In The Advancement of Learning (1605) Bacon noted the Chinese system of 'real characters' which he regarded as capable of giving precise expression to fundamental 'Things or Notions'. It was Bacon's intellectual descendants in this respect, such as C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, Lewis's contemporaries, who are the implicit target throughout That Hideous Strength. And not entirely implicit: Lewis cannot resist a swipe at Richards's 'Basic English', ridiculing it through the mouth of Fairy Hardcastle.

Myers has shown convincingly that Lewis very largely intended the Cosmic Trilogy, and in particular That Hideous Strength, as a counter-blast to the trends in language theory represented by Ogden and Richards. His fiction is being deployed here to dramatise the point which Barfield made repeatedly in his writings, that those who try 'to cut away and expose all metaphorical usage' do not thereby 'escape the curse of Babel'. In fact, they invite a redoubling of that curse. Metaphor rests on the 'psycho-physical parallelism (or more)' which characterises the universe, and therefore to deny or to restrict metaphor (the transfer of meaning from physical units to metaphysical entities) is a mental move similar to a denial of the relationship between material creation and immaterial Creator. To say 'There is no such thing as Man, there are only men' is to resist the imagination's power of seeing beyond sensory data; it is to stultify that faculty which operates also, mutatis mutandis, in the realm of faith.

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EL 525.
EL 13f.
Ibid. 3.
In The Meaning of Meaning (1923), Ogden and Richards established rules for classifying referents so as to ensure that each symbol stands for only one referent. Basic English was a collection of 850 English words covering the needs of everyday life. Richards and Ogden had concluded, while writing The Meaning of Meaning (1923), that everything could be said with under one thousand words by substituting descriptive phrases for particular terms. Richards believed that Basic English could be used for teaching English as a second language and spent several years in China trying to put his theories into practice.
See Myers, Doris. C.S. Lewis in Context (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994).
Barfield is mentioned by name, THS 261.
Barfield, Owen. The Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1977) 64; cf. 123. See also Barfield, Owen. Poetic Diction, A Study in Meaning (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), a work which deeply influenced Lewis (see SJB 161).

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Lewis believed that it was practically impossible to deny metaphor since all but the most elementary human thinking depends upon it. But the attempt could still be made and in the process the despised and suppressed faculty of metaphor would not be idle, it would become frustrated, ready to burst out at inopportune moments and exact revenge. Lewis dramatizes the effects of the theoretical denial of metaphor near the end of the book when the members of the N.I.C.E. lose all control over their language during the banquet at Belbury. To Frost’s great embarrassment, Wither mentions how anachronistic it would be to trust to Calvary for salvation in modern warfare (344). He means Cavalry. The next moment, Wither is demanding that the madrigale of verjuice be talhobianised. Panic ensues. The ‘curse of Babel’ (350) descends. Mercury, riding in the saddle of Merlin’s soul (352), inspires him to cry, above the riot of nonsense: *Qui Verbum Dei contempturunt, eius afferret etiam verbum hominis* (‘They that have despised the word of God, from them shall the word of man also be taken away’).

The role that Mercury plays in that dénouement must now be examined in more detail. Ransom and Merlin have already met, ‘like two drops of quicksilver’ (278). In Chapter 15, the quicksilver god descends to meet them *in propra persona*:

Up till now they [all those downstairs at St Anne’s] had instinctively been talking in subdued voices, as children talk in a room where their elders are busied about some august incomprehensible matter, a funeral, or the reading of a will. Now of a sudden they all began talking loudly at once, each, not contentiously but delightedly, interrupting the others. A stranger coming into the kitchen would have thought they were drunk, not suddenly but gaily drunk: would have seen heads bent close together, eyes dancing, an excited wealth of gesture. What they said, none of the party could ever afterwards remember. Dimble maintained that they had been chiefly engaged in making puns. MacPhee denied that he had ever, even that night, made a pun, but all agreed that they had been extraordinarily witty. If not plays upon words, yet certainly plays upon thoughts, paradoxes, fancies, anecdotes, theories laughingly advanced yet (on consideration) well worth taking seriously, had flowed from them and over them with dazzling prodigality. Even Ivy forgot her great sorrow. Mother Dimble always remembered Denniston and her husband as they had stood, one on each side of the fireplace, in a gay intellectual duel, each capping the other, each rising above the other, up and up, like birds or aeroplanes in combat. If only one could have remembered what they said! For never in her life had she heard such talk - such eloquence, such melody (song could have added nothing to it), such toppling structures of double meaning, such sky-rockets of metaphor and allusion.

A moment after that and they were all silent. Calm fell, as suddenly as when one goes out of the wind behind a wall. They sat staring upon one another, tired and a little self-conscious.

Upstairs this first change had a different operation. There came an instant at which both men braced themselves. Ransom gripped the side of his sofa; Merlin grasped his own knees and set his teeth. A rod of coloured light, whose colour no man can name or picture, darted between them: no more to see than that, but seeing was the least part of their experience. Quick agitation seized them: a kind of boiling and bubbling in mind and heart which shook their bodies.

*‘When we pass beyond pointing to individual sensible objects, when we begin to think of causes, relations, of mental states or acts, we become incurably metaphorical. We apprehend none of these things except through metaphor’: ‘Bluspels and Flalansfres’ (SLE 263).*

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also. It went to a rhythm of such fierce speed that they feared their sanity must be shaken into a thousand fragments. And then it seemed that this had actually happened. But it did not matter: for all the fragments - needle-pointed desires, brisk merriments, lynx-eyed thoughts - went rolling to and fro like glittering drops and reunited themselves. It was well that both men had some knowledge of poetry. The doubling, splitting, and recombining of thoughts which now went on in them would have been unendurable for one whom that art had not already instructed in the counterpoint of the mind, the mastery of double and treble vision. For Ransom, whose study had been for many years in the realm of words, it was heavenly pleasure. He found himself sitting within the very heart of language, in the white-hot furnace of essential speech. All fact was broken, splashed into cataracts, caught, turned inside out, kneaded, slain, and reborn as meaning. For the lord of Meaning himself, the herald, the messenger, the slayer of Argus, was with them: the angel that spins nearest the sun: Viritrilbia, whom men call Mercury and Thoth.

These paragraphs require more analysis than we can accord them here. The central element of this thrilling parousia, however, would appear to be Mercury’s gift of polysemy: downstairs, punning; upstairs, ‘double and treble vision’. The members of the N.I.C.E., in contrast, have no awareness of the multivalent dimensions of language, but since it is still human language that they are speaking, it is necessarily metaphorical and capable of double meaning. When Feverstone exclaims ‘By Jove’, we know that it is, for him, merely a dead metaphor; he has no knowledge of the gods and would not be interested in them if he did. Similarly, when Frost tells Mark, ‘Pray be quick’ (335), ‘Pray make haste’ (336), he has no inkling of the aptness of his words. The villains’ imperceptiveness is never overtly commented upon by the author. Observing it, the reader feels tacitly complimented for having penetrated the insulating context. The coup de grace comes when Feverstone, after witnessing the massacre at the banquet, laconically lights his cigarette and says to himself, with imperturbable urbanity, ‘Well, I’m damned!’ He, like his colleagues, can talk, but without intelligence. The two, as MacPhee points out (191), are not the same thing.

The sense of superiority that this device may breed in the reader is objected to by some critics. Carpenter dismisses it as Lewis ‘working out his schoolboy resentment of bullies’12. Even Barfield (who was at one with Lewis on the importance, indeed the religious significance, of metaphor) finds a ‘psychic or spiritual immaturity’14 in ‘the opera-bouffe climax’ to That Hideous Strength. There is some force in these judgements, especially if we regard the Cosmic Trilogy as a set of ordinary realistic novels. But of course, they are not realistic, or at least, not simply realistic: they are also fantastic and satiric. That Hideous Strength, in particular, is deliberately intended as a ‘fairy-tale’15 in which a realistic opening leads to a fantasy ending. It may be that the transition is fumbled or

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12 THS 321-322. Thoth was the Egyptian god of record-keeping, calculation, calendars, and orderly practices in general, whom the Greeks later identified with Hermes. Hermes is often called Argelphonians, ‘the slayer of Argos’. The herdsman Argos was called Argos Panoptes, meaning ‘all seeing’. He had eyes all over his body, the better to guard his flocks. Zeus, in one of his many infidelities, fell in love with the fair maiden Io. In an effort to hide his new love from his wife, Hera, he turned the young maid into a heifer. Hera, seeing through the deception, assigned Argos to guard the animal. Zeus was inflamed since he could no longer meet secretly with Io. At Zeus’s bidding, Hermes, disguised as a shepherd, lulled Argos to sleep with music and stories, before beheading him. Hera took the eyes from the severed head and put them in the tail of her sacred bird, the peacock.


15 THS 7.
over-hasty, but in intent at least Lewis was attempting to imitate a well-tried literary form. Read from this perspective, there is no need to sympathise with the plight of Feverstone, Frost, Wither et al. To do so would be to show literary tone-deafness, not moral maturity, for in fairy-tale 'evil characters' may be thoroughly distinguished from 'good characters', and in satire the butts of the author's humour deserve no pity as they would in real life. This is 'holiday' fiction, not in the sense of being unserious, but in the sense of being a holiday from a po-faced kind of excessive moral seriousness. And Mercury is relevant, as well as formal considerations, to this line of interpretation. Mercury is a playful deity and the reader must be willing to be tickled. His comedy lets out the bottled-up tensions behind normal courtesies and etiquettes, and refusal to be amused here springs from frigidity rather than gravity. Chesterton remarked: 'I am almost certain that many moderns suffer from what may be called the disease of the suppressed pun.' Lewis, catching medieval Mercury in his butterfly-net and exhibiting his jizz to the over-solemn twentieth century, agreed: the medievals knew 'better than some know now, that human life is not simple. They were able to think of two things at once.'

And this 'counterpoint of the mind' is clearly demonstrated in the company at St Anne's where words are continually regathering older or fuller senses. The terms 'king' (143), 'awful' (363), 'decent' (376), and 'lady' (381) are examples of words made fresh in this way. This newly-acquired semantic depth of vision is attributable to Viritribbia and, through him, to his creator, Maleldil.

Christopher argues that 'Maleldil' means 'Lord of the Sign' which, if correct, would be apt, for Lewis's Christian God is multi-significant. In the incarnation Christ manifested οὐκέτα which witness to his own person and was himself the χαρακτήρ of the Father. And in creation Christ's making and sustaining Word issued in multiform, revelatory ways, including that inspiration of scriptural authors so that their words acquired significance at many different levels, for example in the Psalms, where 'double or treble vision, is part of the pleasure. . . part of the profit, too'.

Thus it could be said that God knows 'plurisignation' from within His own Triune, enfleshed, and creative nature; there is a divine mandate for double and treble vision in the three-fold nature of God, the two natures of Christ, and in the various significations of His creation itself. Monotheism, in Lewis's view, must be construed carefully so as to preserve this understanding of complex divinity. The monotheism of Islam, for instance, falls short in this respect because it so affirms 'unity' that 'union is breached'. Although Lewis rejoiced that Islam had overcome the dualism of ancient Persia, he seems to have regarded the conquest as an overcorrection: the 'living,
paradoxical, vibrant, mysterious truths of Christianity are defeated by it”. Christians who effectively practise mere ‘Jesus worship” adopt a similarly simplistic and reductionist position.

Deity is not simple, Lewis believed. Rather, there is a multivalence in the very nature of the one God, both in the immanent Trinity and in the economic. Underlying Lewis’s presentation of Deity is not simple, Lewis believed. Rather, there is a multivalence in the very nature of the one God, both in the immanent Trinity and in the economic. Underlying Lewis’s presentation of Mercury in That Hideous Strength then is a profound theological disposition, a disposition which — it is worth pointing out — is absent from the treatment of the similar theme in another great work of 1940s dystopia, George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-Four. In Newspeak, Orwell also satirises linguistic reductionism: ‘Every concept that can ever be needed will be expressed by exactly one word, with its meaning rigidly defined, and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten”. This simplism is seen in Nineteen Eighty-Four as only a philosophical, rather than as also a spiritual, failure, and, as such, is significantly different from the N.I.C.E.’s version of the same thing. Nevertheless, it is possible that Lewis’s work was an influence on Orwell, and it is remarkable how Orwell, though writing without an undergirding theology, was yet aware of an atheistical bent in anti-metaphorical thinking.

It could fairly be said of Orwell, as Mills says of Lewis, that he understood words as things ‘to be listened to because they are doorways to reality, not despised as ineffective instruments because they refuse to yield their substance exhaustively to philosophic propositions”. Both writers, in their different ways, stood against those positivist and neo-nominalist movements in early twentieth-century thought which, they felt, were attempting to clip Mercury’s wings. Orwell saw the danger coming through political bureaucracies and scientific planners from bad philosophy. Lewis saw the danger coming through bureaucrats, planners and philosophers alike, from a far deeper and darker source.

3. Mercury in Lewis’s poetry

In his sonnet ‘Re-Adjustment’ Lewis declares: ‘Devils are unmaking language”. The title of the poem is a reference to Richards’s theory of the purpose of poetry, that it produce an ‘adjustment’
in its readers". Lewis reflects in this poem that he himself will have to adjust to the sad situation with which he is confronted by Richards and *hoc genus omne*, a situation in which he finds himself part of the last generation of men 'who could understand a story' (line 7). By 'understanding a story', Lewis means not just being able to comprehend a linear chain of events, but having the ability to discern a story's hidden meaning, 'something that has no sequence in it"."

In 'Re-Adjustment', as in "The Country of the Blind"", we find Lewis addressing the subject of language in regretful, even apocalyptic, mode. However, Lewis was willing to engage with his opponents' views as well as lament their ascendancy. He was not oblivious to the seriousness of the problems which philosophers of language were raising and acknowledges many of the 'dark' difficulties with which Richards, that 'great atheist critic"", was grappling".

In his poetry, the place where he does this most fully is 'The Birth of Language":

How near his sire's" careering fires  
Must Mercury the planet run;  
What wave of heat must lave and beat  
That shining suburb of the Sun.  

Whose burning flings supernal things  
Like spindrift from his stormy crown;  
He throws and shakes in rosy flakes  
Intelligible virtues down,  

And landing there, the candent air  
A transformation on them brings,  
Makes each a god of speech with rod  
Enwreathed" and sandals fledged with wings.  

"Poetry is failing us, or we it, if after our reading we do not find ourselves changed; not with temporary change ... but with a permanent alteration of our possibilities as responsive individuals in good or bad adjustment to an all but overwhelming concourse of stimulations." Richards, *I. A. Poetries and Sciences* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970) 47. Cf. Lewis's summary of Richards's view that 'good poetical taste' resides in 'attaining psychological adjustments', 'Christianity and Culture', EC 72. For further comments on Richards see SIW 314, 328; EIC 10, 135. Whether Lewis thought that I. A. Richards had wittingly or unwittingly volunteered for the role of devil on the shoulder of language is not clear, but he was of the view that Richards's theories were spiritually debilitating. He wrote: 'The whole school of critical thought which descends from Dr Richards bears such deep marks of its anti-Christian origins that I question if it can ever be baptised': 'Christianity and Culture', a series of articles first published in Theology, Vols. XL and XLI (March-December 1940); reprinted EC 71-92: 82f.


"'Christianity and Culture', EC 72.

"The limitations of words occupy Lewis in the last chapter of SIW, 'At the Fringe of Language'. Language is also a major theme of TWHF; see below, note 103.


"That the Sun should be the 'sire' of Mercury is mythologically confusing, for Mercury was the son of Jupiter, not Sol. But this may be explained by the frequent overlap of Solar and Jovial qualities. Mercury, in the modern cosmos, is the planet nearest the Sun.

"Cf. the 'wreathed wand' of 'The Planets', line 19. This is the caduceus with which Mercury (or the kerykeion with which Hermes) healed the sick and led the dead to the other world. 'Mercury conducts pious animae to the happy dwellings', according to Horace's *Odes* (I, x, 17); see SIW 271.
Due west (the Sun's behest so runs)
They seek the wood where flames are trees;
In crimson shade their limbs are laid
Beside the pure quicksilver seas,

Where thick with notes of liquid throats
The forest melody leaps and runs
Till night lets robe the lightless globe
With darkness and with distant suns.

Awake they spring and shake the wing:
And on the trees whose trunks are flames
They find like fruit (with rind and root
And fronds of fire) their proper names.

They taste. They burn with haste. They churn
With upright plumes the sky's abyss;
Far, far below, the arbours glow
Where once they felt Mercurial bliss.

They ache and freeze through vacant seas
Of night. Their nimbleness and youth
Turns lean and frore, their meaning more,
Their being less. Fact shrinks to truth.

They reach this Earth. There each has birth
Miraculous, a word made breath,
Lucid and small for use in all
Man's daily needs; but dry like death.

So dim below these symbols show,
Bony and abstract every one.
Yet if true verse but left the curse,
They feel in dreams their native Sun.

According to the mythic story of this poem, human language operates at two removes from its source: language originates in the Sun, is then transformed on Mercury, and is finally born on Earth after suffering a substantial diminution. Although the Babel myth does not feature explicitly, it is alluded to in the penultimate line with its mention of 'the curse'. The words available for human use are 'dry', 'dim', 'bony', 'abstract'.

The poem thus presents the bifocal vision of Lewis's understanding of language. From one perspective, he has the highest possible view: language is a metaphysical reality with a transcendent origin. From another point of view, he sees that it is, in this sublunary world, subject to severe constraints. As he writes to a correspondent in 1949: 'in a sense, one can hardly put anything into words: only the simplest colours have names, and hardly any of the smells. The simple physical pains and (still more) the pleasures can't be expressed in language. I labour the point lest the devil shd. hereafter try to make you believe that what was wordless was therefore vague and nebulous. But in reality it is just the clearest, the most concrete, and most indubitable realities which escape

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Language: not because *they* are vague but because language is... Poetry I take to be the continual effort to bring language back to the actual.""

Language could give access (albeit limited) to 'the actual', to concrete but wordless realities. Before we turn to Lewis's attempt at a wordless depiction of that spiritual reality symbolised by Mercury, in the donegality of the fifth Narnia Chronicle, we must take a look at his earlier, and very wordy, depiction of the same character, in 'The Planets'.

Next beyond her [Luna]  
MERCURY marches; - madcap rover,  
Patron of pilferers. Pert quicksilver  
His gaze begets, goblin mineral,  
Merry multitude of meeting selves,  
Same but sundered. From the soul's darkness,  
With wreathed wand, words he marshals,  
Guides and gathers them - gay bellwether  
Of flocking fancies. His flint has struck  
The spark of speech from spirit's tinder,  
Lord of language! He leads forever  
The spangle and splendour, sport that mingles  
Sound with senses, in subtle pattern,  
Words in wedlock, and wedding also  
Of thing with thought."

Here we see a compact expression of Mercurial qualities: his metal ('pert quicksilver'); his kleptic influence ('patron of pilferers'); and his spirit of *componendo et dividendo* ('Same but sundered'). This last attribute is also suggested by various plural nouns (*pilferers, selves, words, fancies, senses, words again*) alongside synonyms of joining (*meeting, marshalling, gathering, flocking, mingling, wedding*).

To use words to describe the god of words might be thought of as a kind of narcissism. But how to capture the Lord of language except through language? A poet has no other medium. However, through the technique of donegality a poet can deploy that medium in a way which approaches wordlessness. He can marry 'thing with thought', not by frontal assault on his readers' conscious minds, but by embracing their whole reading experience with the thing he means to make them think. He can communicate his theme through participatory cognition, Enjoyment consciousness. By this method, his readers may, so to speak, 'feel in dreams' the essence of Mercury, much as words themselves might feel their true origin 'if true verse but left the curse'. Lewis attempts this ambitious task in *The Horse and His Boy*.

4. Mercury in *The Horse and His Boy*

"We planned a story of a trip to Mercury - but couldn't get very far with it." So wrote Green of an evening's conversation he had with Lewis in November 1950. Their inability to get far with the story is intriguing. Lewis's fecund imagination did not usually fail him in conversation, and upon a subject such as this - cosmic romance - he would have been better equipped than most to expatiate till the small hours. One assumes that he was anxious not to pursue the theme because it would have involved constant avoidance of his own recent attempt to write a story which had the Mercurial character as its hidden inner meaning. Indeed, of all people, Green was the one whom he had most reason to steer away from such a topic. Less than four months previously, in July 1950, Green had been discussing with Lewis the proofs of *The Horse and His Boy*.

i) the Mercurial Poëma

The *componendo et dividendo* theme is the place to start in analysing the Mercurial donegality of *The Horse and His Boy*. The reunion of the twins, Shasta (Cor) and Corin, is an example of what 'The Planets' calls 'meeting selves, / Same but sundered', for these brothers are not only identical, but were separated shortly after birth, and their coming back together is the main event of the plot; they reunite rather as Ransom and Merlin met in *That Hideous Strength*, 'like two drops of quicksilver' (THS 278). Because Shasta's identity is at first a mystery, his similarity to Corin is repeatedly remarked upon: he is Corin's 'double'; they are 'as like as two peas' (160), 'almost exactly like'; 'as like as two twins' (150); 'two peas' (160); 'twins' (172, 173); 'two boys' (187); 'two brothers' (187).

There are other pairs of brothers - Dar and Darrin, Cole and Colin ('brothers' names run like that in Archenland', 172) - and one suspects (though we are not told) that they too are twins. The reason for so suspecting is that the main pair of brothers, Cor and Corin, are not just twins, but reflections of the Twins: Gemini. This constellation is relevant to Lewis's theme because, in astrology, Gemini is ruled by Mercury. Gemini consists of the stellated brothers, Castor and Pollux, who are the models for Shasta and Corin.

Critics have not before noticed this debt. Homer (whom the young Lewis 'worshipped') described Castor as a great breaker of horses, Pollux as a renowned boxer. Shasta, it is true, does not break Bree in the literal sense of taming him: he is already a great war-horse. But Shasta is a 'horse-boy' (51), who acquires 'a true horseman’s seat' (133) and who breaks Bree's pride and self-conceit: 'At least [Shasta] ran in the right direction: ran back. And that is what shames me most of all. I, who called myself a war-horse and boasted of a hundred fights, to be beaten by a little human boy - a

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10 Letter to Arthur Greeves 12/10/15 (CLI 145).

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child, a mere foal' (128). And just as Shasta is based on Castor, so Corin is based on Pollux. For Corin is a great fighter: he floors a boy who insults Queen Susan, then floors the boy's brother, then the first boy again (71); he threatens to knock down Thornbut before the Battle of Anvard (152); he demands to be allowed to ‘box’ Rabadash (181); no one ‘could ever equal Corin as a boxer’ (188), and after he has ‘boxed’ the Lapsed Bear of Stormness ‘without a time-keeper for thirty-three rounds’ he gains the nickname ‘Corin Thunder-Fist’ (188). According to Greek mythology, Hermes (the Attic equivalent of the Roman Mercury) invented boxing, which is why both Arsheesh and the Calormene soldier also ‘box’ Shasta (12, 52). Shasta is ‘used to hard knocks’ (52), and this is just as well, because all his fights with his brother ‘ended (if they didn’t begin) with Cor getting knocked down’ (187). Their fights are not simply brotherly tussles, but further manifestations of Gemini: ‘the Twins tear each other’”. Lewis chortled over Barfield’s pun on ‘Castor and Pollux’ and it seems likely that he chose the name Shasta (Cor) as a piece of his own wordplay: Cor/Shasta suggesting the portmanteau, Castor.

The twinning of brothers is only the most notable of the many pairs in the story: ‘two hands’ (69); ‘two peaks’ (80); ‘two horses’ (81, 115); ‘two girls’ (83, 102); ‘two slaves’ (93); ‘two humans’ (109); ‘two human children’ (115); ‘two rivers’ (118); ‘two armies’ (157); ‘two lumps of sugar’ (176); a ‘two-headed giant’ (186). Lewis frequently opts for the two-fold image where he could just as easily have chosen the single. Thus we see Corin seizing ‘both [Cor’s] hands’ (149); Susan’s ‘hands’ on Cor’s ‘shoulders’ (57); ‘a forehead and a pair of eyes’ (93) where we might have had just ‘the upper half of a face’; ‘four pairs of eyes’ (112) where the word ‘all’ would have served. And then there are images of symmetrical doubles: six soldiers on either side of the city gate (51); two cypresses on each side of the doorway (56); Aravis looking between the heels of the slave (94); Cor and Corin straddling the window-sill, facing each other (72); King Lune and King Edmund shaking hands across the battering ram at the gate of the castle (161); ‘the huge real moon overhead and the huge reflected moon’ (108).

From the static images we turn to the dynamic ones, for the spirit of *componendo et dividendo* is woven into the movement of the story. Shasta is united with Bree; Aravis is united with Hwin; these pairs are then driven close to each other by roaring lions; at one point Bree veers off to the right just as Hwin veers off to the left, but they are then forced back together ‘neck to neck and knee to knee’ (31), ‘side by side’ (32). In Tashbaan (that ‘devilish city’, 63) they separate (Shasta with the Namians, Aravis with Lasaraleen, the horses with the stable-hand) but are reunited at the Tombs and journey together across the desert. At the hermit’s house, Shasta runs on ahead, alone, but returns there later (170).

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* Lucy at one point asks about Corin, ‘Where is his goosecap Highness?’ (154). Mercury is a ‘madcap rover’, according to ‘The Planets’. Corin is like James IV: ‘mercurial, wilful, restless and inquisitive’, EL 66.

* AT 149. Castor and Pollux were the sons of Leda and Jupiter; he seduced her in the form of a swan. ‘Leda’s twin-born progeny’ find their way into Lewis’s poem ‘After Aristodc’ (CP 94-95). He would have known that Paul’s ship in the Acts of the Apostles had these ‘Dioscuri’ as its figurehead (Acts 28:11), and this presumably explains his own variation on this theme in the minor detail of the Splendour Hyaline’s swan prow (recalled in PC 99). ‘Hyaline’ means ‘transparent like glass’. Mercury’s inhabitants are likewise vitrified, according to Godwin (see CLII 919, note 33). Cf. the water ‘clear as glass’ in Aslan’s footprint (HHB 142).

* Letter to his brother, 11/4/40 (CLIT 381).
And it is not just the four protagonists who act like mercury rolling round a dish. The river ‘divided itself into two streams’ (49) at Tashbaan and reunites on the other side so that the city is built on an eyot. Inside the city ‘everyone seemed to be going either to the left or right’ (74), Aravis and Lasaraleen have to go ‘either left or right’ (92). On the other side of the desert, the protagonists come to ‘the water’s-meet of the two rivers’ (118). In the mountain-pass Shasta finds that ‘the road divided into two’ (135). At one moment in the Battle of Anvard the Hermit relates how ‘Rabadash and Edmund almost met then, but the press has separated them’ (160). After the battle the heroes’ breathless and excited conversation suddenly ‘all united and swelled into a great roar of laughter’ (162). The destination of the journey is not just Narnia but ‘Narnia and Archenland both’ (62), and we read of ‘plenty of comings and goings between Narnia and Archenland’ (68; cf. 188). The separating and uniting imagery is consummated in the action of Shasta and Aravis who become ‘so used to quarrelling and making it up again that they got married so as to go on doing it more conveniently’ (188).

The imagery of division and reunification is wedded with imagery of speed. There is a great sense of urgency for much of the story, with repeated cries of ‘Narnia and the North!’ (23, 28, 65, 69, 91, 109). Bree gallops for sheer joy (28), then for sheer terror (30). Aravis says, ‘There’s not a moment to lose’ (109) after overhearing Rabadash’s plans. Aslan chases them to the Hermit’s dwelling, causing Bree to discover that he has ‘not really been going as fast - not quite as fast - as he could’ (121). Aravis mentions ‘swift horses’ (40); Edmund a ‘swift galley’ (66); Rabadash the ‘swiftest of the galleys’ (95); the Tisroc urges his son to ‘be swift’ (103); a river is ‘far too swift’ for swimming (118); Aslan is ‘swift of foot’ (139); Chervy has ‘speed’ (146); there was a ‘wonderful chase’ of Lord Bar (174) in the back-story; the Splendour Hyaline will be ‘running for home’ (65); Shasta is told to ‘run now, without a moment’s rest . . . run, run: always run’ (124); he sees a slope of grass and ‘a little heather running up before him . . . he had only to run’ (131). When Chapter 9 ends with the word ‘slowly’ we feel (as we are meant to feel) that something is going dangerously wrong.

Of course, Mercury was swift not for the sake of swiftness but because he was the messenger of the gods. Shasta, as the fleet-footed messenger to the King of Archenland, is reminiscent of a traditional picture of Mercury which has him with wings on his heels. Interestingly, a Narnian lord wears a steel or silver cap ‘with little wings on each side of it’ (54), a reference to the ‘Petasus, or Mercurial hat’\(^\text{a}\). Aravis effects her escape from forced marriage with the assistance of ‘the Chief of the Messengers . . . O dispatcher of messages’ (40); she sees a trumpeted ‘Herald’ (170). After reading and writing, the first thing Shasta will be taught is ‘heraldry’ (176).

Shasta’s forthcoming education is itself another aspect of Mercurial influence, for Mercury inspires the studious and clerkly. Shasta, who ‘had read no books at all’ (81), discovers that ‘Education and

\(^{\text{a}}\) SIL 7. Cf. OSP 129 where Mercury is depicted as a ‘winged figure’ carrying a trumpet, in the sculpture of the solar system.
all sorts of horrible things' (173) are going to happen to him; he laments that he is 'going to be educated' (176). The way that the learned Lewis here pokes fun at the prospect of learning is itself a nice example of the playful Mercurial temperament. Sammons points out that Shasta's name is probably based on the Hindu word Shastri, 'one who is learned, who teaches'\textsuperscript{3}. Unaware of the Mercurial donegality, she does not see the aptness of the meaning of the name, nor the reason why Lewis altered the word to 'Shasta' (so as, with 'Cor', to suggest 'Castor'). She has nevertheless made a serendipitous find, which we are happy to purloin.

Mercury patronises pilferers, and accordingly, Shasta several times goes 'raiding' (46). He is concerned that this is stealing, but Bree assures him that what he takes is 'booty' or 'spoil' (25). He steals money, food and wine (25), sacks, rope and clothes (46), oranges, melons, figs and pomegranates (80, 81); Aravis and Hwin 'steal' themselves away (39). In addition there are discussions of 'horse-stealing' (18, 20, 30, 33), although Bree points out that they might as well say that he stole Shasta as that Shasta stole him (33). Lewis had considered entitling the book \textit{The Horse Stole the Boy}\textsuperscript{4}. And to show that Mercury is the deity not just of dishonest gain, but of honest profit too, Lewis throws in a couple of references to 'water-sellers, sweetmeat sellers' (52); 'sweetmeat sellers and the wine merchants' (65).

But the chief characteristic of Mercury is skill in speech. A central theme of \textit{The Horse and His Boy} is language, that faculty of which Mercury is 'Lord'. On the very first page of the book we learn that the Calormenes liked 'talking to one another very slowly about things that sounded dull'. We are told of the 'loquacity' and 'idle words' (15) of the Calormenes. We hear their vain repetitions about the Tisroc ('may he live for ever') and are informed by Bree that this is 'slaves' and fools' talk', 'Southern jargon' (19). We are given numerous examples of their prolix and vapid proverbial utterances: 'Application to the root of business is the root of prosperity, but those who ask questions that do not concern them are steering the ship of folly towards the rock of indigence' (12); 'For as a costly jewel retains its value even if hidden in a dung-hill, so old age and discretion are to be respected even in the vile persons of our subjects' (96); 'For nothing is more suitable to persons of gravity and decorum than to endure minor inconveniences with constancy' (102). In contrast, Narnian proverbs are brief, pithy and witty: 'Easily in but not easily out, as the lobster said in the lobster pot!' (61); 'Maybe Apes will grow honest' (180); 'Come live with me and you'll know me' (60); 'Nests before eggs' (66).

Calormene and Narnian poetry are also contrasted. Ahoshta says that Narnian 'poetry is not, like ours, full of choice apophthegms and useful maxims, but is full of love and war' (101). He observes, 'How well it was said by a gifted [Calormene] poet ... that deep draughts from the fountain of reason are desirable to extinguish the fire of youthful love' (95-6). When Shasta and Aravis attend the grand feast at Anvard they prepare to be bored as the bard with his fiddlers steps forward, 'for

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{3}Sammons, Martha C. A Guide Through Narnia (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1979) 153.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{5}Cf. GMD 166.}

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the only poetry they knew was the Calormene kind, and you know now what that was like. But at
the very first scrape of the fiddles a rocket seemed to go up inside their heads' (186). The word
'rocket' refers us back to the ‘sky-rockets of metaphor and allusion’ in the Mercury passage from
That Hideous Strength. It also refers us forward to Lewis’s study of the literature of the sixteenth
century where he coins the term ‘Drab’ for the doggerel which he thought afflicted the earlier part
of that period. The Calormene poet appealed to by Ahoshta (95, 98) is reminiscent of the Drab,
Hudibrastic versifier, Whetstone, a ‘very lugubrious and sententious poet’; Lewis mocks the title of
one of his pieces, *Fiftie apples of admonicion late growing on the tree of good governmene*.1
However, change occurred in the sixteenth century, as it does in The Horse and His Boy. With
William Harrison (1534-93) the century turns the corner from Drab: ‘Mercury has succeeded
Saturn’2 and ‘Sidney’s work rises out of the contemporary Drab almost as a rocket rises’3. The
rocket which goes off in the heads of Aravis and Shasta is likewise shooting for (or from) Mercury.

The theme of language also works itself out with respect to the two talking horses, and especially
Bree. Early on, Shasta says to Bree, ‘I wish you could talk, old fellow’ (17). Bree reveals that he
can indeed speak but that, ever since he was taken captive by the Calormenes, he has been
pretending to be ‘dumb and witless’ (18; cf. 20, 26, 28, 30, 33, 129). Set alongside the drab qualities
of ‘Calormene talk’ (34) and the ‘maxims and verses’ (96) of Calormene poetry, the assumed
muteness of the animals helps to present a very un-Mercurial picture of life in this Southern land,
which is necessary if we are to feel the growing influence of Mercurial power as the story progresses
and moves to the poetic North.

Rabadash moves, as it were, further South, as the story continues. His refusal of the Mercurial
Aslan’s mercy means that he is turned, temporarily, into a donkey. The centrality of language in
Lewis’s understanding of human nature is indicated during the transformation scene: ‘[Rabadash’s]
human speech lasted just a moment longer than his human shape’ (183). However, true to form,
Lewis is prepared to find an exception to the prevailing Calormene abuses of language. Aravis’s
story-telling style - ‘the grand Calormene manner’ (38) - is praised by the author (36)4. It is
clearly directed against what Lewis elsewhere calls ‘the Wordsworthian heresy’5, by which he means
the theory, as outlined in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads, that heightened or artificial diction
prevents the communication of deep feeling. Lewis was of the view that the organization of a
response was not the same as the pretence of a response5 and that there were certain things that

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3. Aravis thus appears to represent ‘Philology’ (i.e. Literature), squired by Mercury (Shasta); Lewis’s version of
Martianus Capella’s *De Nuptis Philologiae et Mercurii*, see DL 107. Under his Greek name of Hermes, Mercury had the
title *Kriophoros* (‘ram-bearer’), which may explain why Shasta and Aravis name their son ‘Ram’ (188); Rabadash’s
battering-ram (158-161) may be meant as a punning perversion of the same. Another of Hermes’ titles is *Propulatos*
(before the gates) which helps account for the title of Chapter 3, ‘At the Gates of Tashbaan’, and Shasta’s long wait
outside the city gates, which lasts from Chapter 6 to Chapter 9. Hermes was also credited with inventing the flute; and
‘flute players’ (65) are the only musicians mentioned by the Narnians (cf. PC 99).
4. *AOL* 252.
5. *PPL* 55.
could only be said in a high style\(^1\). That Aravis’s story-telling is oral is also significant, for Lewis had a high view of the pre-scribal tradition\(^2\). However, one suspects that Lewis praises Aravis here largely to show how much more praiseworthy is the bard’s singing of the lay at the end of the story (186). It is his own version of the ‘Eloquence versus poetry’ debate (see above note 8). Rejigging Shakespeare, Lewis intends to demonstrate that the songs of Mercury are more glorious than even his very best prose.

Our final ichneutic task is to observe how Mercury’s metal makes its way into the story, for although the word ‘mercury’ never appears, quicksilver itself does. We may be helped to see where if we cross-refer, oddly enough, to the long Lunar passage in ‘The Queen of Drum’. Here, in a context dominated by the Moon, we read of ‘rivers of mercury’\(^3\). It seems perplexing that mercury should intrude among images of the silvery goddess until we recall that mercury is itself a kind of silver. It is listed in the Periodic Table as ‘Hg’, i.e. hydrargyrum, water + silver; it is a ‘double’ metal, a solid that is liquid. Turning back to the ninth chapter of The Horse and His Boy, ‘Across the Desert’, we read: ‘Under the moonlight the sand, in every direction and as far as they could see, gleamed as if it were smooth water or a great silver tray’ (110). Of course, Lewis cannot tilt this silver tray of water, as he suggests tilting a saucer of quicksilver, in order to make its contents divide into glittering drops. However, he does show us the effects of a swift sunrise when the sand is lit up in an instant, ‘strewn with diamonds’ (110). That is what ‘Mercurial’ means!

ii) the Mercurial Logos

When we turn to the theological messages conveyed under the auspices of Mercury, the most obvious thing to consider is the depiction of Aslan. His encounter with Shasta in the mountain-pass in Chapter 11 is one of the high-points in the Narniad, and, indeed, in the entire Lewisian corpus. When Shasta asks his unwelcome fellow traveller, ‘Don’t you think it was bad luck to meet so many lions?’, Aslan replies, ‘There was only one lion.’ Shasta is perplexed: ‘What on earth do you mean? I’ve just told you there were at least two the first night, and -’ He is interrupted: ‘There was only one; but he was swift of foot.’ ‘How do you know?’ asks Shasta.

‘I was the lion.’ And as Shasta gaped with open mouth and said nothing, the Voice continued. ‘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.’

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\(^1\) See his preface, dated 18/5/60, to The Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1961); reprinted as a prefatory note to ‘Screwtape Proposes a Toast’, EC 752-753.

\(^2\) ‘The hrossa . . . say that the writing of books destroys poetry’, OSP 118. Cf. letter to Michael Edwards, 27/6/58 (Bodleian Library): literature ‘might be healthiest when in its oral condition, like Homer and the Ballads’.

\(^3\) ‘The Queen of Drum’, Canto V, line 151 (NP 168).

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As the incarnation of Mercury, Aslan is ‘swift of foot’ and the living and active principle of *componendo et dividendo*. Shasta has apprehended him hitherto only in division. Here in this paragraph, Aslan reveals that all those many ‘lions’ were but components of a single Lion: the anaphora is a stylistic embodiment of the very thing being expressed.

And then, to show that Mercury does not only combine multiplicity in singularity, but also singularity in multiplicity, Lewis presents the most explicitly Trinitarian moment in the entire Narniad:

‘Who are you?’ asked Shasta.
‘Myself,’ said the Voice, very deep and low so that the earth shook: and again ‘Myself’, loud and clear and gay: and then the third time ‘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."

In this passage, Lewis neatly deploys his Mercurial imagery to present ‘One Lion in a threefold Myself’, one God in three Persons. It is the obvious theological message to communicate via Mercury. But because the theological message is so familiar it would be easy to conclude that it was Lewis’s starting-point, as if he sat down one day and decided to insert an episode which would be the romance equivalent of the Athanasian Creed. In reality, we would argue, the images associated with Mercury were Lewis’s imaginative data; he then inhabited those images and, as it were, moved about in that image world, before coming to realise that the symbols of Mercury naturally disposed themselves in a Trinitarian orientation. Imaginative composition was, for Lewis, the process of ‘re-combining elements made by [God] and already containing His meanings’. The task of the poet was to discover those meanings. Finding the Trinity in Mercury is perhaps the clearest example of Lewis’s heuristic imagination at work.

But there is a good deal more *logos* in this Mercurial *poeima* than a brief presentation of the Trinity. As Aslan ‘guides and gathers’ the children and the horses, leading these pious *animae* to the happy dwellings”, he also teaches them to speak in a new way.

It is interesting to note that Aslan is not named ‘Aslan’ in his encounter with Shasta in the mountain-pass; he is described first as ‘the Thing (or Person)’, then as ‘the Large Voice’, and finally as just ‘the Voice’. Shasta, in contrast, has virtually no voice: ‘‘Who are you?’ he said, scarcely above a whisper’ (138). Aslan’s reply - his first recorded utterance in the story - is significant: ‘One who has waited long for you to speak.’ As ‘Lord of language’, Aslan has come both to speak and be spoken to.

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" HHB 139-140.
" Letter to Sister Penelope, 20/2/43 (L 371).
" SfW 271; see note 71 above.
McGrath is of the opinion that 'one of the many merits of the writings of C.S. Lewis is that they take seriously the way in which words can generate and transform experience.' This is an important observation, and most relevant to this passage in _The Horse and His Boy_; but we must be clear what kind of experience is being generated. It is not, principally, an experience containable by more mere words. Shasta does not suddenly start talking. On the contrary, he 'gaped with open mouth and said nothing' (139); then, 'after one glance at the Lion's face he slipped out of the saddle and fell at its feet. He couldn't say anything but then he didn’t want to say anything, and he knew he needn’t say anything' (140). A similar silence falls on Aravis and the horses after their encounter with Aslan in Chapter 14: 'Strange to say, they felt no inclination to talk to one another about him after he had gone. They all moved slowly away to different parts of the quiet grass and there paced to and fro, each alone, thinking' (170).

When the Mercurial Aslan meets his astrological children they do not all start chattering excitedly, as do the characters in the kitchen during the descent of Viritriblia in _That Hideous Strength_. Rather, they are moved to silence. This silence is not, however, simply an absence of words. On the contrary, it is an eloquent silence, an articulacy of a spiritual kind. It is more like what happens to Ransom and Merlin, who find themselves sitting in 'the white-hot furnace of essential speech' without saying anything; the 'shining whiteness' (140) by which Shasta finds himself enveloped in the mountain-pass may be a reworking of that image. Silence is not the same as wordlessness, for there is a kind of thinking which occurs without language, a faculty which linguists call 'mentalese'. Given what Lewis wrote elsewhere about language at the interface between divinity and humanity, one suspects that it is some special sort of mentalese, a hesychastic kind of experience, which he intends to depict in the transformation of Shasta and Aravis, Bree and Hwin.

Lewis held the view that 'prayer without words is best'; one should try 'not to verbalise the mental acts'. He believed that prayer could not be identical with normal human language because no form of words would be fully adequate to the task of addressing its ineffable subject. Hence the poem John utters in _The Pilgrim’s Regress_ in which he concedes that, 'Taken at their word, all prayers blaspheme'; literal sense needs to be translated into God's 'great, / Unbroken speech' if we are to avoid being 'idolaters, crying unheard / To a deaf idol'. And even the mental acts needed to be relativised: 'From all my thoughts, even from my thoughts of Thee, / O Thou fair silence, fall and set me free,' Lewis prays, in another of his poems. God is the supreme example of those concrete realities which are too definite for language: 'The ultimate Peace is silent through very density of life. Saying is swallowed up in being.' Thus the divine Word descends on the children and the horses, or elevates them into itself. They are not rendered 'dumb and witless' by the encounter; rather they find themselves speaking at the highest pitch of articulacy, through a complete irradiation of their whole selves with significance and relation, and through physical acts, such as

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9 LTM 13; ef 18, 30, 65, 87.
10 ‘He whom I bow to only knows to whom I bow’ (PR 183); reprinted as ‘Footnote to All Prayers’, CP 143.
12 M 97.
Shasta's prostration, a response which is not merely verbal, but actual. It imitates that language which is 'a language more adequate' than any other, namely the historical, 'lived' language of the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. It is the Word sans paroles.

After all, what are words without the Divine Mercury? Only so much hot air, like the long-winded jargon of the Calormenes or the 'many words' of the Gentiles. Since God Himself is the Word, what other utterance is needed? Orual comes to a similar realisation in *Till We Have Faces*. A Christian is but one articulation of God’s word and ‘it is by the Spirit that we cry Abba’: therefore, in true prayer, ‘God speaks to God’. The task of the pray-er is to become the increasingly willing participant in that speech, not by means of ‘psychological gymnastics’, but by ‘the union of wills [ours and God’s] which, under Grace, is reached by a life of sanctity’.

In coming to his understanding of wordless prayer, Lewis has, in a sense, made that ‘total leap out of language’ which, according to Steiner in *After Babel*, is death. Or rather he has gone ‘behind the scenes’ of language, plunged down into language and up again into its ur-form, where meaning is not dead, but resurrected. It is there that one can pray from so deep a part of oneself that one has no need to ‘verbalise the mental acts’: God lets down the ‘bucket’ so deep in the pray-er that such small and inflexible things as words are buoyed up by meaning, rather than forming the receptacle of it.

Interestingly, the very grass over which Aravis and Bree and Hwin walk, following their encounter with Aslan, is described as ‘quiet’. Its vegetable soul knows, in a way which is more difficult for the human soul to know, how to participate in the divine *actus purus*: it is like ‘the voice of the garden, heard in / Our hearts’. That Mercury should remove the inclination to talk (or rustle) is

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[119] Letter to Arthur Grecves, 18/10/31 (CLU 977).
[116] In mythology, Maia was the mother of Mercury: in TWHF Maia is Psyche's name for Orual. Orual allows herself to be comforted by Psyche even though she does not heed what she says: it is her voice and the love in her voice which brings comfort (TWHF 130). We hear of the 'incomprehensible speech' of the god (180). The Fox is called 'word-weaver' by Bardia (205). Orual knows Arnom's tidings about Bardia 'without words' (268). Orual and Ansit speak a language 'only of sobs' (273). The Greek Ungit 'wouldn't understand my speech', says the poor woman in the temple (283). Gram accompanies Orual on her second journey to Psyche, but he says nothing, which is odd because 'Gram loquitur', according to DI 186. Orual's search for a 'face' is closely allied to her search for true speech. 'Lightly men talk of saying what they mean. Often when he was teaching me to write in Greek the Fox would say, "Child, to say the very thing you really mean, the whole of it, nothing more or less or other than what you really mean; that's the whole art and joy of words."' A glib saying. 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, not 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?’ (305). When she finally meets the god of the mountain, Orual writes: '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? Only words, words; to be led out to battle against other words' (319-320).
[120] PR 248.
[113] LTM 71.
[112] LTM 63.
[111] LTM 72.
[116] LTM 83; cf. ‘Behind the Scenes’, *Time and Tide*, Vol. XXXVII (1/12/56); reprinted EC 710-713.
[117] LTM 84.
ironic, - doubly so in the case of the horses, who had earlier been told, whatever they did, not to 'start talking' (48), and triply so in the case of Bree, who had been so ashamed of his behaviour in fleeing the Lion that Hwin was unable to 'get a word out of him' (127). But the silence of the lawn and of those walking over it is only temporary: it is a kind of baptismal silence which lasts for 'about half an hour' (170).'

Bree (whose name is pleasingly polysemous\[17\]) has a further lesson to learn about language. Bree is a Eutychian heretic: he believes in the Narnian version of Aslan's 'divinity', but not his full 'humanity' (as it were)\[14\]. He keeps swearing 'Thanks be to the Lion' (109) and 'By the Lion's Mane' (167, cf. 159), but he does not acknowledge the reality of Aslan's lionhood. When Aravis asks, 'If he isn't a lion why do you call him a lion?', Bree replies, 'He's as strong as a lion or (to our enemies, of course) as fierce as a lion.' He has emptied his language of literal reference and employs it as a dead metaphor. His monoscopy may be attributable to his Calormene master, whose name is Anradin (159); Sammons points out that 'anrad' means 'with a single aim or purpose'\[19\]. Bree's lack of double and treble vision is an offence against Mercury which the Mercurial Aslan cures with one touch of his whiskers (168). Eutychianism presumably arrived in Lewis's mind from Dante's depiction of Justinian in the sphere of Mercury\[19\].

Lewis himself has been accused of a theological inadequacy which is reminiscent of Eutychianism. Andrew Walker argues, partly by reference to Aslan, that, in Lewis's account of the incarnation, God does not become 'sufficiently earthed as the particular human being Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He is not so much the God-man, who is flesh of our flesh, as the temporarily earth-visiting God'. On the other hand, Mary Warnock has accused Lewis of a tendency which is reminiscent of an equal and opposite error, the sort of error which issues in a kind of Ebionism or Arianism. She is of the view that Lewis 'would not allow himself to take seriously . . . that the life of Christ itself as recorded in the Gospels is a symbol, a universal-in-particular standing for something, we cannot say exactly what, but speaking to us of infinity, eternity and the triumph over time'; his response to the Gospels was one of 'literalism'.

Walker and Warnock are both perceptive critics. Each sees something which is present in Lewis's work, but they come to such divergent conclusions as a consequence of looking through only one eye. Lewis's work needs to be read with the same stereoscopic vision with which it was written. As

\[14\] Cf Rev. 8:1.

\[17\] According to the OED, the various meanings of 'bree' include the eye-lid or the superciliary ridge (cf. the reference to Bree's eyelids and his supercilious manner, HHB 168), pottage, to scare or terrify, water or sea, and disagreement. 'Brce' is also the name of a village in Tolkien's Middle-Earth and one suspects that Lewis and Tolkien had discussed its many meanings.

\[19\] Eutyches (c. 378-454), a monk of Constantinople, affirmed that there was only one nature in Christ 'after the union' and denied that His manhood was consubstantial with ours.


\[21\] Despite his Eutychian views, Justinian was received into Paradise where he inhabits Mercury's sphere (Paradiso, Canto VI, 14ff) and is seen singing 'twin-lustred with his two-fold luminance' (Canto VII, 5).


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Lyle H. Smith maintains, Lewis understood "the necessity of keeping both the metaphorical and the literal meanings of the terms of a metaphor in view simultaneously". Part of the tremendous power of Chapter 11 of *The Horse and His Boy* springs from the skilful marrying of the metaphorical with the literal:

"The mist was turning from black to grey and from grey to white. This must have begun to happen some time ago, but while he had been talking to the Thing he had not been noticing anything else. Now, the whiteness around him became a shining whiteness; his eyes began to blink. Somewhere ahead he could hear birds singing. He knew the night was over at last. He could see the mane and ears and head of his horse quite easily now. A golden light fell on them from the left. He thought it was the sun."

There are metaphorical meanings running under all these apparently literal statements. We do not have time to analyse the passage in depth, but the most obvious one is 'He knew the night was over at last': Shasta's dark night of the soul, his estrangement from Aslan, has come to its end. Lewis had used the same metaphor to the same intended effect in *That Hideous Strength*, but without the same success: the novelistic (i.e. literalistic) qualites of that book stifle its romance (i.e. its more metaphorical) possibilities. But in the Narniad the writing has a numinous quality; one has the sense of literal and metaphorical twinned in consubstantial connection. Admittedly, the effect may not necessarily operate well in excerpted quotation, for here, as in much poetry, 'the poet's battles are won in advance', and one cannot quote all ten preceding chapters. In context, however, Lewis has succeeded in achieving a balance between literal and metaphorical, running two meanings together unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably. The double vision is a brilliant embodiment of the geist animating the story, and it is also a liberation for some of Lewis's favourite mental habits, for, as Rossi notes, Lewis was 'delighted by the equivocal'; and as Edwards remarks, his first concern was always 'to discover the invisible not behind but within the visible'. In this connection Lewis himself quotes Sir Thomas Browne approvingly: "[It is] the philosophy of Hermes that this visible world is but a picture of the invisible, wherein, as in a portrait, things are not truly but in equivocal shapes, as they counterfeit some real substance in that invisible fabrick"."
In a sense, 'the night was over at last' is a pun, but a pun with a Christological significance, pointing, as it does, not just to the approach of daylight but also to the effect of Aslan upon Shasta. For that matter, all good puns reflect Christological significance: first, because Christ himself was a punster\textsuperscript{16}; second because there was divine wit at work (as Augustine recognised) when the Word became speechless (\textit{infans}) in the infant Jesus\textsuperscript{17}; and third because of the essentially polysemic import of the God-man. The incarnation of Christ, the enfleshment of the spiritual, is the tap-root of Lewis's belief in meanings beyond the literal. It is the incarnation which sanctions and underwrites both his use of word-play, one of the lowest forms of wit, and his faith in the highest double meanings of all, which he calls symbols or sacraments. The highest does not stand without the lowest\textsuperscript{18}, and Lewis's understanding of God is that He is both 'unspeakably immanent' and 'unspeakably transcendent'\textsuperscript{19}. To combine, but not confuse, these theological perspectives might, in a lesser writer, have resulted in a pedantic attempt at definition or a cancelling-out of the polarity. In Lewis's fifth Chronicle the presentation comes brilliantly alive because a river of Mercury runs through it.

\textsuperscript{16} E.g., Matt. 16:18.
\textsuperscript{17} Augustine: \textit{Sermones} CXC.
\textsuperscript{18} One of Lewis's favourite maxims, taken from Thomas à Kempis's \textit{The Imitation of Christ}; see, e.g., FL 9; LTM 89.
\textsuperscript{19} Terms used by Lewis in describing Hooker's 'model of the universe', see EL 459-460, a passage which can usefully be read as Lewis's theological self-portrait.
CHAPTER TEN

Venus

Wide-spread the reign of her secret sceptre

Of the seven planetary deities, Venus was the most ubiquitous in medieval poetry. To a renaissance poet such as George Herbert her omnipresence was questionable: why, he asks, should a Christian poet be required to wear ‘Venus’ livery’? May he not plainly say ‘My God, My King’? To Lewis, however, who was ever aiming to undermine the long reaction against medieval conventions, Herbert’s question itself needed to be interrogated: ‘Why should poets not figure their believed religion under the veil of paganism?’ The Olympian gods - as Farrer noted - were all but dead and buried by the middle of the twentieth century; Aphrodite in particular was ‘no longer anything but the passion of love itself’4. An emergency operation was needed if they were to have a continuing life in modern imagination. Lewis therefore had no hesitation in donning ‘Venus’ livery’ and entering her service, becoming, like Chaucer, Venus’s ‘disciple’.

“Sweeter than all it is when one bed holds twain that love, and the queen of Cypris is praised of both.” Queen of Cypris, you know, is Aphrodite.’ Thus Lewis wrote to Arthur Greeves, in 1917, quoting Asclepiades5; it is the first time the foam-born goddess appears explicitly in his writings5. A year later he recalls to Greeves’s mind ‘the night when we first broached the “nameless secrets of Aphrodite”’6. These nameless secrets, otherwise embarrassing or shameful to the young Lewis, became thinkable and discussible under the rubric of Aphrodite/Venus and the imagery associated with her, and it was around this time that he began to develop his enduring interest in her qualities:

1 ‘The Planets’, CP 26, lines 31-32.
3 George Herbert: ‘Jordan (I)’, line 15.
6 Letter to Arthur Greeves, 20/2/17 (CLI 282).
7 He had already acquired a musical interest in this symbolic region, listening to Charles Gounod’s ‘Bright Star of Eve’ and Wagner’s ‘Venusburg music’. See letter to his brother, 22/12/14 (CLI 98); and letters to Greeves, 4/5/15 (CLI 116), 11/5/15 (CLI 119).
8 Letter to Greeves, 12/2/18 (CLI 355).
he hung her picture in his rooms at Univ*, wrote poem after poem about her¹⁵, stared at her in the night sky¹⁶, and became steadily more learned in her literary manifestations¹⁷.

Since this is a literary and theological, not a psychological, study we shall not be able to mine the vein, so potent to Jung and so fascinating to Lewis, which marks the psychic descent to ‘the Mothers’¹⁸. But in the back of our minds we may remain alert to the fact that Lewis became an ‘orphan’¹⁹ following the death of his mother in 1908 and that he experienced fairly unusual relationships with the two principal women in his adult life. His imaginative interest in the occupant of the third heaven had a personal resonance which he himself acknowledged in his later years; he once explicitly compared Joy Lewis to Hesperus (i.e. Venus)²⁰. While ‘it is never safe to attribute a man’s imaginations too directly to his experience’²¹ we may with a certain impunity commit the Personal Heresy and note autobiographical factors in The Magician’s Nephew, the Chronicle composed under Venus, in which the young Digory hopes to save his mother’s life with a magic apple. Interestingly, although The Magician’s Nephew was published sixth, it was the last of the Chronicles to be completed, having been the second one to be started²². Lewis had uncharacteristic difficulty in finding the right shape for the story, which may in part explain why

¹ See letter to Greeves, 5/5/19 (CLI 447). This was probably his copy of the ‘Mirror of Venus’ referred to in his diary in 1923: see Lewis, W.H. ‘The Lewis Papers: Memoirs of the Lewis Family, 1850-1930’, 11 vols. (unpublished: Wade Center) entry in Lewis’s diary, 26/5/23. Whether it was the painting by Velasquez or Titian or Burne-Jones or another artist is not known. It might have been Bronzino’s ‘Allegory of Venus and Cupid’ which later hung in his rooms at Magdalen: see Derek Brewer, ‘The Tutor: A Portrait’ in Como, James T. (ed.). C.S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table and Other Reminiscences (London: Collins, 1980) 56. There he also had Tintoretto’s ‘The Origin of the Milky Way’: see Peter Bayley, ‘From Master to Colleague’ in Como, Breakfast Table, 77.

² ‘I have nearly finished the Venus poem and am full of ideas for another... about Helen, whom Simon Magus... found living as a very earthly person in Antioch and gradually recalled to her who she was and took her up to Zeus again, reborn: on their way they had to fight ‘the Dynasties’ or planets’, letter to Greeves, 5/5/19, CLI 447. Cf. letter to Leo Baker, 25/2/21, CLI 521.

³ ‘Every night Venus grows more spectacular. It is true Chaucerian weather!’ (letter to his brother, 21/4/40, CLII 397).

⁴ ‘Do you ever notice Venus these mornings at about quarter past seven? She has been terrifically bright lately, almost better than Jupiter’ (letter to Laurence Harwood, 31/12/46, CLII 751). Roger Lancelyn Green recalls Lewis seeing Venus above Addison’s Walk and exclaiming ‘Perelandra!’ with ‘a passionate longing in his voice’; he then went on to quote Tennyson’s ‘Locksley Hall Sixty Years After’, the passage about Venus which ends with the lines: ‘Might we not in glancing heavenward on a Star so silver-fair / Yearn, and clasp the hands and murmur, ‘Would to God that we were there?’ Green, Roger Lancelyn & Hooper, Walter. C.S. Lewis: A Biography, revised & expanded edition (London: HarperCollins, 2002) 201f.

⁵ ‘See AMR 297, 346, 395. In later life Lewis included the Hymn to Aphrodite (presumably Homer’s, not Sappho’s) among the specimens of literature which communicate a particular ‘quality’ or ‘flavour’: ‘On Science Fiction’, address to the Cambridge University English Club, 24/11/55; reprinted EC 450-460: 459.

⁶ Lewis comments on the significance which Jung found in Faust’s cry, ‘The Mothers! The Mothers!’ in ‘Psychological and Literary Criticism’, Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, Vol. XXVII (1942) 7-21; reprinted SLE 286-300: 298. He thinks that one of the chief appeals of the anthropological approach to literature is the sense it gives of ‘descending to the Mothers’: ‘The Anthropological Approach’ in Davis, Norman & Wrenn, C.L. (eds.). English and Medieval Studies Presented to J.R.R. Tolkien on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962) 219-230; reprinted SLE 301-311: 309. Cf. letter to Greeves, 13/1/30 (CLI 863) where he quotes approvingly from Boehme, ‘If the soul did but truly know that all beings were its mothers, which brought it forth, and did not hold the mother’s substance for its own, but for common’: Boehme, Jacob. The Signature of All Things, trans. John Ellistone (1912) 198.

⁷ SBJ 52.

⁸ He had his late wife in mind when quoting Shelley’s translation of a Platonic epitaph: ‘Thou wert my morning star among the living, / Ere thy fair light had fled; / Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus giving / New splendour to the dead.’ Sayer, George. Jack: C.S. Lewis and His Times (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988) 251.

⁹ EL 58.

¹⁰ See Green and Hooper, op. cit. 308-314. The surviving draft of what became MN was written immediately after LWW. That the two works were originally entangled in the womb of Lewis’s imagination is suggested by his comment about ‘a cupboard which one had hitherto valued as a place for hanging coats [that] proved one day, when you opened the door, to lead to the garden of the Hesperides’: ‘Notes on the Way’, Time and Tide, Vol. XXVII (25 May & 1 June 1946); renamed by Hooper as ‘Different Tastes in Literature’ and reprinted, EC 466-471: 468.
Venus continues to make a strong showing in his writings even after the conclusion of the Narniad, most importantly, in *Till We Have Faces*.

### 1. Venus in Lewis’s scholarship

The reasons for that difficulty may have been academic as much as psychological. Venus is the most complicated of the planets from the point of view of literary scholarship and we cannot here give a full overview of her appearances in Lewis’s professional writings. However, a brief survey will be attempted, and the place to start is the summary given in *The Discarded Image*:

In beneficence Venus stands second only to Jupiter; she is *Fortuna Minor*. Her metal is copper. The connection is not clear till we observe that Cyprus was once famed for its copper mines; that copper is *cyprium*, the Cyprian metal; and that Venus, or Aphrodite, especially worshipped in that island, was *Kypriás*, the Lady of Cyprus. In mortals she produces beauty and amorousness; in history, fortunate events. Dante makes her sphere the Heaven not, as we might expect from a more obvious poet, of the charitable, but of those, now penitent, who in this life loved greatly and lawlessly. Here he meets Cunizza, four times a wife and twice a mistress, and Rahab the harlot (*Paradiso*, IX). They are in swift, incessant flight (VIII, 19-27) - a likeness in unlikeness to the impenitent and storm-borne lovers of *Inferno*, V.

But this summary barely scratches the surface of the topic; the Venereal character is, in fact, considerably more complex. There are various ‘metaphysical’ Venuses distinguishable - but not fully divisible - from the strictly astrological one. To gain a full understanding of how Lewis construed Venereal influence we need to understand these satellite variants as they supplement and react upon the mother planet.

At the highest level, Venus is also a name for God, according to Cusanus, and Usk can equate her with ‘Divine Love’. At a slightly lower level, Ficino distinguishes two kinds of *Veneres*: the first is the Angelic Mind (*Venus coelisitvis*) considered in its contemplation of Divine Beauty; the second is the generative power in the *Anima Mundi* - a being inferior to the angels - known as *Venus vulgaris*.

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*For a good adumbration of this subject, see Norwood, W.D., Jr. ‘C.S. Lewis’ Portrait of Aphrodite’, *Southern Quarterly*, VIII (1970) 237-272. Norwood’s analysis of TWHF ‘has as its basis this very point: that the goddess Ungit - Aphrodite, as she is identified by the Fox, or Venus - is one “face” of the true God; i.e., she is God in his aspect of Love’, op. cit. 255. As well as Ungit being ‘undoubtedly Aphrodite’ (TWHF 16; cf. 320), Psyche is repeatedly likened to Aphrodite (32; 157) and to Helen (29, 32; cf. 241). TWHF is indebted to Gavin Douglas’s poem in which the poet, ‘fearing that Venus may transform him into a beast (for angry goddesses have been known to do such things) . . . keeps on passing his hand over his face to make sure that it is still human’ (EL 79; cf. TWHF 184). For an early poetic treatment of the same myth, see ‘On Cupid and Psyche’, Lewis, W.H. ‘The Lewis Papers’, Vol. 8: 163-7 (Wade Center), reprinted King, Don W. *C.S. Lewis, Poet: The Legacy of his Poetic Impulse* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2001) 269-271. AGO also contains much material pertaining to this theme, e.g., its frequent references to mothers (10, 19, 24, 30, 41), its reference to Joy Lewis as ‘H’ (suggesting Helen, her first name); A.L. Rowe even thinks that the title is a parody of Fry’s *Venus Observed* (*The Diaries of A.L. Rowe*, ed. Richard Ollard (London: Penguin, 2003) 365). Finally, Lewis’s short story, ‘After Ten Years’ (EC 864-881), indicates continuing rumination on the subject of the beautiful female and the loss thereof, here typified by Helen of Troy.*

" DI 107.
" SIL 16.
" AOL 225.

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or Venus naturalis." (This second power, the 'generative force in nature', is the same as Lewis finds in the Romance of the Rose, and also in Lucretius'.) Chapman has a form-giving 'archetypal Uranian Venus'; this shows him to be 'taking his Venus more seriously than Marlowe would have done'. And much more so than Shakespeare did: Lewis viewed the Venus of 'Venus and Adonis' as 'a very ill-conceived temptress'.

But it is in Spenser that Lewis finds the richest source of Venereal images. He distinguishes the following kinds of Spenserian Venuses: a 'Venus-on-earth' (who resembles the second of Ficino's types); a 'Venus-as-Paradigma' (who comes from Plato's Timaeus); a 'Venus-as-planetary-deity' (who is the astrological Intelligence simpliciter); a 'bad Venus' (who is Spenser's own picture of diseased sexuality); and a 'veiled Venus' (who is to be regarded as one of Spenser's 'symbols of God'). This last and divine Venus is 'constructed of elements drawn both from Christian revelation and from the intimations of poetic theology'. It would give Lewis a good precedent for his own Christological use of Venereal imagery in the sixth Chronicle of Narnia.

2. Venus in Lewis's poetry

In Lewis's poetry Venereal qualities are used but once for Christological purposes. We will examine that occurrence below, but first we look at the earliest appearances of Venus in Lewis's published verse where her qualities serve predominantly as symbols of God's dwelling-place in paradise, rather than of God (or Christ) Himself.

When he wrote Spirits in Bondage Lewis was not quite sure whether he believed in God or not, but he believed in (or at any rate longed for) a state which, theologically speaking, he would have been hard pressed to differentiate from the heaven of theistic traditions. The volume contains several poems in which Venereal imagery is used to depict an ideal world beyond death. The most noteworthy are 'The Philosopher', 'Death in Battle' and 'Hesperus'.

In 'The Philosopher' the poet enquires:

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\[ \text{SL 50f; cf. EL 374f.} \]
\[ \text{AOL 121.} \]
\[ \text{SIW 225.} \]
\[ \text{'Hero and Leander', Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. XXXVIII (1952); reprinted SLE 58-73: 70. This, despite the fact that 'Venus dominates Marlowe's narrative and Saturn that of Chapman' (SLE 58).} \]
\[ \text{‘This flushed, panting, perspiring, suffocating, loquacious creature is supposed to be the goddess of love herself, the golden Aphrodite. It will not do', EL 498-9. Cf. 'Hero and Leander', SLE 59.} \]
\[ \text{SIW 51.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid. 49; cf. EL 375.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid.} \]
\[ \text{AOL 332.} \]
\[ \text{SIW 16.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid.} \]

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Who shall cross over for us the bridge of fears
And pass in to the country where the ancient Mothers dwell?

And the answer is: not the old man, watery-eyed and full of leaden years, but the young man, 'fresh and beautiful of show'. It is he who shall 'cross at last the shadowy bar / To where the ever-living are'. And it would appear to be this same young man who finally makes that crossing in 'Death in Battle':

Open the gates for me,
Open the gates of the peaceful castle, rosy in the West,
In the sweet dim Isle of Apples over the wide seas breast,
Open the gates for me!

Since stars are 'isles' in the poem 'Song', this 'Isle of Apples' is presumably the same Hesperus who has already appeared in the poem of that name. There Lewis presents the same set of images: a western garden beyond the ocean and beyond fear, containing a sacred tree. 'Hesperus' does not actually mention that this is an apple-tree, but it is undoubtedly so, for this is an early manifestation of Lewis's 'Avalon-Hesperides-Western business'. Twenty-nine years later it was still featuring in his poetry. 'The Landing' tells of the poet's arrival at the garden of the Hesperides - with its 'green hill', its 'apple-gold' headlands, its 'gum-sweet wood' - and of his dismayed discovery that it is only an imitation: the real Hesperides lies even further to the west.

In his poetic search for the country of the ancient Mothers, Lewis was repeatedly misled by a false trail, that laid by the 'bad Venus' whom he had found in Spenser. Lewis calls her 'Venus infernal' and she makes a couple of appearances in his poetry. Under her spell Lewis found that 'it was quite easy to think that one desired . . . the garden of Hesperus for the sake of his daughters'. But eventually he learnt, by means of 'discreditable' experience, that this was not the case. In other words, he discovered that sehnsucht was 'not a disguise of sexual desire'. And this was true of the
proper expressions of sexual desire as much as the improper ones⁴⁴. Nothing on earth, no appetite of flesh and blood, could satisfy the longing for the beauty symbolised by Venus.

This unsatisfiable, inexpressible aspect of Venus is communicated in ‘The Planets’:

In the third region
VENUS voyages . . . but my voice falters;
Rude rime-making wrongs her beauty,
Whose breasts and brow, and her breath’s sweetness
Bewitch the worlds. Wide-spread the reign
Of her secret sceptre⁴⁺, in the sea’s caverns,
In grass growing, and grain bursting,
Flower unfolding, and flesh longing,
And shower falling sharp in April.
The metal copper in the mine reddens
With muffled brightness, like muted gold,
By her fingers form’d.⁴⁺¹

The poet’s ‘voice falters’ for ‘rime-making wrongs her beauty’. If we digress from Lewis’s poetry for a moment, we may find a similar expression of Venus’s inexpressible beauty in his sermon, ‘The Weight of Glory’, where Lewis discusses scriptural portrayals of heaven:

[W]e are to be given the Morning Star⁴⁺² [. . .] In one way, of course, God has given us the Morning Star already: you can go and enjoy the gift on many fine mornings if you get up early enough. What more, you may ask, do we want? Ah, but we want so much more [. . .] We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words - to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it [. . .] That is why the poets tell us such lovely falsehoods. They talk as if the west wind could really sweep into a human soul⁴⁺³; but it can’t [. . .] Or not yet. For if we take the imagery of Scripture seriously, if we believe that God will one day give us the Morning Star [. . .] then we may surmise that both the ancient myths and the modern poetry, so false as history, may be very near the truth as prophecy.⁴⁺⁴

It is highly significant that Lewis should symbolise the human longing for heaven by means of the Morning Star, for the Morning Star (another of Venus’s names) is a Biblical title for Christ (2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 22:16). The fact that Lewis does not mention this in ‘The Weight of Glory’, is itself an aspect of the inexpressibility which he is trying to express, part of the ‘shyness’ which is the theme of that sermon. It is a silence which is audible again in ‘Five Sonnets’, where he writes:—

⁴ Lewis would have acknowledged that ‘discreditable’ expressions of Venus (in his case he means masturbation and his early intense, possibly adulterous, relationship with Mrs Moore) were not full tests of sehnsucht. Marriage, on the other hand, was. But this too could not test it to destruction. See AGO 9: ‘We both knew we wanted something besides one another.’

⁴⁺ Cf. Psyche, ‘slim and straight as a sceptre’, TWHF 40. As the Martial spear partly symbolised the penis (see Chapter Six, section 3 i), so the Venereal ‘secret sceptre’ should be understood partly as a symbol of the clitoris.


⁴⁺² Lewis is alluding to Rev. 2:28. Cf. letter to Oliver Chase Quick, 18/1/41 (CLII 463); Per 200.

⁴⁺³ Lewis probably had in mind Shelley’s ‘Ode to the West Wind’ and possibly Masefield’s ‘The West Wind’. The west wind has an obvious connection to the western Garden of the Hesperides and Venus. ‘Westwind himself’ becomes Psyche’s husband in TWHF 120, 121.

⁴⁺⁴ ‘The Weight of Glory’, sermon preached at the University Church, St Mary the Virgin, Oxford, published in Theology, XLIII (November 1941) 263-274; reprinted EC 96-106: 104.
Pitch your demands heaven-high and they’ll be met.
Ask for the Morning Star and take (thrown in)
Your earthly love."

‘Five Sonnets’ makes no attempt to flesh out what it means Christologically to ‘ask for the Morning Star’, and that is to be expected for, if ‘rime-making’ wrongs Venus, it will certainly be insufficient to speak adequately of Christ. Prose too is barely sufficient, for this is a subject that ‘can hardly be put into words’. However, Lewis’s imagination tended to find prose a more effective vehicle than poetry and that is certainly the case with his understanding of Venus. His Ransom Trilogy is our next area of investigation.

3. Venus in the Ransom Trilogy

i) Perelandra

Lewis sets the second volume of his trilogy on Venus. Ransom, like St Paul, is ‘taken up to the third heaven’44. He enacts the prophecy voiced in ‘The Weight of Glory’: he ‘lived and walked on the oceans of the Morning Star’ (89), bathing in it, receiving it into himself, becoming part of it. Indeed, he does more than unite himself to Venus, he saves the whole planet from a Fall and is given a final resting-place there44. Perelandra turns out to be for Ransom in very truth ‘the Morning Star which He promised to those who conquer’ (200).

As well as being a Christological image the Morning Star is a Biblical term for Babylon and, by traditional extension, for Satan: ‘How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn!’ (Isa. 14:12a). Lewis taps into this tradition in the portrayal of his own Lucifer, Weston, the great physicist who, after inviting demonic power into himself, becomes ‘the Un-man’. This Un-man has ‘been with Maleldil in Deep Heaven’ and ‘heard eternal councils’ (108). His advent into Perelandra in his space-ship suggests an ejection from the angelic ranks: ‘like a shooting star something seemed to have streaked across the sky’ (68).

The Un-man’s temptation of the Green Lady is a manifestation of the ‘Venus Infernal’ theme. He keeps attempting to poison her imagination (the first step in undermining her will) by telling her tales of tragic heroines who had been ‘oppressed by fathers, cast off by husbands, deserted by lovers’ (114), female martyrs who, if men had had their way, would have been kept down ‘to mere child-bearing’ (120). The picture he paints is ‘always very nearly true’ (121). But not quite. In fact, in

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44 ‘Five Sonnets’, Sonnet 4, CP 141, lines 1-3.
45 2 Cor. 12: 2: ‘I know a man in Christ who . . . was taken up to the third heaven.’ In Jewish writings both before and after Christ, the conception of seven heavens is found. See The Testament of Levi 2:7; Assumption of Isaiah 6:13; Babylonian Talmud Hagigah 12b. Cf. 1 Kgs 8:27; Eph. 4:10.
46 He returns permanently to Perelandra at the end of THS, joining Arthur in Avalon, which is variously called Abhalljin (THS 274) and Aphallin (THS 368). ‘Abbal’ means apple in Gaelic. Cf. ‘Victory’, SIB, poem iv; reprinted CP 170, line 8.
ordinary terrestrial speech, these heroines were 'witches or perverts' (114), more reminiscent of 'Agrippina and of Lady Macbeth' (121) than noble pioneers.

Having failed to corrupt Tinidril's imagination by means of words, the Un-man attempts the same thing by means of visual images. In parody of the ancient mythological image of Aphrodite's looking-glass, he produces a small 'English pocket mirror that might have cost three-and-six' (124). This, he promises, enables one 'to walk alongside oneself as if one were a second person and to delight in one's own beauty. Mirrors were made to teach this art' (125). As it turns out, Tinidril is only frightened, not corrupted, by the sight of her own face, and Ransom eventually perceives that the Un-man's strategy is to awaken in her mind not vanity concerning her physical beauty, but egoism concerning her beautiful soul. Not that consciousness of one's own beauty is portrayed by Lewis as an evil. On the contrary, Maleldil has already provided for Tinidril a way of seeing herself in the reflection from the sky, a phenomenon observable 'three days out of five in the planet of love. The queen of those seas views herself continually in a celestial mirror' (30).

But the Un-man fails to infect Perelandra with the spirit of Venus Infernal, and the abiding impression of the book is not these temptations, but the almost overwhelming sensuous richness of the planet itself. For this is the real 'garden of the Hesperides' (39), the home of all sweetness* and laughter* and copper† and warm wetness‡. Although Eve and her apple are several times mentioned or alluded to (130, 133, 137, 151) the story is the reverse of the Genesis myth: it is Eden without the Fall. This paradise is the 'apple-laden land' of Euripides§ in which a 'Fixed Land', rather than a forbidden fruit, represents the divine command, and apples have no prohibitory significance¶. They feature most obviously under the guise of the 'gourds' (36) and the 'bubble trees' (41f) which Ransom both freely enjoys and freely abstains from; also, at one remove, as breasts. Apples, as Lewis wrote elsewhere, 'often symbolize the female breasts': here, in a profound remythologising of the Eden apple, Ransom is 'breast-fed by the planet Venus herself' (172).

Thus Ransom, though 'orphaned' from 'the great Mother of his own race' (139), is united with a 'warm, maternal, delicately gorgeous world' (30). Maternal imagery and terminology abound. The Un-man, for instance, existed 'before the mothers of the mothers of [Ransom's] mother were

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* E.g., 'a light wind, full of sweetness' (37), 'sweet heather' (38), 'sweet new scents' (38), 'sweet night breezes' (160); cf. 51, 89, 92, 95, 97, 178, 205.
† E.g., Perelandran thunder is 'the laugh, rather than the roar, of heaven' (32); Ransom suffers 'a real schoolboy fit of the giggles' (35); the Green Lady bursts 'into laughter - peal upon peal of laughter till her whole body shook with it' (48); 'her sudden laughter' (67); she 'laughed for a whole minute on end' (120); 'the King laughed . . . Ransom laughed . . . the Queen laughed as well. And the birds began clapping their wings and the beasts wagging their tails' (194).
‡ E.g., 'copper-coloured floor . . . copper-coloured ridge' (34); 'copper-coloured heather' (43); 'coppery-green of the water' (72); 'coppery sea' (144).
§ Ransom's first experience of the planet is of 'unconsciously' swimming in an ocean which is 'warm by earthly standards - as warm as a shallow bay with sandy bottom in a sub-tropical climate' (30). He is 'naked yet warm' (38). There is 'warm splendour' (185) all over Perelandra, the planet on which 'the lands swim' (186). The Green Lady, Ransom speculates, has 'a marine ancestry' (92); of course, because she is the foam-born goddess.
¶ Euripides: Hippolytus, 1.742; cf. TWHF 17.
* For more on Hesperian apples see letter to Ruth Pitter, 5/3/55 (Bodleian Library).
‡ 'Spenser's Cruel Cupid', SMRL 166.

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conceived' (108). Ransom's own name was planned to yield a new meaning 'before his Mother had borne him, before his ancestors had been called Ransoms' (135). He warns the Green Lady about 'mothers wearing themselves to a ravelling' (121). She, he learns, has no human mother because 'I am the Mother' (58). Above her, however, is the planetary Mother, the Oyarsa of Venus, the Intelligence which guides Perelandra. Her enfolding, womb-like identity is readable in her eyes, which 'opened, as it were, inward, as if they were the curtained gateway to a world of waves and murmurings and wandering airs, of life that rocked in winds and splashed on mossy-stones and descended as the dew and arose sunward in thin-spun delicacy of mist' (186).

And who is the Mother of the Oyarsa? The operatic finale of the book consists of Ransom's vision of the cosmic Great Dance and the accompanying paeans of praise to Maleldil: 'Blessed be Hel' Maleldil could have been depicted as a 'She', as an even greater kind of Venus; Spenser had done something similar. But Lewis chooses not to take that step. Perelandra apparently has no mother any more than Malacandra had. Maleldil and 'His Father and the Third One' (195) are conceived in masculine terms.

ii) That Hideous Strength

In the closing volume of the trilogy, Lewis dips a toe in the water of feminine theological imagery. The descent of the gods in Chapter 15 includes the descent of Venus. These gods have not suddenly become equated with Maleldil in this third book, but, as has been argued above (Chapter Three, section 3), their descent is, in a certain sense, parallel to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. By including the feminine Venus among those deities, Lewis inches towards the position he would adopt in The Magician's Nephew, when he presents Aslan as the incarnation of the presiding Venereal Intelligence.

But Venus has a lot more to do than merely descend in Chapter 15. She is responsible for bringing about those conditions in which the heir of Jove will be conceived. The very first word of That Hideous Strength is 'matrimony', which denotes not just marriage (of the Martial and Venereal principles illustrated in the first two books), but, literally, 'mother making'. Mark and Jane must come together so as to make of her the mother of the new Pendragon. There are three main Venereal strands to Lewis's depiction of this destiny: a) the terrestrial Venus; b) Mother Dimble; and c) the parousia of Perelandra herself.

a) The terrestrial Venus

The first strand is conveyed by means of planet earth's residual spirit of Venus whom Jane sees in a waking vision in Chapter 14 (304) and Mark likewise in Chapter 17 (382). As Ransom tells Jane,
‘there is a terrestrial as well as a celestial Venus - Perelandra’s wraith as well as Perelandra’ (317). This ‘earth Venus’ is portrayed as a huge, half-naked, beautiful woman in a flame-coloured robe; she has darkish, honey-coloured, ‘Southern’ skin, large breasts, red cheeks, wet lips, black eyes and an enigmatic expression. She sets things alight with a torch in her hand which gives off black smoke and a sticky, resinous smell; vegetation, rather than flame, springs up from whatever she touches. She is attended by several dwarfish, gnome-like men ‘quite insufferably familiar, frivolous, and irrepressible”.

b) Mother Dimble

The second Venereal strand concerns the character of Mrs Margery Dimble. In the very first chapter we learn that ‘one tended to call her Mother Dimble’ (29; cf. 165, 168). She is, in fact, ‘childless’ (29); indeed, ‘barren’ (363). However, she, unlike Jane and Mark, is open to the influence of Venus. Together with her husband, Cecil, she makes her home into a ‘noisy salon’ (29) for all his pupils, of both sexes. She ‘has not rejected’ the terrestrial Venus, as have Mark and Jane through their contracepted intercourse; rather she has ‘baptised’ it (314), transforming it from its ‘raw’, ‘demoniac’ self. She can do this because she has accepted, as Jane has not, ‘all that has happened to [the terrestrial Venus] since Maleldil came to Earth’ (314). This explains why, to Jane, the terrestrial Venus looks like ‘Mother Dimble’s face with something left out’ (304). In the final chapter Mrs Dimble is dressed in a robe of that ‘tyrannous flame colour which Jane had seen in her vision [of the earth Venus]’ and a ‘great copper brooch’ (363). She takes on the appearance of ‘a kind of priestess or sybil, the servant of some pre-historic goddess of fertility - an old tribal matriarch, mother of mothers’. Her maternal role vis-à-vis Jane is most evident when she helps to prepare the bedroom in the Lodge which will be the location of Jane’s reunion with Mark.

c) Perelandra

And the third Venereal strand is the actual descent of the celestial Venus in Chapter 15:

Down in the kitchen drowsiness stole over them after the orgy of [Mercurial] speaking had come to an end. Jane, having nearly fallen asleep, was startled by her book falling from her hand, and looked about her. How warm it was . . . how comfortable and familiar. She had always liked wood fires but tonight the smell of the logs seemed more than ordinarily sweet. She began to think it was sweeter than could possibly be, that a smell of burning cedar or of incense pervaded the room. It thickened. Fragrant names hovered in her mind - nard and cassia’s balmy smells and all Arabia breathing from a box; even something more subtly sweet, perhaps maddening - why not forbidden? - but she knew it was commanded. She was too drowsy to think deeply how this could be. The Dimbles were talking together but in so low a voice that others could not hear. Their faces appeared to her transfigured. She could no longer see that they were old - only mature, like

*These playful dwarfs are a version of Risus, Jocus and Petulantia, ‘the natural attendants of Venus’ (EL 103).*
ripe fields in August, serene and golden with the tranquillity of fulfilled desire. On her other side, Arthur said something in Camilla’s ear. There too . . . but as the warmth and sweetness of that rich air now fully mastered her brain, she could hardly bear to look on them: not through envy (that thought was far away), but because a sort of brightness flowed from them that dazzled her, as if the god and goddess in them burned through their bodies and through their clothes and shone before her in a young double-natured nakedness of rose-red spirit that overcame her. And all about them danced (as she half saw), not the gross and ridiculous dwarfs which she had seen that afternoon, but grave and ardent spirits, bright winged, their boyish shapes smooth and slender like ivory rods.

In the Blue Room also Ransom and Merlin felt about this time that the temperature had risen. The windows, they did not see how or when, had swung open; at their opening the temperature did not drop, for it was from without that the warmth came. Through the bare branches, across the ground which was once stiffening with frost, a summer breeze was blowing into the room, but the breeze of such a summer as England never has. Laden like heavy barges that glide nearly gunwale under, laden so heavily you would have thought it could not move, laden with ponderous fragrance of night-scented flowers, sticky gums, groves that drop odours, and with cool savour of midnight fruit, it stirred the curtains, it lifted a letter that lay on the table, it lifted the hair which had a moment before been plastered on Merlin’s forehead. The room was rocking. They were afloat. 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. Low syllables of prehistoric Celtic self-pity murmured from his lips. These yearnings and fondlings were however only the fore-runners of the goddess. As the whole of her virtue seized, focussed, and held that spot of the rolling Earth in her long beam, something harder, shriller, more perilously ecstatic, came out of the centre of all the softness. Both the humans trembled - Merlin because he did not know what was coming, Ransom because he knew. And now it came. 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. They were blinded, scorched, deafened. They thought it should burn their bones. They could not bear that it should continue. They could not bear that it should cease. So Perelandra, triumphant among planets, whom men call Venus, came and was with them in the room."

The orgasmic intensity of this passage is a kind of literary foreplay, preparing the reader for the final chapter of the book, entitled ‘Venus at St. Anne’s’. For Venus lingers on earth, unlike the other four descended Intelligences. She does so partly in order to transport Ransom back to Perelandra, for which he has been home-sick, and partly to illustrate the ‘triumphant vindication of the body’, for she offers carnal delights of both stomach and loins to all the beasts at St Anne’s (bears, jackdaws, horses, pigs, bats, hedgehogs, mice, and elephants) and also, of course,
to the human couples (the Dennistons, the Dimbles, the Maggses, and the Studdocks). Satisfaction of every fleshly appetite is available amid an all-encompassing 'warmth and wetness' (377). In particular, Venus lingers to preside over Mark and Jane's bed. It is a 'rich bed' (382) and the only bed in the Lodge, one which they must share all night, unlike the separate beds they have at home (74). They go to it fully cognizant at last of their own animality, for although they are more than the beasts, they are not less than them (379). Jane will have no more dreams; she will 'have children instead' (380).

But although Venus has so much to do in this book, she does not operate to the exclusion of either Maleldil or Jupiter. With respect to Maleldil, Venus works to redeem that flesh which Maleldil assumed at the Incarnation (262, 314), and her influence should not be understood as if it were an element ultimately separable from Maleldil's presence. Myers' usual insight fails her on this score when she complains of the unfortunate juxtaposition of two kinds of nonordinary experience in That Hideous Strength, 'the encounter with the allegorical literary figure of Venus and the encounter with the deity of the believed religion'4. On the contrary, the juxtaposition is appropriate because the 'believed religion' is so mythologised in the tale that Christ and Venus are equally at home in it as Maleldil and Perelandra respectively. To Jane, the terrestrial Venus is not an allegorical figure, but a literal manifestation of angelic power, no more and no less 'believed' than Maleldil. One of the deeper messages of the book is that one cannot be put right before God without being put right with oneself and one's fellows. For human beings are equally 'cut off from Earth their mother and from the Father in Heaven' (293).

Maleldil does not feature in propria persona; his being is represented at the creaturely level through the Jovial Oyarsa and, in turn, through that Oyarsa's own human representative, Ransom. It is upon finding herself 'in the sphere of Jove' (151), after her audience with Ransom, that Jane becomes Venereally self-aware, conscious of her own beauty: 'she had the sensation ... that it was growing and expanding like a magic flower' (cf. the 'flower unfolding' in 'The Planets'). She looks at herself in the mirror4: 'Certainly she was looking well: she was looking unusually well ... there was little vanity in this. For beauty was made for others. Her beauty belonged to the Director. It belonged to him so completely that he could even decide not to keep it for himself but to order that it be given to another' (152). With this realisation, Jane begins to desire the enjoying of her own beauty, which 'is the obedience of Eve', as opposed to 'the vanity of Lilith, which desires the desiring of its beauty (63). It is in the Jovial lover (the chaste, but sexually charged Ransom) that she first tastes her own Venereal delightfulness. As we saw above, in Chapter Five, Aphrodite's saffron light burns in Jove's monarchal presence.

A likely source for Lewis's idea about beauty belonging to someone so completely that he can 'order it to be given to another' is Charles Williams4, on whom the portrait of Ransom in That

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4 For more on Jane and mirrors see 16, 165, 362.
4 See his undated letter 'to a friend', LCSL 208.

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Hidden Strength may be partly based⁹. His understanding of Venus was influential on Lewis and requires a section to itself.

4. Venus in Charles Williams

Between That Hideous Strength and The Magician's Nephew Lewis published Arthurian Torso which consists of Williams's unfinished poem, 'The Figure of Arthur', and Lewis's commentary thereon. An important image in 'The Figure of Arthur' is 'the Wood of Broceliande', which Lewis takes to be identifiable with 'what the Greeks called the Apeiron - the unlimited, the formless origin of forms'⁴. This wood has 'no horizon'⁴, and the image of the horizon (what Lewis calls 'a hard straight line which at once unites and separates heaven and earth'⁵) is also an important element in the poem.

The sovereign mistress of Broceliande is named 'Nimue' by Williams. She, Lewis explains, is 'the mother of making'; she is that energy which reproduces on earth a pattern derived from 'the third heaven', i.e. from the sphere of Venus, the sphere of Divine Love⁶. What resides in the third heaven is 'the feeling intellect'⁷ which exists as a permanent reality in the spiritual world and by response to that archetype Nimue brings the whole process of nature into being. Williams is here [, . . .] reproducing the doctrine of the Renaissance Platonists that Venus - celestial love and beauty - was the pattern or model after which God created the material universe⁸[, . . .] Nimue, in obedience to her Lord the Third Heaven, brings the potentialities of Earth to perfection; just as she also brings 'to a flash of seeing' [, . . .] the ultimate femininity of the created universe. In the soft fertile earth of the ploughed fields, in the waters of sea and river [, . . .] in all that receives, responds, brings forth and is enformed, but most of all in the beautiful and wise woman discerned in a flash of Beatrician seeing, Nature sets before us for our delight the unfathomable feminine principle which would otherwise lie invisible at the very roots of Broceliande, 'the world's base'.¹¹

Broceliande, though horizonless, is not the Absolute; it is rather that mysterious place, full of immense dangers and immense possibilities, which lies outside our ordinary mode of consciousness. Within our ordinary mode of consciousness, it is possible to see a horizon, that is, to distinguish earth from heaven: Williams was no Pantheist. In Heaven there is permanence, command, 'the lord'; in Earth there is response, obedience, 'the mother of making'. Complete and balanced

⁹ For my money, Ransom, in this book, is Charles Williams'. Williams, Rowan. 'That Hideous Strength: A Reassessment', address to the Oxford Lewis Society, 5/10/88 (Lewis Society recordings archive). Williams's work is alluded to twice in the course of the story (THS 194, 370).
¹⁰ AT 101.
¹¹ Ibid. 141.
¹² Ibid.
¹⁴ A phrase borrowed from William Wordsworth: Prelude XIV, 226.
¹⁵ AT 102.
¹⁶ Ibid. 149.

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humanity arises out of the union of the two, the Empire and Broceliande, Divine Order and formless chaos, Peras and Apeiron, the city and the wood. One moment of such union is portrayed by Williams in what Lewis calls "an image of startling beauty". The Earth's shadow, that cone of darkness stretching out into the heavens, touches the sphere of Venus, thus linking Nimue's agents on earth with Nimue's archetype in the Third Heaven. "Continuity is established between the natural order, the manifold and unstable ectype, and its "climax tranquil in Venus" where the 'unriven truths' dwell. We are, in fact, watching the impregnation of Nimue by her Pattern."

In part, Williams's scheme is simply that of Spenser, with which Lewis was already familiar. In the image of the Wood, however, he introduces something of his own, which Lewis in turn appropriated in *The Magician's Nephew*, as we will suggest below. For now though, as we leave Williams's works, we must pass one last comment upon the horizonlessness of Williams's woods, for it is an image which Lewis himself redeployes when characterizing the modern view of the universe. In contrast to the builted and ordered quality of the Ptolemaic cosmos, Lewis argues that the post-Copernican universe is like a wasteland: "[T]o look out on the night sky with modern eyes is like looking out over a sea that fades away into mist, or looking about one in a trackless forest - trees forever and no horizon". In that sense, he seems to be suggesting, the post-Copernican world has returned to Apeiron or chaos, helped on the way latterly by poets such as T.S. Eliot. Eliot, in Lewis's view, attacks πέρας by writing chaotic poems that do not fortify one against chaos.

A chaotic cosmos is no cosmos, by definition. The chaos of original matter (as reported in Genesis and certain pagan myths, e.g., the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) was ordered and worked up into a kosmos (kosmein, to arrange, organise, embellish, whence also cosmetics). We do not have space here to analyse Lewis's philological assessment of the developments in meaning of kosmos, world, mundus, phusis, and nature, to which he gives two whole chapters in his 1960 work, *Studies in Words*. But it is amusing to note Lewis glancing in the mirror as he does so. In tracing the fine shades and shifts in their semantic histories, he refers to another 1960-dated publication. It is entitled *Il Nipote del Mago* and nicely illustrates a meaning of the word world. He gives the author as one 'G. Vivante' [sic]. In fact, Giorgina Vivanti was not the author but the translator, and the work in question was Lewis's own *Magician's Nephew*. It is the only time the Narniad is ever mentioned in his works of scholarship.
5. Venus in The Magician’s Nephew

i) the Venereal Poëme

If Lewis chuckled as he smuggled this reference into Studies in Words it would have been entirely appropriate, for Venus, who in beneficence stands ‘second only to Jupiter’**, is ‘partly a comic spirit’**, she is the ‘laughter-loving goddess’**. Her donegalitarian presence in The Magician’s Nephew explains why it is (as Myers has noted) ‘lighter and more humorous than the other Chronicles’**.

This lightness of tone is achieved partly through authorial comment, for example, on the toughness of aunts (78), on how certain houses always smell of mutton (81), on being given dinner ‘with all the nice parts left out’ (80). It is partly achieved through the simple device of putting plenty of laughter in the action of the story: ‘roars of laughter’ greet Jadis in London (88); the sun ‘laughed for joy’ at Narnia’s original dawn (95); and a perky jackdaw makes ‘the First Joke’, upon which all the other animals began making various queer noises which are their way of laughing and which, of course, no one has ever heard in our world. They tried at first to repress it, but Aslan said: ‘Laugh and fear not, creatures. Now that you are no longer dumb and witless, you need not always be grave. For jokes as well as justice come in with speech.’ So they all let themselves go. And there was such merriment that the Jackdaw himself plucked up courage again and perched on the cab-horse’s head, between its ears, clapping its wings, and said: ‘Aslan! Aslan! Have I made the first joke? Will everybody always be told how I made the first joke?’ ‘No, little friend,’ said the Lion. ‘You have not made the first joke; you have only been the first joke.’ Then everyone laughed more than ever; but the Jackdaw didn’t mind and laughed just as loud.***

** DI 107. As a ‘second’ thing, Venus is naturally orientated towards the primacy of Jove (cf. ‘Notes on the Way’, Time and Tide, Vol. XXIII (27/6/42) 519-520; reprinted as ‘First and Second Things’, EC 653-656). It is for this reason that we often find them alongside each other in Lewis’s writings. It is when she is ‘in the sphere of Jove’ that Jane in THS finds her Venereal nature blossoming. It is in ‘Jove’s monarchical presence bright’, that shines ‘Aphrodite’s saffron light’ in ‘The Small Man Orders his Wedding’. And it is for this reason that there is an explicit reference to Jupiter in MN. As Digory and Polly are being swept between worlds in Chapter 3, ‘there were bright lights moving about in a black sky: Digory always thinks these were stars and even swears that he saw Jupiter quite close - close enough to see its moons’ (38). Lewis’s brief insertion of Jupiter into his Venereal donegality is typical of how he sees their relations, and it is interesting to see how he had tried to do something similar in a surviving unfinished draft of MN. In that manuscript to which Hooper has given the title “The Lefay Fragment”, Digory and Polly plan to explore a river on an oaken raft. That it is made from oak, Jove’s tree, suggests again that Venus is not going to left unattended by the kingly planet.

*** FL 92.

** AOL 237; FL 92. ‘Aphrodite the laughing’ is Homer’s formula epithet for the goddess in the Iliad and Odyssey. In Lewis’s view, modern discussions of ‘the act of Venus’ (his term for sexual intercourse, PR 110, FL 85), such as those in which John Robinson participated, ‘sandpapered most of the Homeric laughter off her face’ (LTM 16). Cf. ‘The psychologists have so bedevilled us with the infinite importance of complete sexual adjustment and the all but impossibility of achieving it, that I could believe some young couples now go to it with the complete works of Freud, Kraft-Ebbing, Havelock Ellis and Dr. Stopes spread out on bed-tables all round them. Cheery old Ovid, who never either ignored a molehill or made a mountain of it, would be more to the point. We have reached the stage at which nothing is more needed than a roar of old-fashioned laughter’ (FL 91). See also TWHF: Orual laughs more during Psyche’s early days than in all my life before . . . I laughed because [Psyche] was always laughing. She laughed before the third month’ (TWHF 29-30).

** Myers, C.S. Lewis in Context, 174.

** MN 110-111. Cf. ‘The animals, like our own dogs in similar circumstances, dimly understood that there was merriment afoot; all manner of gambolling, wing-clapping, snorting, and standing upon hind legs began to be displayed. And still the Green Lady laughed’ (Per 48).
And finally, the spirit of levity is conjured by juxtaposing the decorum and etiquette of Edwardian England with the ferocious amorality of the Boudicca-like Jadis. Her cataclysmic destruction of the people of Charn becomes, in Digory’s upper-middle class vocabulary, ‘rather hard luck on them’ (61); her egotistical fantasies are adjudged ‘absolute bosh from beginning to end’ by the no-nonsense Polly (63); and her evil incantations are dismissed by Aunt Letty as the ‘strong language’ of a drunken hussy from the circus (76). In addition, Uncle Andrew’s genteel circumlocutions (‘Madam - my dear young lady - for heaven’s sake - compose yourself’) and fussy appurtenances (frock coat, tall hat, eye-glass) contrast comically with Jadis’s imperious curtness and disturbingly bare arms. In this context, her felling of policemen is much more comedy than tragedy (79, 88f).

Jadis is a representation of Venus Infernal*. She is descended from Lilith* and her intoxicating beauty is constantly emphasised: ‘She was beautiful . . . Years afterwards when he was an old man, Digory said he had never in all his life known a woman so beautiful’ (49); ‘so beautiful!’ (53); she has ‘a white, beautiful hand’ (53); she is ‘seven foot tall and dazzlingly beautiful (61)’; she has ‘beauty’ (66); ‘her height was nothing compared with her beauty’ (67). In addition, she is stunningly vain: she speaks proudly of ‘my beauty and my Magic’ (63) and when she hears the children mention Uncle Andrew she assumes that he must have seen her face ‘in some magic mirror’ and ‘for the love of my beauty he . . . sent you across the vast gulf between world and world to ask my favour and to bring me to him’ (63). Her error is understandable for, as ‘The Planets’ has it, ‘[Venus’s] breasts and brow, and her breath’s sweetness / Bewitch the worlds’. Jadis, as the Infernal shadow of Venereal influence, is able to ‘bewitch’ in literal truth.

When Uncle Andrew eventually meets Jadis, he, like his nephew, is deeply won over by her beauty; that it is of a sexual kind is suggested by the fact that both Polly and Aunt Letty are unimpressed.


*Jadis, though she has the beauty of Venus, does not possess Venereal fertility. Her ‘infernal’ nature manifests itself in the exact opposite, a love of death. She speaks ‘the Deplorable Word’ that destroys Charn, ‘that great city’, an allusion to Nineveh (cf. Jonah 1:2; 3:2). Nineveh was threatened with destruction unless it repented, which it did, and thus everyone in the place was saved (much to Jonah’s annoyance), and not just the people either, but the cattle too, who are mentioned repeatedly (Jonah 3:7f; 4:11), which may help explain why Polly mentions the animals in Charn alongside all the people whom Jadis killed (MN 61). Jadis is drawn to Mars’s metal, iron. She threatens Uncle Andrew with ‘red hot iron’ (70); her strength is such she could ‘break an iron bar as if it were a stick of barley-sugar’ (88); during the fight at the lamp-post we read ‘more men were knocked down by the iron bar’ (89); and once arrived in Narnia she flings the iron bar at Aslan’s head (99). Uncle Andrew, at a lesser level, is Martial too: he wants a gun to shoot Aslan (96, 101), and he has the idea to ‘bring a few old bits of scrap iron here, bury ’em, and up they come as brand new railway engines, battleships, anything you please’ (103). Narnia starts to be created in a chapter entitled ‘The Fight at the Lamp-post’, a strangely Martial title. But Lewis may be alluding to Paradise Lost X, 329: ‘the Sun in Aries rose’. As Lewis explains in PPL 140, ‘the sun was in Aries because the Creator of all kindes Vpon this signe first began The world whan that he made man (Gower, Conf Am. VII, 994).’ Of course, Venus is going to get the better of all these Martial plans, for when Venus meets Mars there is always a victory of beauty over strength and peace over war . . . This is what the story meant to . . . Botticelli, in whose picture the profound sleep of Mars and the waking tranquillity of Venus powerfully present the ‘lineaments of gratified desire’ - not their desire only but that of all creation: ‘Spenser’s Cruel Cupid’, SMRL 164-165. Botticelli’s picture may underlie Aslan’s command to Uncle Andrew: “Sleep . . . Sleep and be separated for some few hours from all the torments you have devised for yourself.” Uncle Andrew immediately rolled over with closed eyes and began breathing peacefully” (MN 158).

See LWW 76. Although Jadis in MN and the White Witch in LWW are the same person, the characteristics on display are markedly different, a difference required by the different donegalities. The White Witch has Saturnine properties which are defeated by the Jovial Aslan; in MN Jadis is a representation of Venus Infernal. 
Uncle Andrew thinks ‘more and more of her wonderful beauty. He kept on saying to himself, ‘A dem fine woman, sir, a dem fine woman. A superb creature’’ (73); he imagines that ‘the Witch would fall in love with him’, and even at the end of the book, when he is a sadder and wiser man, he is still obsessed by her appearance and ready to regale any visitor with an account of this ‘dem fine woman’, - the very last words of the book*. His fixation with Jadis is a manifestation of Venus’s influence over the carnal instinct. Its comedic portrayal expresses Lewis’s view that it is never wise to be ‘totally serious about Venus”’. But ought there not to be a serious treatment of sexual desire and sexual activity given the Venereal donegality? Lewis did not dissent from the view that sex ‘is serious”, theologically, naturally, morally and emotionally; and given that he uses ‘Venus’ as a term for the act of sexual intercourse, he clearly thought it was central to her influence†. He felt that writing for an audience which included pre-pubescents necessarily ‘excluded erotic love’‡; and he had a personal reluctance to depict anything like a quasi love-affair between children§. But in *The Magician’s Nephew* he still manages to communicate a sense of ‘flesh longing’, as ‘The Planets’ has it.

He does this in two places. First, in the way that human and animal characters are paired off preparatory to copulation and procreation. King Frank* and Queen Helen* are told that they will have ‘children and grandchildren’ (129), that they and their ‘children and grandchildren shall be blessed’ (130), that they will be ‘father and mother of many kings that shall be in Narnia and the Isles and Archenland’ (159). Thus their projected future suggests something of the connubial, hymeneal aspect of Venus. There is also a nod towards it in the conjugating of the beasts: ‘[Aslan] was going to and fro among the animals. And every now and then he would go up to two of them (always two at a time) and touch their noses with his. He would touch two beavers among all the beavers, two leopards among all the leopards, one stag and one deer among all the deer’ (106). Venus is ‘double-natured”* and the coupling up of these characters suggests that the Genesis command to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ will be heeded before long.

* He has, by this time, become ‘a nicer and less selfish old man than he had ever been before’, suggesting that he is, like Cunizza and Rahab, whom Dante put in the sphere of Venus, now penitent of his lawless love for Jadis.
† FR 91.
‡ Ibid.
§ PR 110; FL 85. Cf. Lewis’s argument that virginity ought to be lost ‘in obedience to Venus’ rather than ‘in obedience to the lure of the eunuch’; ‘The Inner Ring’, a memorial oration at King’s College, London, 1944; reprinted EC 721-728: 724. See also his argument that unchastity is an evil, not because coitus is an evil, but because it is good and must be honoured: ‘Foam-born Venus . . . golden Aphrodite . . . Our Lady of Cyprus . . . I never breathed a word against you’: ‘We Have No Right to Happiness”, The Saturday Evening Post CCCXXXVI (21-28 December 1963) 10, 12; reprinted EC 388-392: 390 (Lewis’s ellipses).
¶ Such a thing ‘embarrasses and nauseates me”: ‘On Science Fiction’, address to the Cambridge University English Club, 24/11/55; reprinted EC 450-460: 460. Not that he was averse to depicting sexuality in the Narniad, as Philip Pullman has alleged (see Pullman, Philip. ‘The Dark Side of Narnia’, The Guardian, 1/10/98). There are marriages, and fruitful marriages, depicted in the Chronicles: e.g., between Caspian and Ramandu’s daughter (VDT 188); Bree and Hwin also get married, but not to each other (HHB 188); and there is a teasing suggestion of a budding romance between Lucy and Tirian at the end of LB (134, 136, 137).
* Frank’s name may itself be suggestive of Venereal activity. Lewis was struck by Spenser’s description of the act of love: ‘frankly each paramour his leman knowes’ (AOL 316, 332, quoting Faerie Queene III, vi, 41); and he writes approvingly of the ‘singularly fresh and frank account of Arthur’s meeting with Gloria’ (AOL 332f).
† Helen’s name connotes Helen of Troy, that avatar of beauty, whom Lewis habitually links with Venereal imagery.
§ THIS 322.

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But there is no need directly to depict coital relations between human or animal characters because Venus’s fertility has already been portrayed at a higher level in the animation of the whole Narnian universe. This is the second and fuller way in which Lewis treats ‘the act of Venus’. Charles Huttar has noted how, ‘at this moment, one of the climactic scenes in the whole Chronicles of Narnia, the stars burst forth again into song.’ It is worth comparing the descent of Perelandra in *That Hideous Strength* with this ‘climactic scene’ in order to observe the skilful way in which Lewis builds the Narnian creation upon Venereal imagery. When Perelandra is readying herself to come down upon earth, the temperature rises:

> It was from without that the warmth came . . . a summer breeze was blowing into the room . . . The room was rocking . . . A soft tingling and shivering as of foam and breaking bubbles ran over [Ransom’s and Merlin’s] flesh . . . As the whole of [Perelandra’s] virtue seized, focussed, and held that spot of the rolling Earth in her long beam, something harder, shriller, more perilously ecstatic, came out of the centre of all the softness . . . And now it came. It was fiery, sharp, bright and ruthless . . . the translunary virtue, fallen upon them direct from the Third Heaven, unmitigated. They were blinded, scorched, deafened. They thought it should burn their bones."

Compare that passage with the following from *The Magician’s Nephew*:

> The Lion opened his mouth, but no sound came from it; he was breathing out, a long, warm breath; it seemed to sway all the beasts as the wind sways a line of trees. Far overhead from beyond the veil of blue sky which hid them the stars sang again: a pure, cold, difficult music. Then there came a swift flash of fire (but it burnt nobody) either from the sky or from the Lion itself, and every drop of blood tingled in the children’s bodies, and the deepest, wildest voice they had ever heard was saying: ‘Narnia, Narnia, Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak.’"

The two passages are constructed upon a remarkably similar semantic field: ‘warmth’ / ‘warm’; ‘breeze’ / ‘breath’; ‘rocking’ / ‘sway’; ‘tingling’ / ‘tingled’; ‘fiery’ / ‘fire’; ‘burn’ / ‘burnt’. The image of a painless burning is particularly Venereal and, interestingly, the ‘swift flash of fire’ (reminiscent of Williams’s ‘flash of seeing’) comes ‘either from the sky or from the Lion’. Lewis is content to allow some doubt about the matter: does the awakening of Narnia result from astrological ignition or the inspiration of Aslan? We shall examine this question in more detail below. Our present task is simply to recognise the Venereal imagery within which the story consists and it is enough to note that the animation of Narnia is conceived and presented in terms which, in *That Hideous Strength*, are deliberately suggestive of a kind of sexual congress. Lewis need not trouble his young readers by depicting an adult romance between Uncle Andrew and Jadis, nor

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78 THS 332.
79 MN 108.
80 It it used thrice in TWHF: Psyche is rescued by Westwind’s ‘beautiful arms which seemed to burn me (though the burning didn’t hurt)’ (121), when she takes the cup in his palace: ‘again, that burning, though without pain’ (123); and when Orual encounters Psyche at the end of the story, ‘I knew that she was a goddess indeed. Her hands burned me (a painless burning) when they met mine’ (317).
embarrass himself by depicting a quasi love-affair between Polly and Digory; he has infused an erotic charge into the creation of Narnia itself.

As well as this specifically orgasmic moment, there is a general theme of fecundity dominating the book, 'a warm, good smell of sun-baked earth and grass and flowers' (139). It has two other principal manifestations: in the Wood between the Worlds and in chapters 8 and 9 where Narnia is brought to birth.

The Wood between the Worlds, where 'you could almost feel the trees growing' (31, 65) is an attempt to symbolize the secret springs of life which Venus oversees. The debts to the Wood of Broceliande are evident, for just as Williams's Wood is 'the world's base' without a horizon, so Lewis's Wood is the world's base where Digory cannot even get a 'glimpse of the sky' (31). It is 'very much alive' and 'rich and warm' (43), 'rich as plum-cake' (32), but quiet and dreamy and peaceful. Interestingly, Jadis hates the place; it saps all her strength, and she cannot remember it when she leaves it. This reinforces her status as a kind of anti-Venus. Venus, as we are informed in Perelandra, has eyes that open 'inward, as if they were the curtained gateway to a world of waves and murmurings and wandering airs'. Jadis has no such inscape, no secret depths or tender self-awareness. She is averse to the Wood because it is teeming with fertility at a fundamental level. It has countless pools ('moisture is the prerequisite of generation' and only from such formlessness 'can Venus arise in her beauty'). Moreover, its earth is a 'rich reddish brown' (39), suggesting the presence of copper ('There is even copper in the soil,' as Ransom says in That Hideous Strength, 317).

With respect to the creation of Narnia, the whole creating process should be seen as a Venereal accomplishment, but it will be useful to focus on specific images which Lewis habitually used in his depictions of Venus. Just as in his 1935 poem he had written of 'grass growing, and grain bursting, / Flower unfolding' so, at the birth of Narnia, all these features receive a mention, directly or indirectly. 'Grain bursting' is alluded to in the hymn which the Cabby sings in the darkness, 'all about crops being "safely gathered in"' (92); the hymn is 'Come, Ye Thankful People, Come' and contains a prayer that worshippers will be 'wholesome grain and pure'. The 'grass growing' is referenced more explicitly than the grain: we are told that 'the valley grew green with grass. It ran

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Cf. letter to his brother about the wood at The Kilns where 'you can almost hear things growing' (20/3/32, CLII 62).
Cf. 'Behind the Scenes', Time and Tide, Vol. XXXVII (1/12/56) 1450-51; reprinted EC 710-713.
SIL 129.

The hymn, written by Henry Alford (1810-71), begins: 'Come, ye thankful people, come, / Raise the song of harvest-home! / All be safely gathered in, / Ere the winter storms begin'. The second stanza runs:

All the world is God's own field,
Fruit unto his praise to yield;
Wheat and tares together sown,
Unto joy or sorrow grown;
First the blade and then the ear,
Then the full corn in shall appear;
Grant, O harvest Lord, that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.

The reference to this hymn works allusively and demonstrates a growth in subtlety over earlier Venereal passages in Lewis. In THS, at the descent of Venus, Lewis had used the image of 'ripe fields in August'; here in MN, the same image is deployed, but through suggestion, rather than statement.
up the sides of the little hills like a wave. In a few minutes it was creeping up the lower slopes of the distant mountains, making that young world every moment softer. The light wind could now be heard ruffling the grass. Soon there were other things besides grass' (97). And as for the ‘flower unfolding’, we see the new grasslands ‘sprinkled with daisies and buttercups’ (99) and Polly notices ‘primroses suddenly appearing in every direction’ (99). In the new-founded Narnia, everything is ‘bursting with life’ (103, 158)\textsuperscript{145}.

And not only does Venus spawn life, she counteracts its opposite: ‘Her union with matter - the fertility of nature - is a continual conquest of death.’\textsuperscript{144} This brings us to the main plot-line of the story: the healing of Digory’s mother, or rather, Digory’s ‘Mother’, for the word, which appears nearly forty times (though she herself appears in only one chapter), is almost invariably capitalized. Early in the first chapter we are told that Digory’s ‘Mother was ill and was going to - going to - die’ (10)\textsuperscript{145}. Her fatal illness is a plot device that allows Lewis doubly to involve Venereal imagery. Not only can a life be saved through Venus (for ‘while we ourselves can do nothing about mortality, Venus can’\textsuperscript{145}), but the life in question is that of a mother, and mothers, as we have already seen, signify in Lewis’s imagination just that combination of femininity and fertility which he associated with Venus.

Her healing comes about indirectly. Digory and Polly, whose names are both carefully chosen\textsuperscript{146}, set out astride Fledge, whose wings are ‘chestnut colour and copper colour’ (134), for the ‘garden’ (133) in ‘the West’ (132) where Digory has to pluck an apple. But who is this apple for? Resting for the night ‘as the bright young stars of that new world came out they talked over everything: how Digory had hoped to get something for his Mother and how, instead of that he had been sent on this message’ (141). The mission on which they have been sent has a different purpose from

\textsuperscript{144} The creation account in MN owes a great deal to Milton’s version of the same thing in Paradise Lost VII, 216-640. In particular compare Lewis’s ‘thousand, thousand points of light’ (MN 93) with Milton’s ‘thousand thousand stars (VII, 383); the dogs ‘struggling’ out of the earth as through a narrow hedge (MN 105f) with the ‘Lion, pawing to get free / His hinder parts’ (VII, 464f); the stag emerging, antlers first (MN 106) with the ‘Stag from under ground / Bore up his branching head’ (VII, 469f).

\textsuperscript{145} SIL 56.

\textsuperscript{146} Lewis’s mother had died before he was ten: ‘With my mother’s death all settled happiness, all that was tranquil and reliable, disappeared from my life. There was to be much fun, many pleasures, many stabs of Joy; but no more of the old security. It was sea and islands now; the great continent had sunk like Atlantis’ (SBJ 23). Intriguingly, the rings that Uncle Andrew uses to send people between the worlds are made from dust found in a secret box left to him by his godmother, Mrs Lefay, and ‘the box was Atlantean; it came from the lost island of Atlantis’ (MN 24). It does not seem fanciful to draw a connection here: Lewis likens the loss of his mother to the disappearance of Atlantis; he has Digory’s mother saved from death by means of dust retrieved from Atlantis.

\textsuperscript{145} SIL 56.

\textsuperscript{146} Digory, a highly unusual name, meaning ‘almost lost’, is taken from the anonymous Middle English poem, Sir Degare. Degaré’s story, like Digory’s, involves restoration of his relationship with his parents. Degaré (unlike many medieval heroes) was born illegitimately and abandoned by his mother: Digory is threatened with the loss of his mother (through death) and is without his father, who is away in India. Both Degaré and Digory reclaim their natal parents before the end of their stories. See Laskaya, Anne & Salisbury, Eve (eds.). The Middle English Breton Lays (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1993) 89-144. Digory’s surname, ‘Kirke’ (he is not named in LWW), which in LB will allow Lewis to suggest something of his old Saturnine tutor, Kirkpatrick, here connotes maternal influence by cross-reference to ‘Mother Kirk’ (PR 100 et seq).

Polly is a form of ‘Molly’ which is a form of ‘Mary’, the archetypal mother, with whom Lewis associated ‘warmth and wetness and fecundity’ (PR 232). Polly’s surname, ‘Plummer’, is perhaps meant to suggest a grower of plums: cf. the description of the Wood between the Worlds as ‘rich as plum-cake’ (MN 32).

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that of healing Mrs Kirke: Digory’s task is to take the apple to Aslan for the healing of Narnia. From its seed will spring a ‘Tree of Protection’ that will guard Narnia against the witch whom Digory had brought there on the day of its birth.

Venus is ‘the Bringer home of all good things’ and Digory, having plucked the apple, completes Aslan’s commission to ‘bring it back to me’ (133). He successfully resists the blandishments of Jadis, helped in part by the bird in the tree, whose slit-eyed watchfulness is surely based on Milton’s dragon with ‘uninchanted eye’ watching ‘the fair Hesperian Tree . . . to save her blossoms, and defend her fruit / From the rash hand of bold incontinence’. Once the apple is planted, the Tree of Protection grows up in an instant. From this tree Digory is quite unexpectedly given a second apple; this one for the healing of his Mother.

As a result of eating the apple, Digory’s Mother is able to enjoy ‘sweet natural sleep’ (150; cf. 167). Sweetness is a key word in Lewis’s Venereal lexicon. ‘The Planets’ speaks of Venus’s ‘breath’s sweetness’; Ransom on Perelandra smells a fragrance ‘warm and sweet, and every moment sweeter and purer’; Orual, as she descends into Westwind’s valley, finds that ‘the air came up to us warmer and sweeter every minute’. Digory and Polly, as they near their destination, find just the same thing: ‘The air came up warmer and sweeter each moment, so sweet that it almost brought tears to your eyes’ (144). In addition, the story tells of ‘sweets’ (9); ‘sweet hope’ (103); sugar ‘sweeter than grass’ (115); Helen arriving as ‘sweetly as a bird flies to its nest’ (127); ‘sweet country’ (131); Jadis speaking ‘more sweetly’ (151) than would seem possible for one with so fierce a face.

Alongside sweetness another key Venereal term is ‘gum’. We recall the ‘gum-sweet wood’ in ‘The Landing’ and Milton’s Paradise which ‘contained ‘all the right things’ - odorous gums, golden fruit, thornless roses’. One of Venus’s properties is to produce ‘night-scented flowers, sticky gums’, according to That Hideous Strength; and on Perelandra ‘much that [Ransom’s] fingers touched was gummy’. In The Magician’s Nephew Digory repeatedly exclaims, ‘By gum!’ (30, 49), and this is no verbal accident. Like Peter’s favourite expostulation, ‘By Jove!’ in the first Chronicle, it has a double meaning. Lewis used the expression himself to suggest divine power: ‘By gum (blessed be he)!’ he exclaims, in a letter to Charles Williams. Swearing by gum is swearing by

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12 CE LTM 91.
13 Per 92.
14 TWHF 109.
15 It is a semantic curiosity that, in modern English, ‘venereal’ automatically connotes ‘venereal disease’ and ‘gum’ is an abbreviation for ‘genito-urinary medicine’. The euphemistic ‘gum clinic’ specialises in the treatment of VD.
16 ‘The Landing’, line 18 (CP 41-42).
17 PPL 51. Cf. the ‘sweet gum’ dropping from the buds on the trees in Spenser’s Paradise, Faerie Queene III, vi, 43; cf. SIL 55.
18 Per 176.
19 Letter to Charles Williams, 22/2/39 (CLII 249).
Venus, and swearing by Venus is swearing by God, for God 'is the reality behind . . . Venus; no woman ever conceived a child, no mare a foal, without Him'.

ii) the Venereal Logos

But why 'blessed be he' and not 'blessed be she'? Since Venus is a goddess, 'the unfathomable feminine principle', the Mother of mothers, why is Lewis not prepared to feminise the depiction of Aslan in *The Magician's Nephew*? He is willing to turn Aslan into an albatross, a lamb, and a cat in certain other Chronicles: what is stopping him from making Aslan a lioness in this book?

The answer is: imagination. Lewis addresses the imaginative difficulties of depicting God in feminine terms in various places. One place is 'Neoplatonism in Spenser's Poetry' where he writes:

> There remains the problem of [Spenser's] Venus . . . [I]s it tolerable that, in defiance of all tradition, Form should be embodied in the feminine image and Matter in the masculine, and even called 'the Father of all forms'?

> It it hardly tolerable, yet I believe we must tolerate it. [I think] that the Sapience of the fourth Hymn must be identified with the Second Person of the Christian Trinity, the Word . . . I do not say that this image, if rightly understood, is theologically shocking; it is imaginatively shocking. The intellect can accept it; but on the level of the imagination the masculinity of the Word is almost impregnable entrenched by the sixfold character of Son, Bridegroom, King, Priest, Judge, and Shepherd. Yet all these, apparently, Spenser was prepared to break through. After that, the transference of the sexes between Form and Matter sinks into insignificance."

Another place is his article 'Priestesses in the Church?' where he imagines common sense asking the question:

> 'Why not? Since God is in fact not a biological being and has no sex, what can it matter whether we say *He* or *She*, *Father* or *Mother*, *Son* or *Daughter*?

> But Christians think that God Himself has taught us how to speak of Him. To say that it does not matter is to say either that all the masculine imagery [in the Bible] is not inspired, is merely human in origin, or else that, though inspired, it is quite arbitrary and unessential. And this is surely . . . based on a shallow view of imagery. Without drawing upon religion, we know from our poetical experience that image and apprehension cleave closer together than common sense is here prepared to admit; that a child who had been taught to pray to a Mother in Heaven would have a religious life radically different from that of a Christian child . . . [I]mage and apprehension are in an organic unity."

We see in these two remarks that Lewis was ready and willing to accept feminine imagery for the divine at the level of the intellect. However, at the level of imagination, his respect for scriptural precedent and his understanding of the relationship between image and apprehension prevent him...
from entertaining such images. The overwhelming majority of images of deity in the Bible are masculine, and for Lewis they were not allegories, but symbols or pupillary metaphors. In his view, we cannot get behind the images to some sort of imageless truth. Although rationally we have good grounds for saying that God is ‘sexless’, it does not follow that this masculine imagery is therefore dispensable and interchangeable with feminine imagery. Sexlessness is a negation which we cannot usefully imagine. Like God’s impassibility, it is, though intellectually acceptable, an all but unimaginable abstraction. The imaginative content behind such intellentions is attenuated and unsupportive: religious life cannot survive on such a diet.

Lewis suggests two rules for exegetics. First, ‘never take the images literally’. Second, ‘when the purport of the images - what they say to our fear and hope and will and affections - seems to conflict with the theological abstractions, trust the purport of the images every time. For our abstract thinking is itself a tissue of analogies: a continual modelling of spiritual reality in legal or chemical or mechanical terms. Are these likely to be more adequate than the sensuous, organic, and personal images of scripture - light and darkness, river and well, seed and harvest, master and servant, hen and chickens, father and child?’

We know, Lewis says, ‘that God forgives much better than we know what ‘impassible’ means”. Likewise, he would argue that we know that God is a Father much better than we know what ‘sexless’ means. To prefer abstractions is not to be more rational; it is simply to be less fully human. De-mythologisers, like Bultmann, are really only re-mythologisers; and the new mythology is poorer than the old one”. A ‘sexless God’ is the theological equivalent of The Romance of the Onion: the rich and redolent image has been unwisely substituted by a less profound and less suggestive one. Of the old image (Father) it may be difficult to say ‘in cold prose exactly what it meant’; and theologians may be able to say about the new image all sorts of things which could not have been said about the old one. Like the new image of Ungit (the barbarian Aphrodite) in Till We Have Faces, a ‘sexless God’ is much cleaner and simpler than the traditional image, but it contains ‘no comfort” because it is a merely rational construction; its relationship with the organ of meaning has grown tenuous. Imagination’s role in theological understanding must not be belittled in this way, for the result is that reason ends up trying to make bricks out of strawy abstractions. Lewis’s dependence here on imagination arises from his belief that ‘it is rational not to reason, or not to limit oneself to reason, in the wrong place.”

All this serves to explain Lewis’s thinking behind his retention of the masculinity of Aslan. However, the chosen donegality requires Lewis to portray Aslan as the incarnation of Venus. How can this be done if Aslan is not to be feminised?

113 LTM 54f.
114 Ibid. 53.
115 See letter to Mary Van Deusen, 16/1/59 (Wade Center).
116 TWHF 283.
117 ‘Priestesses in the Church?’, EC 398.
The answer we suggest is that Aslan is feminised, but not to the complete exclusion of the masculine. And this is a fair representation of Venus, for Venus may be properly understood as containing a masculine element alongside her feminine ones. It is only because there is a permanent masculine element in Venus that her fertility, her motherliness, exists in the first place.

Lewis is following his medieval and renaissance sources. For example, to Spenser ‘Venus is a Hermaphrodite:

she hath both kinds in one,
Both male and female, both under one name:
She syre and mother is her selfe alone,
Begets and eke conceives, ne needeth other none.”

And as well as Spenser, Lewis had authority for this understanding of Venus in Nicolas of Cusa. ‘Venus, says Cusanus, was also a name for God. The universal means of generation is sexual, so that ‘Hermes . . . argued, in consequence, that the Cause of All, God, comprised in Himself the masculine and feminine sexes”.

From this perspective, we can see what Lewis is attempting in The Magician’s Nephew. He is not willing to convert all of Aslan’s masculine characteristics into the feminine gender, because that would effectively be to assume that the divine being is sexless, which is an abstraction, which is imaginatively un-nourishing. Hermaphroditism, however, is different from sexlessness. Venus, though feminine, is hermaphroditic, and we can imagine what androgyne consists in. The very act of coitus itself provides us with something like an image of it, and Lewis’s use of the term ‘Venus’ to denote sexual intercourse suggests this very confusion of sexual identities, the ‘one flesh’ that emerges when a man and a woman make the beast with two backs, that ‘young, double-natured nakedness’ which Perelandra inspires. As Valerius Romanus had sung of a ‘Jupiter who was God the father and God the mother”, so Lewis depicts Aslan as a Venus who is God the mother and God the father.

Thus Aslan embodies and expresses the Venereal spirit which undergirds The Magician’s Nephew even while he retains his lion’s form and masculine pronouns. He is ‘beautiful’ (124) and Digory finds Aslan’s voice ‘beyond comparison, the most beautiful noise he had ever heard. It was so beautiful he could hardly bear it’ (93). In addition, he is the source of sweetness. At the end of the story Digory and Polly look up in Aslan’s face and ‘such a sweetness and power rolled about them and over them and entered into them that they felt they had never really been happy or wise or good, or even alive and awake, before’ (165). He speaks of ‘my sweet country of Narnia’ (131).

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SIL 42; quotation from The Faerie Queene IV, x, 41.
SIL 16; Lewis’s ellipsis. He is quoting De docta ignorantia, i, 24 and 25. Cf. ‘The generation of the Son is conceived [by Spenser] as a kind of hermaphrodite self-fertilisation within the First Fair (the Father)’, letter to Alastair Fowler, 22/11/60 (Bodleian Library).
THS 322.
Ibid.
Aslan brings Narnia to birth like Venus, from whom, according to Spenser, "all the world derives the glorious features of beautie", "all the world by thee at first was made". "With an unspeakable thrill, [Polly] 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" (99).

As well as bringing new life forth in the form of Narnia, he also brings new life to Digory's Mother (163), pairs off male and female characters, and encourages the gift of laughter (110). He is clearly Venus incarnate. The lion form and the male pronouns should not be seen as a diminution of his Venereal character, but as an essential feature of it, the masculine element without which Venus cannot be fully fertile. Although in some respects it would have been more satisfactory to depict Aslan-as-Venus in the form of a lioness with feminine pronouns, that would have been to stretch the imagination further than Lewis considered useful. And that he struggled with how to manage the Venereal theme is indicated by the lengthy composition history of this Chronicle.

It was not only Lewis's beliefs about feminine divine imagery which made composing this story difficult, but also the general complexity of Venus's literary history, for Lewis wanted to depict more than just 'Venus-as-God' in The Magician's Nephew. He also seems to have had in mind Ficino's two Veneres, the Angelic Mind (Venus coelistis) considered in its contemplation of Divine Beauty, and Venus naturalis, the generative power in the Anima Mundi.

Here we return to the point made above about the role apparently accorded to the stars in the creation of Narnia. At the climax of the creation of Narnia there is a to-ing and fro-ing between Aslan and the heavens. Aslan opens his mouth, but it is the firmament that sings; a flash comes from one or the other (it is not specified which); and then a voice issues a fiat, but we are not told definitely that it is Aslan speaking (the 'tingling' in the children's bodies leaves open the possibility that the stars are speaking in their very flesh).

In addition to his medieval and renaissance sources, Lewis is of course drawing on the Book of Job: 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ... when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" But rather than just depicting the stars as onlookers, Lewis gives them a role in the animation of Narnia itself. The creator is shown honouring the creature by allowing it to participate in further acts of creativity. The vivification

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108, 109 The Faerie Queene, III, vi, 12; cf. AOL 342.
110 Ibid. IV, x, 47; cf. SIL 43.
111 Cf. Edmund Spenser, An Hymne in Honour of Beatuie, lines 50-56, quoted in SIL 44:
   For through infusion of celestiall powre,
   The duller earth it quickneth with delight,
   And life-full spirits privily doth powre
   Through all the parts, that to the lookers sight
   They seeme to please. That is thy soveraine might,
   O Cyprian Queene, which flowing from the beame
   Of thy bright starre, thou into them doest streame.
of Narnia comes about not simply and solely because of a single creative act by the Venereal Lion. Rather, Aslan-as-Venus with Venus coelistis and Venus naturalis achieve it between them, together, at once. Again we see Lewis’s interest in portraying ‘creaturely participation in the Divine attributes’134. His cosmogony is more than simply the Genesis account retold: it is a creation narrative deliberately angled to present Venereal qualities.

The very first command given to this newly awakened Venereal country, is ‘Love!’ Given that Venus is ‘the planet of love’135, we should expect the logos of The Magician’s Nephew to be largely concerned with love, and in Digory’s love for his Mother we find just that very thing. The principal theological thrust of the story, akin to that argued in The Four Loves, is that human love is inordinate if entertained without reference to love of the divine. Digory has to learn that his filial affection for his mother, though felt to be of absolute importance, is actually only relative to his love for Aslan.

The very first time we see Digory we are told that he has been in tears because his Mother is dying. We do not see his Mother until the very last chapter, but Digory’s concern for her is repeatedly held up for our attention (e.g. 21, 72, 78, 81f, 104, 111, 125, 131), so that we do not forget that his relationship with her is the mainspring of the story. His painful mixture of love and fearfulness at the prospect of losing that love (which is perhaps drawn from Lewis’s own experience136), provides the unspoken emotional dynamic at the centre of the story.

According to Philip Pullman, who also lost a parent at a young age137, this is an example of Lewis ‘cheating’ as a writer, ‘exploiting’ the sympathy of his readers and failing to justify it as an integral part of the story. Pullman understands The Magician’s Nephew as follows: ‘Digory is told that if his mother were to eat one of the apples she would get better, but he mustn’t steal one, because, if he did, she would get better but she wouldn’t enjoy getting better, she’d be unhappy. So, as a good boy, he doesn’t do this, and as a reward for being a good boy he’s given the magic apple and he comes back to the real world and gives the apple to his mother and she gets better and everything’s happy.’138 Pullman goes on, ‘Think what the passage is saying! It says that, if your mother is dying, it depends on you whether she gets better or not. If you’re a good boy, she’ll get better and if you’re not a good boy, she won’t get better.’ He alleges that this is ‘cruel’, ‘utterly wicked’, ‘so wicked as to be beyond the reach of literary criticism and deserve stern and forthright moral condemnation’.

134 POP 41.
135 Per 30.
136 ‘[When I was] about 9... my Mother died, and there has never really been any sense of security and snugness since. That is, I’ve not quite succeeded in growing up on that point: there is still too much of ‘Mammy’s little lost boy’ about me’, letter to Phyllis Sandeman, 7/12/53 (Wade Center).
137 When Pullman was seven his father died in a plane crash. Pullman later discovered that his parents had been preparing to divorce at the time of his father’s death. For further details see Tucker, Nicholas. Darkness Visible: Inside the World of Philip Pullman (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2003).
But Pullman has misread the story. Digory is not told by Aslan that a stolen apple will lead to his Mother's unhappy recovery; on the contrary, it is the witch who tells him that it will lead to her happy recovery. Only after the event is Digory told by Aslan that an unhappy recovery is 'what would have happened' (163) if he had stolen the fruit rather than keeping it for the purpose he had promised to put it to. What the temptation scene is saying is therefore the reverse of Pullman's reading. If Digory is 'a good boy' (Pullman's sardonic term) and keeps his promise to Aslan, his Mother won't get better, which is what she herself would approve because she believes promises should be kept (151). Digory therefore has to choose between his love for Aslan (as betokened by the promise) and his love for his Mother (his desire that she should not die). This is an excruciating choice, and Lewis does not pretend that it is not painful: 'Digory never spoke on the way back, and the others were shy of speaking to 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' (152). Digory does not know, or even suspect, that keeping his promise will lead to his being given a second apple, from a different tree, which will, after all, bring healing to his Mother. There is therefore no bribery involved in his original decision. It is a morally untainted and deeply moving moment.

Lewis's reflections on the rival claims of natural and supernatural loves appear in much of his work. In addition to The Magician’s Nephew and The Four Loves, this theme is also strongly present in The Great Divorce, Till We Have Faces, A Grief Observed, and 'Five Sonnets' ('Ask for the Morning Star and take (thrown in) / Your earthly love'). The prominence of the theme may be traced to two biographical sources: his loss of his own mother when he was nine, and his long relationship with Janie Moore, who, by all accounts, was never reconciled to the loss of her son in the Great War.

Here in The Magician’s Nephew, the theme of love and loss is treated with sensitivity and blooms out of the Venereal donegality with a perfect naturalness. Digory realises that 'there might be things more terrible even than losing someone you love by death' (163); that is, he acknowledges the possibility of denying his love of Aslan for the sake of clinging on to his Mother. He opts to participate in Aslan’s love, ‘the translunary virtue, fallen direct from the Third Heaven, unmitigated’, instead of preferring a human reflection of it. Perfect love casts out his fear of being orphaned because he knows that he cannot, ultimately, be orphaned in a world that is held in the arms of Venus.

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"Cf. 1 John 4:18. Fearlessness appears frequently in Lewis’s works in connection with Venereal influence, e.g., the ‘bridge of fears’ in ‘The Philosopher’ (CP 186, line 12); also Weston’s attempt to infect the Green Lady with ‘Fear’ (Per 125). In MN consider the following: ‘Who’s talking about being afraid?’ says Polly (44); ‘No fear!’ she says (50); ‘No fear!’ says Digory (50) and again (101); ‘No fear!’ says the Jackdaw (110); Nellie does ‘not appear to be very frightened’ (128); Polly asks Aslan to ‘unfrighten’ Uncle Andrew (158); Aslan’s kiss gives Digory ‘strength and courage’ (132); the children’s memory of Aslan comes back to them whenever they felt ‘sad or afraid or angry’ (165); ‘Laugh and fear not,” says Aslan (110).
CHAPTER ELEVEN

Saturn

The last planet, old and ugly

The last planet gave Lewis the subject for his first published poem, ‘Quam Bene Saturno’. The Saturnine qualities on display in this poem are diametrically opposed to almost everything Lewis wrote about Saturn thereafter. Our first task in this chapter therefore will be to account for this volte face. We will then examine Lewis’s mature presentation of Saturn in scholarship, poetry, and That Hideous Strength, before turning to see how Saturnine imagery provides the donegality of The Last Battle. We will discover that, although Lewis did not believe in a Saturnocentric universe, he was fully prepared to give Saturn his due. Indeed, essential to Lewis’s theodicy is this recognition, that only by acknowledging the true weight of Saturn’s influence could one arrive at the real centre of the spiritual cosmos.

1. Saturn in Lewis’s poetry

‘Quam Bene Saturno’ appeared in Lewis’s school magazine in 1913. He took the title from one of the Elegies of Tibullus, the Roman poet who lived 55?-19 B.C. Tibullus had written, ‘Quam bene Saturno vivebant reges’ (‘How well they lived when Saturn was king’) and Lewis’s poem was probably a school exercise in translation; it renders sixteen lines of Tibullus into twenty-eight lines of his own iambic tetrameter. The poem praises the reign of Saturn and laments the Jovial era which has succeeded it:

Alas! What happy days were those
When Saturn ruled a peaceful race,
Or yet the foolish mortals chose
With roads to track the world’s broad face.

No haughty keel proud ocean spurned,
No breeze filled out no swelling sails,
No daring prow had outward turned
To face old Neptune’s angry gales;

It sought to gain no foreign land,
Took produce from no distant shore.
The horse endured no bit’s command
No yoke the sturdy oxen wore.

No door enclosed the happy home,
No landmark in the meadows fair
Bade whoso there by chance might roam
The boundaries framed by man beware.


Albius Tibullus: Elegies I, iii, 35.
The wholesome nectar of the bees
From oaks poured down its golden wave,
The cattle, eager then to please,
Unasked their milk to mortals gave.

No clashing phalanx battle waged
Nor war the nations rent apart,
No man with man in anger raged
Nor plied the smith his savage art.

But now... With Jove our haughty lord
No peace we know but many a wound:
And famine, slaughter, fire and sword
With grim array our path surround.

The Saturn depicted here is the same planetary god whom we find in Virgil’s Aeneid, Horace’s Jubilee Hymn, and repeatedly throughout Augustan poetry in general, where he stands for the mythical Golden Age which many believed or hoped was about to return. The most famous paean to this glorious Saturnalia occurs in Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue:

Magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo.
Iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna;
Iam nova progenies caelo demittitur alto.

These lines were understood in the Middle Ages as a pagan prophecy of the birth of Christ; Dante viewed them as such in his Purgatorio (Canto XXII: 64-73). The adult Lewis apparently made the Fourth Eclogue a regular part of his Christmas reading even though, by that stage of his life, he had come to favour the medieval, rather than the classical, understanding of the Saturnine spirit.

The young Lewis may not have had a free choice about which lines of Tibullus to translate and so we should not attach much importance to this early appearance of the classical Saturn in his corpus. However, the schoolroom exercise did perhaps establish in his poetic mind a contrast between a pacific, paradisal Saturn and a brutal, domineering Jove. This version of Jove appears again (now under his Norse name) in another of the poems he wrote in his early teens, ‘Loki Bound’ (1914)⁴. It was a piece of juvenilia significant enough for Lewis to recall it when writing Surprised by Joy over forty years later. He explains that ‘Loki Bound’ presented ‘the brutal orthodoxy of Thor... Thor was the real villain, Thor with his hammer and his threats... Thor was, in fact, the symbol

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⁴ Lewis gives his own translation of these lines in ROP 85: ‘The great procession of the ages begins anew. Now the Virgin returns, the reign of Saturn returns, and the new child is sent down from high heaven.’ Lewis explains: ‘The non-classical reader needs to know that to a Roman the ‘age’ or ‘reign’ of Saturn meant the lost age of innocence and peace’, ROP 85. Cf. Isaiah 7:14, 15; 9:7; 11:6-8; 35:1.


of the Bloods". (The Bloods were the aristocracy of athletes whom Lewis so detested at Malvern College.) Reading back from 'Loki Bound' to 'Quam Bene Saturno' we may reasonably wonder whether the Jove of the earlier poem served a function somewhat similar to that of the Thor in the later work; not, of course, that the 1913 Jove could have represented the Bloods (Lewis had not at that stage encountered them), but possibly he stood in the young teenager’s mind as a symbol of the sadistic headmaster, Robert Capron, a ‘haughty lord’ inflicting ‘many a wound’, whose ungentle oversight he had only recently escaped. This is admittedly speculation, but it is worth trying to understand why, in his youth, Lewis found the classical Jove useful for negative depictions, but preferred to deploy the medieval Saturn for such purposes in his adulthood. It would appear that evil was perceived as merciless power in his younger days; as weakness, sorrow and death in his later years.

The change takes place gradually, and the 1926 poem, Dymer, is an interesting milestone in the process. Dymer ends with the following stanza:

And from the distant corner of day’s birth
He [Dymer] heard clear trumpets blowing and bells ring,
A noise of great good coming into earth
And such a music as the dumb would sing
If Balder had led back the blameless spring
With victory, with the voice of charging spears,
And in white lands long-lost Saturnian years.

It is difficult to know how to take these lines. Is the reference to ‘Saturnian years’ classical or medieval? At first sight one would say ‘classical’, since the classical Saturn presided over the long-lost Golden Age which the resurrected Dymer, Balder-like, is now bringing back in triumph. On closer inspection, the matter is more complicated. Line 2 (‘He heard clear trumpets blowing and bells ring’) could well be intended as a reference to the medieval Jove. As Lewis would later write in That Hideous Strength: ‘The pealing of bells, the blowing of trumpets ... are means used on earth to make a faint symbol of [Jupiter’s] quality.’ And in a poem pre-dating Dymer, Lewis had written: ‘scarcely can he dream of laughter and love, / They lie so many leaden years behind’ which (because of its metal) could well be a reference to the medieval Saturn and, thus taken, an indicator that the Saturn in Dymer should be understood in the same way. If the imagery in this final stanza is meant medievally, the ‘years’ mentioned in the concluding phrase would be the years

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7 SBJ 94. Thor as representative of the Bloods may be Lewis’s own later reinterpretation of ‘Loki Bound’; he admits that this reading would not necessarily have occurred to him ‘at the time’ (SBJ 94). An alternative reading might take Thor as a symbol for God; Lewis was keen to disparage theistic images at this period. See letter to Greeves, 4/7/16 where he talks about ‘the primitive savage idea that everything has a spirit (just as your precious Jehovah is an old Hebrew thunder spirit)’ (CLI 206). Cf. SBJ 95.

8 SBJ, Chapter VI, ‘Bloodyery’, 70-83.

9 Dymer, Canto IX, stanza 35 (NP 90).

10 Cf. the reference to ‘the great age and the golden age when still the cycle ran / On upward curve and easily, for then both maid and man / And beast and tree and spirit in the green earth could thrive’: ‘Ode for New Year’s Day’, SIB, poem viii, lines 15-17; reprinted CP 174-5.

lost to the grim and sour medieval Saturn, years which have now been retrieved from his numbing influence by jocund Jove.

One thing can be stated with certainty: if Saturn in Dymer was intended classically it was positively the last time it appears so in Lewis's imaginative writings\(^\text{11}\). Thereafter he only ever uses the imagery of the last planet in a neutral or in a medieval sense. There are four such appearances in his poetry. One is in the negligible ‘Lines to Mr. Compton Mackenzie’\(^\text{14}\). Another is in ‘The Turn of the Tide’ (‘Saturn laughed and lost his latter age’s frost, / His beard, Niagara-like, unfroze’)\(^\text{13}\). The third is in ‘On W.T. Kirkpatrick’, which we shall examine in section 3 below. The fourth is in ‘The Planets’:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Up far beyond [Jupiter]} \\
\text{Goes SATURN silent in the seventh region,} \\
The skirts of the sky. Scant grows the light, \\
Sickly, uncertain (the Sun’s finger} \\
Daunted with darkness). Distance hurts us, \\
And the vault severe of vast silence; \\
Where fancy fails us, and fair language, \\
And love leaves us, and light fails us \\
And Mars fails us, and the mirth of Jove \\
Is as tin tinkling. In tattered garment, \\
Weak with winters, he walks forever \\
A weary way, wide round the heaven, \\
Stoop’d and stumbling, with staff groping, \\
The lord of lead. He is the last planet \\
Old and ugly. His eye fathers \\
Pale pestilence, pain of envy, \\
Remorse and murder. Melancholy drink \\
(For bane or blessing) of bitter wisdom \\
He pours for his people, a perilous draught \\
That the lip loves not. We leave all things \\
To reach the rim of the round welkin, \\
Heaven’s hermitage, high and lonely. \\
\end{align*}
\]

It is worth noting the recapitulation of the previous six spheres in lines 7-10 of this excerpt: ‘fancy’, ‘fair language’, ‘love’ and ‘light’ are, respectively, summary descriptions of Lunar, Mercurial, Venereal and Solar influence; Mars and Jupiter are then named directly. Also noteworthy is the image of Saturn’s ‘perilous draught’ which may be drunk either ‘for bane or blessing’. In other words, his influence is bad, not \textit{per se}, but only (and then only potentially) in relation to its recipients in the sublunary realm. The translunary realm (as discussed above, Chapter Six, section

\(^\text{11}\) Although not in his apologetic works: there we find the ROP reference to Virgil, mentioned above; also, in POP 131, the following: ‘To have lions and lambs that so consorted (except on some rare celestial Saturnalia of topsy-turvydom) would be the same as having neither lambs nor lions.’ Cf. letter to Edward Allen, 10/12/62 (Wade Center).

\(^\text{12}\) ‘Good heavens, Sir, will you condemn us / To talk of Romulus and Remus / And Venus - or perhaps Wenoos? / Each language has its native use, / And words like Saturn are abom- / inable here, if not at Rome’, MS. Eng. lett. c. 861, fol. 69, Bodleian Library, lines 1-6. See also King, C.S. Lewis, Poet 178-80. This is a ‘neutral’ example; so brief a reference is this that it can be firmly identified as neither classical nor medieval.


2) was considered to be unfallen and therefore unable to contain anything that was essentially malefical. But beneath the circle of the moon a patient could make the astrological agent bad in effect by turning its influence the wrong way. 'Born under Saturn, you are qualified to become either a mope and a malcontent or a great contemplative.' With this remark we have emerged from Lewis's poetry into his literary scholarship.

2. Saturn in Lewis's scholarship

*The Discarded Image* contains the following summary of Saturnine qualities:

In the earth his influence produces lead; in men, the melancholy complexion; in history, disastrous events. In Dante his sphere is the Heaven of contemplatives. He is connected with sickness and old age. Our traditional picture of Father Time with the scythe is derived from earlier pictures of Saturn. A good account of his activities in promoting fatal accidents, pestilence, treacheries, and ill luck in general, occurs in *The Knight's Tale* [...]. He is the most terrible of the seven and is sometimes called The Greater Infortune, *Infortuna Major*.

In Lewis's literary criticism we find him advertent frequently to this Saturnine category. In a paper read to the British Academy he declared: 'If we feel young while we read the first two sestiads [of *Hero and Leander*] and feel in the remaining four that youth has died away, our experience is very like Hero's. If Venus dominates Marlowe's narrative and Saturn that of Chapman, the same may be said of the events which each narrates.' He later mentions the 'passages of saturnine realism' in Chapman which strengthen and thicken the poem, including the sketch of Adolesche and the description of the women talking at a funeral in the tale of Teras.

Marlowe's and Chapman's overt deployment of the planetary gods meant that it was natural for Lewis to comment on their work by extrapolating from its planetary characters to the Venereal and Saturnine qualities of the poem's events. But sometimes Lewis brings planetary influences into his literary criticism even when there is no immediate textual reason for him to do so. For instance, in his essay, 'Variation in Shakespeare and Others', he imagines how an Elizabethan poet would have rendered Wordsworth's couplet about 'blind Authority beating with his staff / The child that might have led him'. Lewis suggests the Elizabethan would have begun with a flourish about authority in

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17 DI 117. 'Mope' is an instructive word. Cf. 'far from moping I am spoiling for a fight [after the death of Charles Williams]', letter to Barfield, 18/5/45 (CLII 651); and 'One meets young people who make the threat of [the H-bomb] a reason for poisoning every pleasure and evading every duty in the present. Didn't they know that, Bomb or no Bomb, all men die (many in horrible ways)? There is no good moping or sulking about it': 'Willing Slaves of the Welfare State', *The Observer*, 20/7/58, reprinted EC 746-751: 746f.
18 See Lewis's copy of Henryson's 'The Testament of Cresseid' (149), now in the Wade Center: 'his lyce was lyke the leid', i.e., 'his flesh was like the lead' (Lewis's underlining).
19 DI 105.
21 Ibid. SLE 58f.
22 Ibid. SLE 70.
23 'Variation in Shakespeare and Others', R 159-180; reprinted SLE 74-87.
the abstract, ‘old and sour as Saturn’14. And in his essay on Donne15 he suggests that Donne gives us a ‘saturnocentric universe’, even though none of Donne’s poems under discussion mentions Saturn or, indeed, any of the seven medieval planets by name. By ‘saturnocentric’ Lewis means astringent, stern, tough, unmerry, uncomfortable, unconciliatory, and serious (though not necessarily profound or virtuous). Elsewhere he describes Donne’s love songs as ‘saturnine’16, again without any proximate cause.

Lewis had been ‘intoxicated’ by Donne as an undergraduate17, and the residue of that intoxication lingers in his mature work, for instance when he recalls Donne’s observation that Christ never laughed18 and his hangman’s question, ‘What if this present were the world’s last night?’19 Not that the Saturnine facets of Donne’s corpus were sufficient for the young Lewis; he had a taste for even bleaker poetry. He sympathised with what he called the ‘Heroic Pessimism’20 of Hardy, Swinburne, and Shelley’s Prometheus Unbound; and Housman’s line ‘Whatever brute and blackguard made the world’21 found an echo in his bosom22. The tone of many of the poems of Spirits in Bondage23 shows that the young Lewis had a pessimistic daemon which was able to ferret in dark corners. But in his early to mid thirties, he turned his back on such writers and such a disposition: Saturn’s charms were overthrown.

3. Saturn in That Hideous Strength

Lewis once wrote: ‘The key to my books is Donne’s maxim, “The heresies that men leave are hated most.” The things I assert most vigorously are those that I resisted long and accepted late.’24 The maxim is actually Shakespeare’s25, not Donne’s, but the misattribution is significant. Donne seems to have become for Lewis an emblem - at the literary level - of that which, theologically and psychologically, he had once entertained but had now rejected. And as he had turned away from the Saturnine spirit of Donne, so, in That Hideous Strength, he has Jane Studdock do something similar. Her projected doctoral thesis on Donne is abandoned as her true vocation becomes clear.26

14 Ibid. SLE 80.
16 ‘Dante’s Similes’, paper read to the Oxford Dante Society, 13/2/40; reprinted SMRL 64-77: 73.
21 A. E. Housman, Last Poems (1922), ‘The Chestnut Casts His Flambeaux’: ‘We for certainty are not the first / Have sat in taverns while the tempests hurled / Their hopcfid plans to emptiness, and cursed / Whatever brute and blackguard made the world.’
22 ‘De Futilitate’, EC 677. He claims not to lack sympathy with such poetry, even though he regards it as logically incoherent. Cf. EIC 126.
23 See King, C.S. Lewis, Poet, 70-78 for a useful summary of these ‘Morose Poems’.
24 SBJ 170.
25 William Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night’s Dream (II, ii, 138-139): ‘The heresies that men do leave / Are hated most of those they did deceive.’
26 See above, Chapter Five, section 3 iii) b).
However, Saturn's influence need not necessarily be fled for it is not always and only evil in its sublunary effects. There is also a good use to be made of his spirit and this helps to explain why Saturn is one among the five gods who descend upon St Anne's". Saturn is not just a tool by means of which Maleldil punishes sinners; he is also a servant who comes to provoke needful qualities in the saints: in Denniston, belief; in MacPhee, potential belief; and in Ransom and Merlin, godly sorrow:

"Stir the fire, Denniston, for any sake. That's a cold night," said MacPhee. "It must be cold outside," said Dimble. All thought of that: of stiff grass, hen-roosts, dark places in the middle of woods, graves. Then of the sun's dying, the Earth gripped, suffocated, in airless cold, the black sky lit only with stars. And then, not even stars: the heat-death of the universe, utter and final blackness of nonentity from which Nature knows no return. Another life? 'Possibly,' thought MacPhee. 'I believe,' thought Denniston. But the old life gone, all its times, all its hours and days, gone. Can even Omnipotence bring back? Where do years go, and why? Man never would understand it. The misgiving deepened. Perhaps there was nothing to be understood.

Saturn, whose name in the heavens is Lurga, stood in the Blue Room. His spirit lay upon the house, or even on the whole Earth, with a cold pressure such as might flatten the very orb of Tellus to a wafer. Matched against the lead-like burden of his antiquity the other gods themselves perhaps felt young and ephemeral. It was a mountain of centuries sloping up from the highest antiquity we can conceive, up and up like a mountain whose summit never comes into sight, not to eternity where the thought can rest, but into more and still more time, into freezing wastes and silence of unnameable numbers. It was also strong like a mountain; its age was no mere morass of time where imagination can sink in reverie, but a living, self-remembering duration which repelled lighter intelligences from its structure as granite flings back waves, itself unwithered and undecayed but able to wither any who approach it unadvised. Ransom and Merlin suffered a sensation of unendurable cold; and all that was strength in Lurga became sorrow as it entered them."

This sorrow deserves to be called 'godly' in the Pauline sense (2 Cor. 7:8-11) because of what it leads to. It leads to joy, as symbolised by the advent of Jupiter. He is the final god to descend, even though he comes from the sixth sphere and Saturn from the seventh. "Lurga in that room was overmatched. Suddenly a greater spirit came - one whose influence tempered and almost transformed to his own quality . . . even the numbing weight of Saturn."" Saturnine sorrow is not central in Lewis's myth of the heavens, but it is necessary to produce the conditions under which that centre can be arrived at. We see the same process at work in the conversion of Jane Studdock:

For one moment she had a ridiculous and scorching vision of a world in which God Himself would never understand, never take her with full seriousness. Then, at one particular corner of the gooseberry patch, the change came.

What awaited her there was serious to the degree of sorrow and beyond. There was no form nor sound. The mould under the bushes, the moss on the path, and

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" It is not clear why the descent of Saturn should be singled out for special mention in the proleptic dialogue between Ransom and Merlin (THS 274). A possible explanation which presents itself is that, being the Intelligence of the furthest planetary sphere, Saturn might be taken to include the lower planets and thus imply the descent of all the gods.

" THS 325-326.

" Ibid. 326.
the little brick border, were not visibly changed. But they were changed. 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."

Jane realises that Maleldil will not treat her with 'full seriousness'; nevertheless, her encounter with Him is 'serious to the degree of sorrow and beyond'. Very subtly Lewis has presented here the same experience at the personal level as is manifest at the astrological level. Sorrow comes, but it is not total, not 'full', there is something 'beyond'; Saturn does not have the last word. Jane and the residents of St Anne's, as true contemplatives, pass into an experience on the other side of Saturn, so to speak. In this they are unlike the members of the N.I.C.E. who fall under the influence of Saturn's 'ungodly sorrow', the malcontentment that leads to death. Fairy Hardcastle shoots Jules, then herself; Steele is trampled, Filostrato beheaded, Straik stabbed, Wither mauled, Frost burnt, Feverstone buried alive. Where Ransom's household have a life to look forward to beyond the grave - in their own resurrection as well as in the life of the heir of Jove who is about to be conceived, - the villains (with the comic exception of Curry) are brought to nothing.

There are two other aspects of the passage describing Saturn's descent which are especially deserving of comment. The first is the emphasis on 'the heat-death of the universe'. This is a very common theme in Lewis's non-fictional writings. Time and again, whether it be in his literary criticism4, his apologetics4 or his journalism4, he emphasises the brute fact of the mortality of the universe. Sometimes he does this to contextualise political idealism, sometimes to relativise temporal theological concerns, sometimes to undercut certain scientific assumptions. This continual recurrence to the transitoriness not just of human life, but of cosmic life as a whole, may rightly be taken as evidence of Lewis's own very serious reckoning with Saturn. Although he prefers to focus on the Jovial side of life, because Jove's wisdom dominates the stars, he cannot be accused of ignoring less pleasant realities. Indeed, in one place he even out-Donnes Donne, stating, with poignant double meaning, 'Death does not die'44.

4 "Ibid. 318.
4 E.g., the political idealist must reckon with the fact that after all has been done to improve the lot of mankind, 'the race and the planet themselves must one day follow the individual into a state of being which has no significance - a universe of inorganic homogeneous matter moving at uniform speed in a low temperature', 'William Morris' R 35-55; reprinted SLE 219-231: 230.
4 E.g., no 'social or biological development on this planet will delay the senility of the sun': 'The Weight of Glory', sermon preached at the University Church, St Mary the Virgin, Oxford, and first published in Theology, XLIII (November 1941) 263-274, reprinted EC 96-105: 99; 'entropy is the real cosmic wave, and evolution only a momentary tellurian ripple within it': 'Dogma and the Universe', The Guardian (19/26/3/43), reprinted EC 118-126: 123; 'organic life is only a lightning flash in cosmic history': 'De Futilitate', address to Magdalen College, Oxford, reprinted EC 669-681: 670; 'It is sobering and cathartic to remember ... the ... astronomical processes which may, in the long run, makes many of our hopes ... ridiculous': 'On Science Fiction', address to the Cambridge University English Club, 24/11/55, reprinted EC 450-460: 455; cf. 'Is Theology Poetry?', The Socratic Digest, No. 3 (1945) 25-35, reprinted EC 10-21: 14.
4 E.g., 'the planet will one day be uninhabitable': 'Notes on the Way', Time and Tide, Vol. XXIV, 4/9/43, reprinted as 'My First School', EC 594-596: 596; 'The astronomers hold out no hope that this planet is going to be permanently inhabitable. The physicists hold out no hope that organic life is going to be a permanent possibility in any part of the material universe. Not only this earth, but the whole show, all the suns of space, are to run down': 'On Living in an Atomic Age', Informed Reading, Vol. VI, 1948, reprinted EC 361-366: 362.
4 SIW 304. The comment contradicts Donne's sonnet 'Death, be not proud' with its concluding assertion: 'Death, thou shalt die'. SIW appeared in September 1960, a few months after the death of Lewis's wife. Cf. his ruminations on the lack of true tragic dignity in human sufferings (e.g., 'The Funeral of a Great Myth', EC 32; also EIC 78).
The other aspect of Saturn’s descent in *That Hideous Strength* which we must examine is its effect on Mr Andrew MacPhee, a character whose depiction Rowan Williams considers ‘superbly done’, adding, ‘but that is because he is drawn from life’⁴⁴. MacPhee is a portrait of Lewis’s old tutor, William Kirkpatrick, with whom he lived and studied from September 1914 to March 1917. In an autobiographical poetic fragment, ‘On W.T. Kirkpatrick’⁴⁴, written by Lewis in the early 1920s, he likens Kirkpatrick to ‘Father Time himself’, the first indication that Kirkpatrick was to take the role of Saturn in Lewis’s mythology of his own life. However, the imagery is a little inconsistent: Kirkpatrick’s mind is likened to an ‘iron coast’, when of course the metal ought to be lead for a thorough-going Saturnine character. But it is interesting to note how it was against this ‘iron coast’ that the young Lewis, ‘with noise of yeasty waves’ flung ‘the young / Spring-swellings of my uncorrected mind’. That image is reworked in the later description of Saturn as one who ‘repelled lighter intelligences from its structure as granite flings back waves’ (THS 326).

By the time Lewis came to publish *Surprised by Joy* (1955) he had firmly settled on Saturn as Kirkpatrick’s presiding genius, with no admixture from Mars:

[His] was a saturnine humour. Indeed he was very like Saturn - not the dispossessed King of Italian legend⁴⁴, but grim old Cronos⁴⁴, Father Time himself with scythe and hour-glass. The bitterest, and also funniest⁴⁴, things came out when he had risen abruptly from table (always before the rest of us) and stood ferreting in a villainous old tobacco jar on the mantelpiece for the dottles of former pipes which it was his fiugal habit to use again. My debt to him is very great, my reverence to this day undiminished.⁴⁴

Standing between ‘On W.T. Kirkpatrick’ and *Surprised by Joy* is *That Hideous Strength*, where MacPhee appears to be the one naturally Saturnine character in Ransom’s household. After the descent of Lurga he is dressed in an ‘ash-coloured and slightly monastic-looking robe’ (378). The last we see of him he is studiously ignoring the carnal foreplay going on all round him, preparing instead to cast some accounts and reminiscing about his uncle who was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. It is an affectionately mocking portrait, at one with Lewis’s opinion that ‘full seriousness’ is more than Saturn deserves.

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⁴⁴ For more on the ‘Italian Saturn’, see THS 316.
⁴⁴ In the *Theogony* of Hesiod (495-497), Cronos swallows his children, only to disgorge them later, a practice that mythologises the astronomically discernible phenomenon of Saturn periodically appearing with a pair of round projections, one on each side, which then proceed to disappear. That these projections were part of a ring surrounding the planet was not discovered until 1655, by the Dutch astronomer Christiaan Huygens.
⁴⁴ SBJ 120.
4. Saturn in *The Last Battle*

1) the Saturnine Poeima

Although Saturn may not deserve full and final seriousness, his spirit is nonetheless to be deeply respected as far as it goes. And in Lewis's view, it goes a long way: indeed, to the uttermost degree of sorrow. Lewis was impatient with bromides about death being a small thing\(^6\) and in *The Last Battle* he takes his readers down to the very bottom rung of the ladder of sadness as he orchestrates a story of apocalyptic terror\(^7\). He dares to do something hardly associated with so-called 'children's literature': he kills off every single character with whom the story opens.

Rossi comments that 'the striking thing about this particular volume in the series is its bleakness of tone"', perceptively noting that one technical device which helps brings about this tone is the delayed appearance of the narrator\(^4\). Another device which helps subtly to subvert the reader's expectations of a reassuring atmosphere lies in making the main character an adult. Admittedly, Tirian is far from the seventh age of man: we are told that he is younger than twenty-five (17). Nevertheless, he is clearly not a child - 'his shoulders were already broad and strong and his limbs were full of hard muscle, but his beard was still scanty' - and in this respect he plays a unique role in the septet, requiring the reader to identify with a significantly older protagonist than usual. The young children from England (Jill and Eustace) help him: he is not there (as Puddleglum is in *The Silver Chair*) to help them. Thus the reader is put into a maturer, less protected, frame of reference than is the case in the previous six books.

And this contributes to what Myers has called 'the emotional tone of old age"" in the book. Saturn, so 'The Planets' relates, is 'the last planet / Old and ugly', and accordingly Lewis ploughs a semantic field which will help establish a feeling of senectitude. Each of the three adjectives which appear in that phrase from 'The Planets' occurs repeatedly in the seventh Chronicle.

\(^{6}\) When Stuart Barton Babbage, an RAF chaplain, expatiated on the Christian's inner peace in relation to the fact of death, Lewis disagreed: 'No, he said, death is dreadful and we are right to fear it . . . [It] is not a very little thing and it is horrible.' Babbage recalls that Lewis distrusted his 'easy assurance in the presence of death. My attitude, he implied, was sentimental rather than serious.' See Keefe, Carolyn (ed.), *C. S. Lewis: Speaker and Teacher* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1971) 92-93. Cf. letter to Edward Dell, 5/3/61 (private collection).

\(^{7}\) Holst's literal orchestration of the same subject was one of Lewis's favourites. When he heard the Planets Suite in 1935 he thought Saturn 'the best', along with Mars (see Lewis, W.H. *Brothers and Friends: The Diaries of Major Warren Hamilton Lewis*, ed. Clyde S. Kilby and Marjorie Lamp Mead (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982) 169). Apparently the complete work was not performed on this occasion (cf. letter to Sister Penelope, 31/1/46, CLII 701f). He only heard the full piece ten years later when he still thought Saturn 'the best', but this time included Uranus and Neptune alongside it (letter to Arthur Greeves, 26/12/45, CLII 693).


\(^{9}\) 'He is almost totally absent, especially at the beginning' (Rossi, op. cit. 76). Determining exactly when the narrator is present is a nice question. Three are three obvious methods by which the author can make his presence felt: i) the authorial 'I'; ii) conversely, the address to 'you', the reader; iii) reference to 'this', the story itself. Lewis uses all three methods, but relies on i) and ii) as introductory options. The narrator thus appears in each of the other six books on the very first page: LWW 9 (using technique iii); PC 11 (a variant of iii); VDT 7 (i); SC 11 (iii); HHB 11 (iii); MN 9 (iii). In LB he delays appearing till the end of the fourth chapter, page 47 (i).

\(^{10}\) Myers, Doris. *C. S. Lewis in Context* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994) 178.
The book’s title itself alerts us to the theme of finality, as does its very first sentence which starts: ‘In the last days of Narnia . . .’ The second chapter opens with the words, ‘About three weeks later the last of the Kings of Narnia . . .’ Tirian is described again as ‘the last King’ in chapters 4 and 13. In chapter 12 we hear of his ‘last friends’ shortly after the keynote sentence of the whole story: ‘And then the last battle of the last King of Narnia began’ (123).

As for ‘old’ and ‘ugly’, Shift the Ape is both\(^4\): ‘He was so old that no one could remember when he had first come to live in these parts, and he was the cleverest, ugliest, most wrinkled Ape you can imagine’ (7). When Shift reappears in Chapter 3 he is ‘ten times uglier’ than before. He tells the bewildered Namians: ‘I’m so very old: hundreds and hundreds of years old. And it’s because I’m so old that I’m so wise’ (33).

Shift’s great age (whether he is lying or not is irrelevant) reflects the imprint of Saturn whose home is that ‘mountain of centuries’ presented in That Hideous Strength: ‘more and still more time’. This aspect of the planetary influence allows Lewis to usher on stage that one character who is ‘common to Spenser’s age and ours’\(^5\), Father Time: ‘his name was once Saturn’\(^6\). That great giant who had been glimpsed dormant in the underworld of The Silver Chair\(^7\) is roused towards the close of this final book: ‘Jill and Eustace remembered . . . that his name was Father Time, and that he would wake on the day the world ended’ (142). He squeezes the sun dry as if it is an orange (‘the sun’s finger / Daunted with darkness’). For this is that Time whom Lewis had read of in Hawes, who comes to ‘dystroye bothe se and lande, / The sonne and mone and the sterres alle’\(^8\).

According to The Discarded Image, Saturn produces ‘disastrous events’, and in The Last Battle Lewis - who knew his etymologies, - makes this come literally true: the destruction of the stars by Father Time shows that this is in very truth a dis-aster story. Time’s depredations give rise to a ‘dreary and disastrous dawn’ (148). And this study is not the first to have noticed a connection here to Saturn. Patterson has observed that Father Time brings about ‘that “utter and final blackness of nonentity” which Lewis first evoked [at Lurga’s descent] in That Hideous Strength’\(^9\). There we were shown a ‘black sky lit only with stars. And then, not even stars: the heat-death of the universe, utter and final blackness’\(^10\). In the final Chronicle we are shown another dark shape against the sky as well as the giant’s. It was in a different place, right overhead, up in the very roof of the sky as you might call it. ‘Perhaps it is a cloud,’ thought Edmund. At any rate, there were no stars there: just blackness. But all around, the downpour of stars went on. And then the starless patch began to grow, spreading further and further out from the centre of

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\(^4\) Lewis is here drawing on Tertullian’s *Diabolus simius Dei* (‘The devil is the ape of God’) in *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, 928c; see letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 17/1/40 (CLIT 327). Cf. ROP 89.

\(^5\) EL 356.

\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) He is there described as having a ‘snowy beard’ (SC 128). Cf. note 15 above.

\(^8\) AOL 285.


\(^10\) THS 325.
the sky. And presently a quarter of the whole sky was black, and then a half, and at last the rain of shooting stars was going on only low down near the horizon.

With a thrill of wonder (and there was some terror in it too) they all suddenly realized what was happening. The spreading blackness was not a cloud at all: it was simply emptiness. The black part of the sky was the part in which there were no stars left. All the stars were falling: Aslan had called them home.49

The elision of Father Time into Aslan is clear evidence that Aslan is taking on the role of Saturn; waves splash about his forefeet (148) just as they had splashed against Kirkpatrick's hard mind. We shall explore his full role in the story further below. Our task at present is to note that it is not just in the heavens that disaster strikes: the world of Narnia and all the characters in it are beset by disastrous events from the very beginning of the story - indeed, from before its beginning, for we are told that Shift's discovery of the lionskin merely set in train a plan which had been laid deeper and longer ago than anyone had suspected (89). Lewis conveys the atmosphere of gathering misfortune in a variety of ways. He has one disaster tread hard on the heels of another (the centaur has hardly finished telling of the ill omens before the dryad is seen dying). He suggests that events might have gone differently if only certain small things had not happened (if Tirian had been allowed to speak all might have been well (37), but he is struck in the mouth just too soon). He allows moments of respite and relief, after which he piles on new and unrelated agony (Poggin's defection from the group of treacherous dwarfs heartens the heroes but almost instantly they receive the new shock of Tash's arrival; they refresh themselves with happy memories of Narnia just before Farsight tells them terrible news). The author repeatedly frustrates the plans of his heroes (Roonwit is sent to warn Cair Paravel, but never makes it; the heroes think the tide has turned (67) but then discover that the dwarfs have been soured; their decision to parade Puzzle is undone by the cleverness of the enemy (99); animals rally to Tirian (111) and the first clash goes their way, but then the Calormene drum begins calling for reinforcements so that, even though the next Narnian attack is also successful (119), the enemy never grows less). He complicates already difficult and dangerous situations (Jill goes missing just as drum-beats are heard in the distance, meaning that there are now 'so many different things to be worry about that they didn't know what to do' (64); the dwarfs become actively hostile (116), so that the heroes suddenly have both more enemies and fewer allies). He introduces plain perplexity and ignorance (for example, about the fate of the Lamb (82); and about who the enemy's leader is, the Ape, the Cat, the Captain, or Tash?). Perhaps worst of all, he portrays the fulfilment of dire prophecy when Ginger reverts to dumbness (105). As 'The Planets' puts it: 'fair language . . . leaves us'.

Lewis sometimes remarked that the worst has not come while we can still say, 'This is the worst' and Ginger's loss of speech shows that that moment has indeed arrived: doom is fulfilled as death descends in actual fact. Under that planet who is responsible for 'fatal accidents', everyone who is alive at the beginning of this story is dead by the end of it. Lewis, having admitted less than a dozen

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49 LB 142-143.
deaths in all the preceding tales”, here deals out death in abundance. The Stoics’ allegorisation of Saturn as Time ‘bearing all his sons away’ is here, as it were, literalised. The note is struck proleptically in the first chapter when Shift cunningly predicts he ‘shall probably die’ (10) if he tries to retrieve the lionskin from Cauldron Pool; Puzzle retrieves it instead and is ‘almost tired to death’ (11) by the time he gets it out. In the second chapter the first actual death occurs when the dryad is cut down; then Tirian and Jewel in their wrath kill two Calormenes. But to enumerate all the instances of death and deathly imagery would be almost to retell the whole tale, for the subject is pervasive. Tirian remarks, ‘If we had died before today we should have been happy’ (25); he asks, ‘Would it not be better to be dead than to have this horrible fear?’ (29); the Mice say, ‘It would have been better if we’d died before all this began’ (41); dwarfs are taken ‘to die in the salt-pits of Pugrahan’ (68); Cair Paravel is ‘filled with dead Narnians’ (88). The verbs to die, to kill and to murder (and associated nouns and adjectives) are numerous: the toll is over 60 in fewer than 160 pages of text.

Coldness is another image by means of which Lewis communicates a deadly atmosphere. It is a feature of Saturn that Lewis particularly emphasises during Lurga’s descent in That Hideous Strength (‘cold night . . . airless cold . . . unendurable cold’) and it is found frequently throughout The Last Battle. Puzzle becomes ‘numb with cold’ (11) while fetching the lionskin from the Pool. Tirian and Jewel ford a river but are so angry ‘they hardly noticed the cold of the water’ (23). Tirian becomes ‘cold’ (39), then ‘colder’ (47), when tied to the tree. The rescue of Jewel takes place on a ‘cold night’ (60), an occasion when Tirian holds a ‘cold’ blade against the sentry’s neck (62). Poggin the Dwarf joins the Narnian side during ‘the coldest hour of the night’ (74). At the appearance of Tash, Puzzle complains, ‘It’s so cold’ (78). The next night ‘grew cold’ (94) and Jill suffers a ‘cold shock’ (119) when she realises that the Calormene army is being reinforced. ‘Shivering’ appears repeatedly (11, 18, 57, 78, 81, 89, 94). And of course it is not just the characters who turn cold as any stone in The Last Battle, it is the whole world of Narnia. ‘Ice-cold air’ (149) blows through the Doorway when the sun is put out and Narnian history comes to an end (‘all her glories and joys were over’), as the heavens had predicted.

It is appropriate that there should be more explicit talk of astronomy in this tale than in any of the others, for Dante associates star-lore with Saturn in the Convivio*. Roonwit declares: ‘Never in all

That is, deaths among the ‘good’ characters. As befits romance, enemies are despatched with ease and there are very few fatalities among the heroes of the earlier stories. In LWW, apart from Aslan himself, none of the good characters dies, although after the final battle ‘Edmund is covered in blood . . . his face a nasty green colour’ (162); those who are petrified or wounded are depetrified or healed very quickly. In PC Caspian’s army has ‘the worst’ of the early fighting (83), ‘the best of the Bears had been hurt, a Centaur terribly wounded, and there were few in Caspian’s party who had not lost blood’ (84); Caspian’s father is murdered off-stage before the story begins, but no one else among the Old Narnian forces dies except Nikabrik, who is a traitor. In VDT a man is lost overboard during the storm (57) and Reepicheep is translated (which may be counted as a death). In SC Rilian’s mother is killed by the serpent, a Talking Stag is killed by the Harfang giants and Caspian dies as an old man. In HHB a Narnian giant is downed at the Battle of Anvard, ‘shot through the eye’ (160), but we are not told if it is a mortal wound; a knight starves himself to death in order to save Cor (174). In MN a couple of policemen are felled by Jadis (88-89), but it is not clear whether these are fatalities or not; ‘old Great-Uncle Kirke’ dies (169). In sum there are nine clear deaths amongst the ‘good’ characters in these six books; three of them (Aslan, Reepicheep and Caspian) are major characters, two of whom depart without violence and all three of whom enjoy a resurrection.

* AOL 62.
** DI 186.

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my days have I seen such terrible things written in the skies as there have been nightly since this year began... I know by my art that there have not been such disastrous conjunctions of the planets for five hundred years... If Aslan were really coming to Narnia the sky would have foretold it' (20). Later, when we hear of this same 'Roonwit the Centaur lying dead with a Calormene arrow in his side' we know that the doom he voiced has struck and 'Narnia is no more' (88). The horn which Father Time raises to his mouth (142), with its 'high and terrible' note, is reminiscent of the goat's horn which is the sign of Capricorn, the zodiacal house over which Saturn presides*. For this is his hour. Saturn has overthrown Jupiter whose sign, Sagittarius, depicted a live centaur aiming a bow and arrow*. Roonwit's death and the manner of it could not more clearly indicate that Lewis's imagined kingdom, which began in Joviality, has been defeated.

ii) the Saturnine Logos

We now consider the theological messages which Lewis conveys by means of the Saturnine imagery in The Last Battle. At first sight, Lewis might seem to have got himself in a bind by attempting to communicate anything 'about Christ' through the symbolism of Infortuna Major for, generally in his writings, he is keen to emphasise the extreme good fortune that springs from knowing the Christian God, insisting on the absolute purity of his moral nature. Lewis would not entertain 'dark' theologies* or flirt with an ambiguous deity who either created or was beyond both good and evil*. How then could he deploy Saturn (father of disaster, melancholia, sickness, decrepitude, pestilence, treachery, and ill luck in general) for Christological purposes? How could Aslan be shown to embody that Saturnine spirit? Indeed, where is Aslan? He seemingly makes no appearance in the story until all the characters are dead.

Worse still, doubts are introduced about Aslan's very nature. He is said to have changed so that he is now in favour of felling the Talking Trees and putting the Talking Beasts under the yoke. He now apparently approves of hard labour, not revelry, and his name can be mixed with that of Tash to form the new syncretistic portmanteau: 'Tashlan'. He is said to be very angry with all the Narnian creatures, choosing to communicate with them only via the Ape and to appear in person only at night. Tirian looks at the silent, four-legged beast which, lit by a bonfire, slouches out of the Stable, and 'horrible thoughts went through his mind' (43).

* "The signe of Capricorn, / The hous approped to Satorne", AOL 205.
* The one visitor from hell who gains access to heaven in GD does so after being transformed into 'a kind of Sagittarian horseman', according to Barfield: 'Reflections on The Great Divorce' in Owen Barfield on C.S. Lewis, ed. G.B. Tennyson (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989) 82-89: 86. Cf. the use of centaur imagery in M 164-167.
* Lewis would rather flirt with Dualism (see MC 44-47; letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 20/12/61, L 501) than allow that God was somehow either immoral or amoral.
But these desperate thoughts soon clear: Tirian ‘remembered the nonsense about Tash and Aslan being the same and knew that the whole thing must be a cheat’ (43). His reaction reminds us that Saturn’s influence is not malign in itself, but only if it is turned to bad effect by its patient. Death is the great weapon both of Satan and of God1, and by definition, no evil can be wholly evil, because existence itself (in Lewis’s view) is a good, and even Hell has form and limit1. As evils beset his kingdom, Tirian makes good use of Saturnine constellation by penetrating surface realities with a wise spiritual insight, exchanging his ‘horrible thoughts’ for a determination to be faithful despite his apparent forsakenness. Dante had made Saturn’s sphere the home of contemplatives: The Last Battle does the same. Far from presenting Lewis with a problem, Saturn’s character enables him to convey that Christological attribute which he wrote about more than any other: contemplation of the divine nature with the eye of faith and against the odds.

Of all Biblical passages, the one which occurs most frequently in Lewis’s writings is Psalm 22:1a, and its New Testament citations at Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. Not only are its appearances in Lewis’s work very numerous, they are also spread across the whole range of his corpus. In one form or another, the cry of dereliction appears in his diary1, poetry4, fiction7, apologetics4;

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1 See M 129.
2 See PR 229.
3 ‘Barfield showed me . . . his new poem “Lama Sabacthani” [sic] beginning “It is impossible to keep awake”. I pronounced it perfect and thought it one of the finest contemporary poems I have seen, perhaps the finest’, AMR 186.
4 Dymer is whirled up a ‘sky stair’ to a level where he hears blown ‘the mort / For the world spirit herself. The last support / Was fallen away - Himself, one spark of soul / Swam in unbroken void. He was the whole, / --- / And wailing, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” / Was there no world at all, but only I / Dreaming of gods and men?’ Dymer IX, 4-5 (NP 82).
5 It appears in i) Per and ii) THS:
   i) ‘And you think, little one,’ [the Un-man] answered, ‘that you can fight with me? You think He will help you, perhaps? Many thought that . . . They all think He’s going to help them - till they come to their senses screaming recantations too late in the middle of the fire, mouldering in concentration camps, writhing under saws, jibbering in mad-houses, or nailed on to crosses. Could He help Himself?’ - and the creature suddenly threw back its head and cried in a voice so loud that it seemed the golden sky-roof must break, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lamabachthani.’
ii) ‘Christianity was a fable. It would be ridiculous to die for a religion one did not believe. This Man himself, on that very cross, had discovered it to be a fable, and had died complaining that the God in whom he trusted had forsaken him - had, in fact, found the universe a cheat. But this raised a question that Mark had never thought of before. Was that the moment at which to turn against the Man? If the universe was a cheat, was that a good reason for joining its side?’

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“... And the moment it had done so, Ransom felt certain that the sounds it had made were perfect Aramaic of the First Century. The Un-man was not quoting; it was remembering. These were the very words spoken from the Cross, treasured through all those years in the burning memory of the outcast creature which had heard them, and now brought forward in hideous parody; the horror made him momentarily sick’, Per 140.

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1 See M 129.
2 See PR 229.
journalism", anthology", literary criticism", correspondence", and autobiography". No other scriptural verse comes close to receiving a treatment in so many and various of Lewis’s works; and interestingly, two of these sixteen mentions occur even before his theistic conversion.

The cry of dereliction, although not directly quoted in The Last Battle, may be heard echoing in Tirian’s cry from the tree:

And he called out, ‘Aslan! Aslan! Aslan! Come and help us now.’
But the darkness and the cold and the quietness went on just the same.**

In spite of such desolation, Tirian persists with his prayer:

‘Let me be killed,’ cried the King. ‘I ask nothing for myself. But come and save all Narnia.’
And still there was no change in the night or the wood, but there began to be a kind of change inside Tirian. Without knowing why, he began to feel a faint hope. And he felt somehow stronger.**

We observe here a felt abandonment, followed by self-abnegation, followed by the awakening of the contemplative faculty, the perception of spiritual presence despite unchanging external circumstances. It is admittedly vague. Tirian experiences a ‘kind of change’, but it involves no ‘knowing why’, it comes about ‘somehow’. But it is not nothing; it is something. As with Jane’s experience of sorrow, things are not visibly changed, but they are changed. Aslan does not ‘come and help’ in the way Tirian wants, but ultimately the King is stronger for calling on him. Aslan

** It appears in i) ‘The World’s Last Night’; ii) ‘The Efficacy of Prayer’:


ii) ‘Does God then forsake just those who serve him best? Well, he who served him best of all said, near his tortured death, ‘Why hast thou forsaken me?’ When God becomes man, that Man, of all others, is least comforted by God, at his greatest need. There is a mystery here which, even if I had power, I might not have the courage to explore’: ‘The Efficacy of Prayer’, The Atlantic Monthly CCII (January 1959) 59-61, reprinted EC 237-241: 241.

** Under the heading ‘Eli, Eli’, Lewis quotes from Macdonald’s Unspoken Sermons, First Series, ‘The Eloi’: ‘He could not see, could not feel Him near; and yet is it ‘My God’ that He cries’, GMD 18.

‘The Father can be well pleased in that Son only who adheres to the Father when apparently forsaken. The fullest grace can be received by those only who continue to obey during the dryness in which all grace seems to be withheld’, AT 154-155.

** It appears in two letters:

i) ‘The presence of God is not the same as the sense of the presence of God. The latter may be due to imagination; the former may be attended by no “sensible consolation”. The Father was not really absent from the Son when He said “Why hast thou forsaken me?” You see God Himself, as man, submitted to man’s sense of being abandoned”, letter to Mary Willis Shelburne, 20/2/55 (LAL 36-37).

ii) ‘The sense of dereliction cannot be a bad symptom for Our Lord Himself experienced it in its depth - “Why hast thou forsaken me?”’, letter to Mary Willis Shelburne, 21/7/58 (LAL 75).

** It appears twice in AGO:

i) ‘Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble? I tried to put some of these thoughts to C. this afternoon. He reminded me that the same thing seems to have happened to Christ: “Why hast thou forsaken me?” I know. Does that make it easier to understand?’, AGO 8.

ii) ‘Almost His last words may have a perfectly clear meaning. He had found that the Being He called Father was horribly and infinitely different from what He had supposed. The trap, so long and carefully prepared and so subtly baited was at last sprung, on the cross’, AGO 26-27.

** LB 45.

Ibid.
evidently becomes present to him in the role of Luther’s ‘hidden God’, the deus absconditus, who can only be discerned with what Lewis calls ‘the seeing eye’

Tirian conceives this gift of insight; Aslan appears to him, as it were, like a transparent silhouette: nothing substantial, but at least the outline of a shape

In that gap is the thing that Lewis is trying to communicate, ‘the conviction of things not seen’ (Heb. 11:1). Tirian demonstrates what Lewis (pace MacDonald) called ‘The highest condition of the Human Will . . . when, not seeing God, not seeming itself to grasp Him at all, it yet holds Him fast”

He exercises ‘obstinacy in belief”, finding Aslan perceptible despite his invisibility: ‘I give myself up to the justice of Aslan,’ he says (30); ‘In the name of Aslan let us go forward’ (59); ‘I serve the real Aslan’ (72). He is resolved to take ‘the adventure that Aslan would send’ (90), for ‘we are all between the paws of the true Aslan’ (103): ‘Aslan to our aid!’ (113).

Jewel likewise sustains faith in the face of failure, trusting that the Stable ‘may be the door to Aslan’s country and we shall sup at his table tonight’ (123). In all this we are to discern a parallel with Christ’s faithful contemplation of his Father, for even in his cry of dereliction he addressed the One by whom he felt abandoned: ‘He could not see, could not feel Him near; and yet it is ‘My God’ that He cries’

Tirian, Jewel and the others see Aslan with the eyes of their heart, thus sharing in his own faithfulness-in-forsakenness when, bound and shorn on the Stone Table, he had ‘looked up at the sky” and had endured in quietness and sadness. As a result Tirian, after death, receives the divine accolade: ‘Well done, last of the kings of Narnia, who held firm in the darkest hour’ (140) and Emeth, the faithful Calormene, likewise receives his heart’s desire

The reader too must be content at first to find Aslan in the story despite his apparent absence. This is what one would expect in the sphere of Saturn. The reader - at any rate, the πεπαρασπερμενος” - is to learn to Enjoy contemplativeness, to look along the beam of contemplative faith

But there is another, slightly less hardy, aspect to Tirian’s contemplativeness: ‘Oh Aslan, Aslan,’ he whispered. ‘If you will not come yourself, at least send me the helpers from beyond the world’ (45). In his request for ‘helpers’ we see his readiness to apprehend divine aid under representative forms. When Eustace and Jill arrive in Narnia Tirian accepts them as, in effect, manifestations of Aslan. For ‘the supreme Mind, though it delegates, is not absent, and works itself in its lower agents: ‘such privilege hath omnipresence”

The Centaur with his eschatological portents (20),

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* The outline defines not only the hiddenness of God, but also ‘the shape of that gap where our love of God ought to be . . . . If we cannot “practise the presence of God”, it is something to practise the absence of God, to become increasingly aware of our unawareness till we feel like men who should stand beside a great cataract and hear no noise, or like a man in a story who looks in a mirror and finds no face there’, FL 128.

* GMD 21.

* Cf. ‘On Obstinacy in Belief”, paper read to the Socratic Club and published in The Socratic Digest (1955); reprinted EC 206-215. It makes reference to the phrase ‘Dilly, dilly, come and be killed’ (EC 214) as does LB 102.

* GMD 18.

* LWW 140.

* ‘Emeth’ is an Hebraic term for fidelity or permanence; cf. ROP 55, 71; AOM 60.

* PH 114; cf. 144.

* Contemplation in Alexander’s sense and contemplativeness in the Saturnine sense are to be distinguished.

* AOL 96.
the Lamb with its innocent wisdom (35) and, more especially, the water from the white rock (122)\textsuperscript{4}, should be understood as further divine agents perceptible by the contemplative spirit. In these respects Aslan is, as it were, materially (and not just spiritually) present in the story even though he does not appear in \textit{propria persona} until after the end of life has come for Tirian and the others.

That end is depicted very skilfully. ‘For a moment or two Tirian did not know where he was or even who he was. Then he steadied himself, blinked and looked around. It was not dark inside the stable, as he had expected. He was in strong light: that was why he was blinking’ (125). Perhaps the most direct theological message of \textit{The Last Battle} is that death is not the end, nor is death the worst thing that can happen; indeed, ‘noble death is a treasure that no one is too poor to buy’ (88). Inasmuch as the heroes learn this lesson, we witness another of the good effects of Saturn, a peculiar possibility presented by his influence. For ‘all fortune is good’, as Boethius said\textsuperscript{6}; it is up to the patient to choose whether to turn it to ‘bane or blessing’. Tirian and his company learn that it is sweet and fitting to die for their country.

Others in the story regard ‘\textit{dulce et decorum est}’ as no more than an irrational sentiment\textsuperscript{8}; they treat nobility and patriotic feeling with cynicism. For there are mopes and malcontents in \textit{The Last Battle} as well as contemplatives. They are the dwarfs, to whom everything is a sensory wilderness: pies and trifles and ices are received by their palates as hay and turnips and raw cabbage; fine wine is ditchwater; violets are stable-litter. The dwarfs are probably modelled on the young educated men, ‘angry and restless’, full of ‘distrust’ and ‘contempt’, whom Lewis identified as the inhabitants of the modern Saturnocentric universe, which Eliot (guided by his poetic forebear Donne) was helping imaginatively to construct\textsuperscript{9}. They are the ones whom ‘The Wasteland’ had infected with, rather than fortified against, chaos\textsuperscript{10}. For in Lewis’s view ‘a heap of broken images’\textsuperscript{11} was itself an image, and an (as yet) unbroken one, an image which exacts its own price from the human imagination which continually entertains it; consequently also from the reason and the will which permit that entertaining. Part of Lewis’s \textit{raison d’être} as a writer was to break it.

The Lewisian cosmos, although it has room for Saturn, is not Saturnocentric. We will look at the real centre below. Before we do so we must emphasise that Lewis’s emotional relationship with Saturn was far from Stoical\textsuperscript{12}. Although Jill refuses to wet her bowstring with her tears (120), and although Tirian does not show that he has given up hope (117), there is space for the expression of grief. The last fragments and leavings of their lives are not reflected upon stony-faced; rather, the

\textsuperscript{4} Tasting the water is an Enjoyment experience: ‘Such was their thirst that it seemed the most delicious drink they had ever had in their lives, and while they were drinking they were perfectly happy and could not think of anything else’ (122). Cf. 1 Cor. 10:4; Exod. 17:6.

\textsuperscript{6} Letter to Mary Neylan, 26/03/40 (CLII 374).

\textsuperscript{8} CC AOM 22.


\textsuperscript{10} Letter to Paul Elmer More, 23/3/35 (CLII 163).


\textsuperscript{12} See POP 101.
heroes weep freely at their losses (150f) and Lucy insists that Aslan would not wish to stop them from lamenting Narnia's death. Their sorrow is described by Tirian as a 'virtue'; its omission would be a 'discourtesy'. But it is a beatitudinal mourning, not a desperate moping, a recognition (as Lewis wrote in other places) that, although 'it is somehow good to die'\textsuperscript{101}, nevertheless, 'it is a real brook'\textsuperscript{102} which has to be crossed: 'something is being ended.'\textsuperscript{103}

The ending is made all the more poignant by the review of Narnian history in Chapter 8. Jewel tells Jill about the 'hundreds and thousands of years' in Narnia's past when peaceful king followed peaceful king 'till you could hardly remember their names'; he tells of Moonwood the Hare, and Swanwhite the Queen, and how King Gale obtained the Lone Islands for the Narnian kingdom. 'And as he went on, the picture of all those happy years, all the thousands of them, piled up in Jill's mind till it was rather like looking down from a high hill on to a rich lovely plain full of woods and waters and cornfields, which spread away and away till it got thin and misty from distance' (86). By these means Lewis suggests not only the diuturnity of the world which is now moving to its close, but also readiness for death. The image of a rich cornfield connotes harvest-time and the approach of the natural and desirable consummation of such beauty. Lewis reflected that the times he most desired death were not when life was harshest: 'On the contrary, it is just when there seems to be most of Heaven already here that I come nearest to longing for the patria. It is the bright frontispiece [which] whets one to read the story itself'\textsuperscript{104}. This metaphor of the frontispiece recurs in the final paragraph of The Last Battle when we are told that the children's life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia 'had only been the cover and the title page'. Now 'they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before' (173). It is a paradoxical image with which to finish a story, but a paradox which nicely expresses the good fortune that Infortuna Major may bring to those who respond positively to his influence, finding their beginning in their end.

5. The eccentricity of Saturn

But once the imagery has moved from ends to beginnings Saturn is no longer the sole presiding planet. The donegality shifts. Saturn helps focus the imagination upon the beginning which is to be found in the end of life; like the prospect of being hanged, he wonderfully concentrates the mind. However, his dominance is over as soon as new life is conceived. Saturn's sphere is not Lewis's imaginative resting-place. Rather he goes beyond Saturn 'To reach the rim of the round welkin / Heaven's hermitage'\textsuperscript{105}.

\textsuperscript{101} M 135. Cf. FL 111.
\textsuperscript{102} PR 248.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 5/11/54 (L 441). Cf. TWHF 82.
\textsuperscript{105} 'The Planets', CP 29, lines 121f. Cf. Dante, Paradiso, Canto XXII, 139-150.
Heaven is the centre of Lewis’s spiritual cosmos and heaven is Jovial, not Saturnine*. The spirit of the sixth sphere is also the spirit which dominates the universe beyond the seventh, the resurrection home of Aslan, the Empyrean itself**. Repeatedly in Lewis’s works Saturn yields to his kingly son. In That Hideous Strength Saturn is ‘overmatched’ by Jupiter. In ‘The Turn of the Tide’ Saturn is defrosted by the Jovial birth of Christ at Bethlehem. And in English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Lewis notes how the Scottish poet, Gavin Douglas (c.1475-1522), depicts a similar defeat of Saturn in his Twelfth Prologue. It deals with the coming of spring and the passing of night; and Lewis particularly admired ‘the shining figures which Douglas makes move across his sky’:

Saturn draws off into the dim distances behind the circulat world of Jupiter - Aurora opens the windows of her hall - crystalline gates are unfolded - the great assault is ready and marches forward with banners spread,

Persand the sabill barmkyn nocturnall
[piercing the black rampart of night]

This is not simply a better or worse way of describing what we see. It is a way of making us see for always what we have sometimes felt, a vision of natural law in its angelic grandeur, a reminder of . . . the pomp and majesty mingled even in the sweetest and most gracious of Nature’s workings. It is a true spiritualization (true, at least, to our experience) of the visible object.*

Douglas’s Saturn is displaced by the combined forces of Jupiter and Aurora (who, as a Solar character, is another example of that mythological-astrological confusion discussed above, Chapter Seven). This displacement, Lewis avers, is a ‘true spiritualization’ of the vision one may sometimes get on earth of a spring morning: winter is passed; night is passed; Saturn withdraws****.

In the last quarter (approximately) of The Last Battle Lewis attempts to symbolise the same sort of thing. The book is about 175 pages long; the first 125 take us up to Tirian’s death. In the closing section, Saturn begins to fade and Jupiter starts to take over. Digory and Polly become ‘unstiffened’ and no longer feel old (132); Edmund’s sore knee is healed (132); Erlian’s grey-haired head turns youthful again (168); Cauldron Pool, once ‘bitingly cold’ now turns to a ‘delicious foamy coolness’ (163); we hear tell of ‘summer’ (126), ‘early summer’ (130).

And there are certain, even more obvious, indications that Saturn has conceded centre stage. Father Time throws down his horn (149) and is given a new name (142)***; and Jove is mentioned directly:

Lewis attached importance to the fact that Christ did not experience Saturnian old age. One Christmas, he wrote to a correspondent: ‘I send greetings . . . which belong to this blessed time wherein we again seek Bethlehem and the Holy Child. Let us pray to Him that, weakened as we are by age and the long habit of sinning, He may make new persons of us and lead us into His Kingdom - that Kingdom into which there is no entry except in the likeness of a child. I rejoice that the Lord, who took upon Him all our other miseries, willed not to take old age: in the One True Man, lives youth everlasting’, letter to Don Giovanni Calabria, 19/11/49 (CLII 999).

** The Stellatum and the Primum Mobile receive no apparent treatment in the Narniad.
*** EL 89; Lewis’s italics.
**** In Lewis’s copy of Henryson’s ‘Testament of Cresside’ (now in the Wade Center), Cresside, objecting to the harsh verdict passed on her by Saturn, cries out: ‘O cruell Saturne . . . / Withdraw thy sentence, and be gracious / As thou was never’ (Lewis’s underlining).
***** We are not told this new name, but presumably it is ‘Eternity’.

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"Isn’t it wonderful?" said Lucy. "Have you noticed one can’t feel afraid, even if one wants to? Try it."
"By Jove, neither one can," said Eustace, after he had tried.\textsuperscript{111}

This is the first mention in \textit{The Last Battle} of Fortuna Major and we are back, in a sense, to where the Narniad started in \textit{The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe}, six books earlier. But only in a sense. This second coming of Jove is just that, a second coming, not merely a return to the first advent. We do not find ourselves back in the Narnia of the four thrones, but have to advance to the ‘Narnia within Narnia’ (170). That this journey passes through and beyond Saturn means that the new Joviality is even more deeply joyful than before, more poignant, more meaningful.

A sceptical account of this imaginative journey would configure it quite differently. Lewis’s recidivist Joviality would rather be taken as evidence of a refusal to learn from experience, an inability to grow up. His ‘boyish greatness’\textsuperscript{111}, of which Kathleen Raine affectionately wrote, might have been a great thing, but would it not have been more appropriate for a man to have had a ‘manly greatness’? Jonathan Franzen, in his novel, \textit{The Corrections}, mocks naive Narnian ‘dearness’\textsuperscript{111}, and Humphrey Carpenter, in \textit{The Inklings}, suggests that the boyishness evident in the Chronicles was only the dark flip-side of prejudices against modernism, liberalism, Catholicism, and anything that stood opposed to the supposedly old-fashioned, conservative, Protestant world in which Lewis was brought up\textsuperscript{114}. Philip Pullman goes further and contends that there is a ‘life-hating ideology’\textsuperscript{111} at work in Lewis’s willingness to massacre his cast at the end of the Narniad. Pullman thinks Lewis should have allowed Peter to ‘go on and be a father’\textsuperscript{114}. He thinks Lewis was afraid of maturation.

These criticisms serve as useful correctives to readings of Narnia which find in it only sweetness and light and not also traces of psychological needs being met\textsuperscript{117} on the part of its author. But such objections could equally well be made against any work of art, for every product of the human imagination comes ‘tainted’ with the subjective weaknesses of the artist and is conditioned by the peculiarities and foibles of his psychology. The extraordinary thing about Lewis, in Rowan

\textsuperscript{111} LB 164.
\textsuperscript{115} ‘One of the most vile moments in the whole of children’s literature, to my mind, occurs at the end of \textit{The Last Battle}, when Aslan reveals to the children that “The term is over the holidays have begun” because “There was a real railway accident. Your father and mother and all of you are - as you used to call it in the Shadowlands - dead.” To solve a narrative problem by killing one of your characters is something many authors have done at one time or another. To slaughter the lot of them, and then claim they’re better off, is not honest storytelling: it’s propaganda in the service of a life-hating ideology.’ Pullman, Philip, ‘The Dark Side of Narnia’, \textit{The Guardian} (11/09/98) 6.
\textsuperscript{116} Public meeting, St Andrew’s Church, North Oxford, 16/6/2002. For more on this and Pullman’s other criticisms of the Narniad, see Ward, Michael. ‘Philip Pullman’s Attack on Narnia: A Defense’, \textit{Mars Hill Review}, No. 21 (2003) 127-135.
\textsuperscript{117} For instance, since he elsewhere paints Kirkpatrick as Saturn and himself as Jupiter, what should we conclude about the victories of Jupiter over Saturn in LWW and LB? Is not the healing of Digory’s mother in MN at least partly a compensatory fantasy for the loss of Lewis’s own mother early in his life? 241
Williams's opinion, is the degree to which he successfully manages 'to relativise his own prejudices'. Lewis, though by temperament a cheerful and hearty personality, was not content to be merely bluff and jolly as an artist. The happy ending to The Last Battle is not won at anything less than the ultimate price.

More substantially, we may challenge the premises upon which Lewis is arraigned by Pullman, Carpenter and Franzen, for their allegations about 'immaturity' assume that the more bleak an outlook, the more adult (i.e., wise) it must necessarily be. This is a large question which we cannot tackle at a detailed level, but, in an attempt to find a balance, it will be worth recording the subtleties of his attitude to youth and age, the arguments he mounted against those who accused him of 'Peter Pantheism', his satirising of poets who never got 'beyond the pageant of [their] bleeding heart', and the seriousness with which he regarded mortality and loss. Furthermore, we should note that Lewis thought that art ought to meet psychological needs. That, in his view, was one of its justifications. Art (good art) very properly served to awaken or maintain or strengthen those parts of the human constitution which needed such ancillary support. As we have seen, he considered his own contemporaries to be in particular need of the imaginative help which Jovial imagery could confer, for, of all the terrible losses inflicted by the Saturnine Great War, perhaps the most terrible - from the imaginative point of view - was the loss of the belief in the kingship of Jupiter and the usurpation of his throne by Saturn.

If Saturn was not king, what was he? Lewis, like Charles Williams, believed that 'the acceptance of loss... combines in itself the two 'Ways', the Romantic and the Ascetic, the Affirmation and the Rejection of images'. Though his temperamental preference was for the Romantic affirmation of images, he did not rule out the Ascetic rejection of the same. He thought asceticism and mortification had their place. He was even prepared to admit that Eliot's best work had valuable 'penitential qualities'. But asceticism - that sanctity which rebukes the world from above - must have a positive purpose behind its negations or else it makes common cause with the barbarism which hates the world from below. Born under Saturn, the generation that grew up between 1914 and 1918, who felt they had been sold a false prospectus about the glory of battle and the sweetness of dying in service of their country, had an understandable cause for saying, with Graves, 'Goodbye to all that'. Lewis, however, like Tolkien - both veterans of the trenches, - wished to know exactly what was meant in that catchphrase by the word 'all'.

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112 See, e.g., letter to Arthur Greeves, 17/12/32 (CLII 93); also SC 202-203; EIC 70-73.
115 AT 181.
116 PPL 137.
In other words, he thought that asceticism must have an account of the light by which it sees the darkness under reproach\textsuperscript{133}. Failure to recognise the uncondemnable wisdom inherent in the act of condemnation is itself a condemnation of philosophies which are wholly rejectionist. Such failure constitutes what Lewis - as early as 1924 - called 'The Promethean Fallacy in Ethics'\textsuperscript{134}, a fallacy he found in Russell\textsuperscript{135}, in Thackeray\textsuperscript{136}, and in every 'good atheist'\textsuperscript{137}. Lewis's belief in the less-than kingly status of Saturn is thus built on plain logic. Despair or outrage at crookedness only makes sense if one has a notion of the straight, and that notion could not have arisen if everything were bent. Saturn therefore cannot be sovereign. Indeed, it is only by virtue of his deferral to Jove that Saturn can exert his true influence, making his patients into contemplatives who see beyond sorrow.

Historically, Lewis wonders whether the modern poetical taste for nihilism and angst (such as he found in Roy Fuller\textsuperscript{138}) had its beginning in Keats's praise of 'those to whom the miseries of the world / Are misery, and will not let them rest'\textsuperscript{139}. He thinks it springs from 'the optimistic-revolutionary illusion that the woes of the world can be rapidly and decisively cured'\textsuperscript{140}. Lewis, contrariwise, believed the world's woes to be chronic but not absolute, because the Resurrection of Christ relativised them. One must do all one can to alleviate such sufferings, but need not be crushed by their non-disappearance in this life: 'one's own cheerfulness, even gaiety, must be encouraged', as must 'the importance of not being earnest'\textsuperscript{141}.

Hence Lewis's glad acceptance of the 'middle things' of 'merry middle earth'\textsuperscript{142}. Hence his pleasure in the 'eagles and trumpets of epic poetry'\textsuperscript{143} and in the eagles and trumpets of Jupiter. For 'of Saturn we know more than enough, but who does not need to be reminded of Jove?'\textsuperscript{144} Since the mind is never wholly passive in apprehension, but is always a factor in the worldview being constructed, there is no necessary reason for disillusion or inanition. Pressure and pain can always be actively received, as well as suffered, so that they transpose from torture into labour and issue in a 'rebirth of images', to use Farrer's phrase. In The Last Battle Lewis subjects his subcreation to full...

\textsuperscript{133} On this subject see an important letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 20/12/46 (CLII 746-748).
\textsuperscript{134} AMR 283.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid. 281.
\textsuperscript{136} Thackeray 'is almost wholly negative. He finds meanness in all things but he does not show us any "light by which he has seen that darkness"', AMR 286.
\textsuperscript{137} ‘The defiance of the good atheist hurled at an apparently ruthless and idiotic cosmos is really an unconscious homage to something in or behind that cosmos which he recognizes as infinitely valuable and authoritative: for if mercy and justice were really only private whims of his own with no objective and impersonal roots, and if he realised this, he could not go on being indignant. The fact that he arraigns heaven itself for disregarding them means that at some level of his mind he knows they are enthroned in a higher heaven still', De Futilitate, EC 680. Lewis thought that the Book of Job showed the legitimacy of such complaint: see De Futilitate, EC 680. Cf. letter to Peter Bide, 14/6/60 (Bodleian Library); AGO.
\textsuperscript{138} Letter to Dorothy L. Sayers, 30/6/49 (CLII 951). The poem Lewis had particularly in mind was Fuller's 'Translation', stanza 7, lines 1-2: 'Anyone happy in this age and place / Is daft or corrupt' (The Listener, XLI (20/12/49) 1027).
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid. The quotation is from John Keats, The Fall of Hyperion (1856) I, 148-9.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
Saturnian dominance, only for it to yield new Joviality. His work manifests ‘the almost crushed (but for that very reason arch-active) imagination’117.

Once Jupiter has regained his happy seat we may see, in retrospect, how he was present (incognito) all along. For ‘all the planets are represented in each’ and there are vestiges of Jupiter even in the opening Saturnine sections of The Last Battle. The Eagle, Farsight (significant name), suggests something of Jove (eagles were sacred to Jupiter) and something of Sol (see Chapter Seven above). Tirian is introduced sitting under a ‘great oak’ (17), Jove’s tree. His his name also is carefully chosen: it summons up those ‘Tyrian traders, in trouble steering’ who came with precious cargo from the Isles of Tin in the Jupiter section of ‘The Planets’.

That poem - as this and the last six chapters have implicitly argued - may be properly understood as an early draft of the atmospheric qualities communicated by the Narniad. Both works admit us to those spiritual symbols which Lewis thought were of ‘permanent value’; both make full use of that ‘Phänomenologie des Geistes’ which he deemed specially worth while in his own generation. And his use of Hegel’s term is particularly relevant in connection with Saturn, for in Hegel’s view:

The life of the Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself.118

The truth of Joviality springs out of the charred remnants of Saturnised Narnia. We discover that Lewis’s fictional universe (like the real one he believed himself to be living in) is not Saturnocentric, nor even interminably eucratic, but has a fifth act and a finale ‘in which the good characters ‘live happily ever after’ and the bad ones are cast out’119. It is true that some characters, such as Susan, are left alone to make up their mind at a later stage120. However, the rest have to decide which they prefer: Aslan’s shadow or his welcome. The Dwarfs are irremediably Saturnocentric, carrying their prison with them: they are that ‘Fraternity of Vacabonds’ whose toleration of misery rests on the claim that they have in the past been so ‘often deceived’121. Lewis does not want his readers to take refuge in such a claim. The Last Battle, like so much of his oeuvre, says to its readers: ‘Often deceived, yet open once again your heart’122. And at the end of the Narniad we see a reason for maintaining that openness. Lewis orchestrates there a great

117 AT 143.
119 Letter to Joyce Pearce, 20/7/43 (CLII 585).
121 EL 296. Cf. ‘We are often deceived by things from the inside ... Having been so often deceived by looking along, are we not well advised to trust only to looking at?’, ‘Meditation in a Toolshed’, The Coventry Evening Telegraph, 17/7/45, 4; reprinted EC 607-610: 608.
122 ‘What the Bird Said Early in the Year’, line 11 (CP 85).
eucatastrophe which, wave-like, Jove-like, overwhelms the saints who persist to the end: everything sad is going to come untrue.

Edmund’s ‘By Jove’ is the prelude to the curtain call of characters from all the earlier Chronicles, including Tumnus from Jupiter (Mark One), Reepicheep from Mars, Monopods from Sol, Puddleglum from Luna, Cor and Corin from Mercury, Fledge from Venus. In the final pages of The Last Battle Lewis presents imaginatively what he had analysed critically in Dante’s Comedy, namely ‘the gathering of the Church Triumphant in Heaven [which] is the final cause of the whole historical process and may thus be called the fruit of Time, or of the Spheres’.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

The Music of the Spheres

The heaven remembering throws sweet influence still on earth

In the previous eleven chapters we have argued the following three things:

i) that Lewis, though not a trained theologian, is worth serious consideration within theology because of his theory and practice of inspired imaginative reason;

ii) that this inspired imaginative reason worked principally upon images supplied by the seven planets of the medieval cosmos;

iii) that as well as the explicit use of the medieval planets in much of his poetry and in the Ransom Trilogy, these astrological images underlie each of his Narnia Chronicles, determining the broad arc of each story, countless points of ornamental detail, and, most significantly (from the theological point of view), the presentation of the Christological figure of Aslan so that he incarnates and locates - makes Contemplatable - the personality of the presiding planetary spirit which is otherwise only Enjoyable by the characters in the story.

In this chapter we will examine factors which may have motivated Lewis to focus so strongly on the medieval heavens in his imaginative writings and we will suggest one particular occasioning factor behind the composition of the Narniad. In addition, we will consider theological and pedagogical reasons why Lewis kept silent about the planetary theme, before drawing conclusions about the main claim of this dissertation. But first we address two questions which the foregoing chapters might have raised: to what extent did Lewis unconsciously resort to planetary imagery when composing the Narniad; and to what extent did he entertain a serious belief in astrology?

1. Conscious and unconscious use of planetary imagery

It may be argued that Lewis was so immersed in the planets that they found their way into the Narnia Chronicles via his unconscious mind. Is not this the reason why he never told anyone about the planetary theme, because he never became consciously aware of it himself?

It might be plausible to argue that this could have happened with one book, but not with seven; it stretches credibility beyond breaking-point to advance such an explanation. There is less strain

1 *My Heart is Empty*, PR 206, lines 19-20; reprinted as 'The Naked Seed', CP 131. Lewis may be glancing at 'the sweet influences of Pleiades', Job 38:31 (KJV); cf. Paradise Lost, VII, 375.

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involved in conceding that Lewis kept a secret than in showing how an unusually self-aware writer, at the height of his powers, happened to produce - without noticing he was doing so - seven books each uniformly dominated by imagery drawn from one of the seven medieval planets.

On the principle of Occam's Razor we are driven to acknowledge that Lewis made a conscious initial choice to write each book to its given planetary theme. The major plot-lines, the prevalent semantic field and the patterning of dominant imagery all relate so well to the relevant planets that we have to conclude that Lewis's 'poetic intelligence' (to use Spufford's term) was consciously engaged at a very detailed level.

Nevertheless, we need not exclude the possibility that Lewis's unconscious mind still played some part. The unconscious can be a significant feature of imaginative utterances, as both Lewis and Farrer, in their different studies of imagery, recognised. Farrer, for example, was of the opinion that each Biblical writer had not with his conscious mind thought out every sense, every interconnexion of his imagery. They had worked in his thinking, they had not themselves been thought. If we endeavour to expose them, we shall appear to over-intellectualize the process of his mind, to represent an imaginative birth as a speculative construction. Such a representation not merely misrepresents, it also destroys belief, for no one can believe in the process when it is thus represented. No mind, we realize, could think with such complexity, without destroying the life of the product of thought. Yet, if we do not thus intellectualize, we cannot expound at all; it is a necessary distortion of method, and must be patiently endured by the reader. ³

With respect to the Narniad, we wish to contend that the broad narrative trajectory of each story and many of its larger ornaments were 'thought out' in advance of composition so as consciously to ensure that the story would embody and express the relevant planetary spirit at the large- and mid-scale. The poema sections of Chapters Five to Eleven have all implicitly made this contention. But we do not intend to suggest that Lewis's initial conscious decision was then consciously appealed to at every stage of the subsequent creative act so as to control 'every sense, every interconnexion of his imagery'. On the contrary, we would wish to say of Lewis, as Lewis said of Spenser, that in the composing of his stories (as distinct from their deliberated projection) he partly 'left the images alone to manifest their own unity, a unity far more subtle than conscious contrivance could ever have achieved". Lewis was of the view that 'not all that is unconscious in art is therefore accidental", and the fact that, in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe for instance, he may not consciously have connected every last noun and adjective to his typical Jovial lexicon does not imply that the book is not properly to be understood as Jovial throughout. For one so steeped in the planets as Lewis was, it would have been natural for pertinent imagery to have presented itself unconsciously once the imaginative orientation had been chosen. We do not propose to list the

² SIL 139.
³ AOL 203.
Jovial images which he arrived at consciously against those he arrived at unconsciously: by the nature of the case, such a list would be impossible to construct. But we affirm the likelihood that 'unconscious' images, at the small-scale, found their way into the story alongside the 'conscious' ones and that this does nothing to undermine the donegalitarian interpretation.

2. Did Lewis believe in astrology?

Another question which it will be worth addressing is the extent to which Lewis really believed in astrology. The modern distinction between astrology and astronomy is not one that clearly existed before the end of the sixteenth century⁴, and given his immersion in the pre-Copernican mindset, it may be somewhat unfair to apply the distinction to his own habits of thought. However, if we do, we find that he was interested in both disciplines.

He was a keen amateur astronomer⁵ who knew about such things as Venus's albedo⁶ and about such figures in astronomy and physics as Schiaparelli⁷, Ball⁸, Jeans⁹, Eddington¹⁰, Schrödinger¹¹ and Hoyle¹², as well as more speculative writers such as Dunne¹³, Abbott¹⁴, Hinton¹⁵, and Ouspenski¹⁶. He was not at all like "the modern educated man who, though 'interested in astronomy', knows neither who the Pleiades were nor where to look for them in the sky"¹⁷.

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⁴ In the bibliography to EL (619), Lewis directs the reader as follows: 'On astronomy (best not distinguished from astrology), see J.L.E. Dreyer, History of the Planetary Systems from Thales to Kepler ... E.F. Bosanquet, English Printed Almanacks and Prognostications ... F.R. Johnson, Astronomical Thought in Renaissance England ... and D.C. Allen, [The Owles Almanacks].'
⁵ See, e.g., letter to Edward Allen, 3/4/52 (Wade Center); also Chapter Four above, note 146.
⁶ Per 28.
⁷ Giovanni Virginio Schiaparelli (1835-1910), prolific Italian astronomer and cartographer of Mars. See Per 20f.
⁸ Sir Robert Ball (1840-1913), Andrews Professor of Astronomy, Trinity College, Dublin, and author of thirteen books on popular astronomy. See SBJ 57.
¹⁰ Sir Arthur Eddington (1882-1944), father of modern theoretical astrophysics. See MC 54; 'Dante's Similes', SMRL 75; 'Historicism', EC 631; letter to Margaret Sackville Hamilton, 23/9/52 (Bodleian Library); letter to Dorothy L. Sayers, 25/6/57 (Wade Center).
¹⁴ Edwin A. Abbott (1838-1926), clergyman, biographer of Bacon, and author of Flatland (1884). See Graham, op. cit. 112.
¹⁵ Charles H. Hinton (1853-1907), mathematician and author of numerous works on multi-dimensionality, including The Fourth Dimension (1904). See Graham, op. cit. 112.
¹⁶ P.D. Ouspenski (1878-1947), Russian mathematician and mystic, whose works include Tertium Organum (1911) and A New Model of the Universe (1931). See Graham, op. cit. 112.
¹⁷ EL 62.
As for astrology, the foregoing ten chapters have shown that Lewis’s imaginative interest was lifelong and deep. But what about a more literal belief? Should we equate Lewis with his own protagonist, Ransom, who ‘found it night by night more difficult to disbelieve in old astrology: almost he felt, wholly he imagined, ‘sweet influence’ pouring or even stabbing into his surrendered body’?  

The most we can say is that he did not fully, or at any rate willingly, disbelieve in it. After seeing an unusual conjunction Lewis wrote to his brother that he now ‘understood what is at the back of all astrology i.e. the difficulty of believing that anything so splendid is without significance’.

Noting of Paracelsus and Ficino that they both entertained the notion that aquatic elemental spirits may really exist, he added, ‘and who knows, perhaps in this as in so many things the ancients knew more than we’.

Those ‘many things’ may well have included astrological influence for elsewhere he wrote ‘we presume’ that the galaxies cannot think, as if he were open to the idea that they might. Unlike Williams’s Damaris Tighe, it occurs to Lewis that the objects of medieval thought which it is his job to study have a possible reality. When wondering why there were many men of genius born in the latter half of the sixteenth century, he remarks that ‘the Elizabethans themselves would have attributed it to Constellation’; he sounds somewhat disappointed when he goes on, ‘I must be content with trying to sketch some of the intellectual and imaginative conditions under which they wrote.’

A due humility about our lack of knowledge as to the causes of currents in history is part of the background theme of English Literature in the Sixteenth Century and Lewis seems to have applied this humility to the subject of astrology: he wanted to keep his options open as to the possible characteristics of the heavenly bodies. He was reluctant to strip the stars of their divinity, appeared to believe that a star was more than merely ‘a huge ball of flaming gas’, thanked ‘all good stars’ for fortunate events, and was ready to confess: ‘the night sky suggests that the inanimate also has for God some value we cannot imagine’.

On the other hand, he once stated (albeit in an article that was never published in his lifetime) that he did not believe in ‘the astrological character of the planets’ as they appear in his Ransom

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OSP 34.
Letter to his brother, 18/2/40 (CLII 348).
SIL 129.
‘Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages’, originally given as two lectures at the Zoological Laboratory, Cambridge, July 1956; reprinted SMRL 41-63: 52.
EL 2; cf. 323.
E.g. EL 113, 558.
He admits that ‘the stars lost their divinity as astronomy developed’ but maintains ‘it is not the greatest modern scientists who feel most sure that the object, stripped of its qualitative properties and reduced to mere quantity, is wholly real. Little scientists, and little unscientific followers of science, may think so. The great minds know very well that the object, so treated, is an artificial abstraction, that something of its reality has been lost’, AOM 42f.
He has Coriakin say to Eustace: ‘[A huge ball of flaming gas] is not what a star is but only what it is made of’, VDT 159.
See letter to Laurence Harwood, 26/1/63 (Bodleian Library).
LTM 58.
Trilogy. And in a letter to a Mr Anderson he calls astrology 'an aberration of the human mind'.

The epistolary context of this remark is hard to ascertain because we have only Lewis's side of the correspondence, but it would seem likely that he is reining in Mr Anderson from an excessively eager interest in the subject, not absolutely ruling out the possibility of sidereal or planetary influence. Usually, in his public writings, he is aiming to jolt his readers out of what he regards as a likely over-materialistic world-view and make them consider the rich and mysterious possibilities with which the universe may be teeming, under God. He is attempting a little more than mere story-telling when he has Roonwit assert: 'If Aslan were really coming to Narnia the sky would have foretold it. If he were really come, all the most gracious stars would be assembled in his honour.'

This general perspective on astrology - wondering what may be possible and refusing to adopt hard and fast negative positions - would, in Lewis's view, have been quite compatible with orthodox historic Christianity and the three-fold test of scripture, reason and tradition.

Scripturally, the people of Israel regarded the stars as influential at least as early as the time of Deborah; and stars are seen as 'signs' throughout the Bible (most notably signifying the birth of Christ) and sometimes as a celestial court or choir.

Rationally, we have to admit that we do not absolutely know that there is no actual or possible means by which the planets might influence us. With respect to the Sun, it would be difficult to show that it did not exert considerable influence, - over human moods, pastimes, skin colour. The Moon also clearly affects the way people behave: when the Moon is full and bright, certain activities (e.g. hunting, travelling) are more easily undertaken than on a dark night. Given our susceptibility to Solar and Lunar influence, it would be unreasonable to maintain in principle that we were invulnerable to effects which the other planets might exert.

Traditionally, the Church has been prepared to countenance astrology provided it was kept within certain bounds. For instance, in the medieval Church, it was not so much the belief in astrological influence that was condemned (indeed, to Lewis's knowledge, 'no theologian denied the general
theory of planetary influences''); it was three offshoots from that central belief which the Church stood against:

i) the lucrative, and politically undesirable, practice of astrologically grounded predictions^4;
ii) astrological determinism^40;
iii) planetolatry^41.

Within these parameters, the medieval Church was content to allow belief in astrological influence,
and it seems probable that Lewis was prepared to adopt a similarly tolerant position, without committing himself. He noted how the Venetian Franciscan, Francesco Giorgi, in his De Harmonia Mundi Toltius (1525), had 'made his religion entirely absorb his astrology'". Lewis's own attitude to astrology could be characterised in the same way: he did not uncritically accept it, but nor did he utterly disown it; rather, as if it were a fellow sinner, he 'baptised it'" and put it to use in theologically imaginative ways.

3. Factors motivating Lewis to focus on the medieval heavens

i) relativising the contemporary model

E.L. Mascall, whom Lewis knew well through the Socratic Club, has written: 'Interesting as they undoubtedly are in themselves, cosmological theories as such are of no ultimate theological importance'". In one sense, Lewis would have agreed with him because he believed that mankind has 'no abiding city even in philosophy [which includes cosmology]: all passes, except the Word'". However, in another sense, Lewis would have contended that cosmology, though not of ultimate importance, was nevertheless of considerable penultimate importance. The cosmology which a given generation accepts has immense consequences for its 'thoughts and emotions'". There is always a 'mythology which follows in the wake of science'"; a mythology which feeds into our understanding of ourselves and the way we artistically interpret the world and our place in it. Take, for instance, the 'iconographical art' of the medieval period: 'The planets (it said), the Virtues, the "Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages", SMRL 55.

Aquinas opposes the idea that influences cause anything more than propensities or tendencies (Summa, Ia, CXV, Art. 4), following Augustine who casts no doubt upon the fact of stellar influence but believes it can be overcome by man's free will and the grace of God (De Civ. Del, V, 7.). Cf. Dante's Purgatorio, XVI, 79-81.

Worship of the planets is repeatedly outlawed in the Bible: Deut 4:19; 2 Kgs. 17:16; 21:3; 23:5; Job 31:26f; Jer 8:2; 19:13. Cf. letters to Dorothy L. Sayers, 17/7/57 & 4/7/57 (Wade Center); also his implied statement that he does not approve of 'devotions to stars' in his letter to Church Times, Vol. CXXXII (15/1/57) 463-464; reprinted EC 774f.

Walker, D.P. Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella (London: The Warburg Institute, 1958) 115 (Lewis's underlining in his copy of Walker now in the Wade Center).

His position with respect to astrology in general is the same as that of Mrs Dimble with respect to Venus in particular (THS 314).


Letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 8/1/36 (CLII 176). Also he never found persuasive the cosmological argument for God's existence: see letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 28/5/52 (Wade Center).

EL 3.


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Vices, the Liberal Arts, the Worthies, are thus. If now we were to use a similar art, it would be full of figures symbolizing the atom, evolution, relativity, totalitarianism, democracy, and so on.** Garrett Green makes a similar point about how cultures take their 'authoritative paradigms' from science: 'From Galileo and Newton to Einstein and Stephen Hawking, the reigning scientific models of the cosmos have provided the larger culture with powerful analogies and metaphors that shape its epistemology, its poetry, its politics, and its religion . . . many of the leading postmodernist ideas borrow much of their imagery and not a little of their social prestige from scientific notions of relativity, uncertainty, and incommensurability.'**

Lewis was particularly alive to the non-scientific consequences of scientific paradigm shifts because of his intimate scholarly acquaintance with the Copernican revolution**. His magnum opus begins with a fourteen-page treatment of 'the new astronomy' which was pioneered by Nicolas of Cusa, theorised by Copernicus, and verified by Kepler and Galileo. He concludes that 'what proved important . . . about the new astronomy was not the mere alteration in our map of space but the methodological revolution which verified it'**: 

By reducing Nature to her mathematical elements it substituted a mechanical for a genial or animistic conception of the universe. The world was emptied, first of her indwelling spirits, then of her occult sympathies and antipathies, finally of her colours, smells, and tastes. (Kepler at the beginning of his career explained the motion of the planets by their anima motrices; before he died, he explained it mechanically.) The result was dualism rather than materialism. The mind, on whose ideal constructions the whole method depended, stood over against its object in ever sharper dissimilarity. Man with his new powers became rich like Midas but all that he touched had gone dead and cold. This process, slowly working, ensured during the next century the loss of the old mythical imagination: the conceit, and later the personified abstraction, takes its place. Later still, as a desperate attempt to bridge a gulf which begins to be found intolerable, we have the Nature poetry of the Romantics.**

The important parts of this passage are the references to 'the mind, on whose ideal constructions the whole method depended' and the 'mythical imagination'. The isolation of the one and the loss of the other were not necessary or logical consequences of Copernicus's theory: they were the unscientific collateral effects caused by his scientific advance. Lewis is here drawing on ideas which Barfield propounded in Poetic Diction:

Science deals with the world which it perceives but, seeking more and more to penetrate the veil of naive perception, progresses only towards the goal of nothing, because it still does not accept in practice (whatever it may admit theoretically) that the mind first creates what it perceives as objects, including the instruments which Science uses for that very penetration. It insists on dealing with 'data', but there shall no data be given, save the bare percept. The rest is imagination. Only by imagination therefore can the world be known. And what

** SIL 11.
** The year before Lewis died, Kuhn published his influential The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. There is no record of Lewis having read it.
** EL 3.
** Ibid. 3-4.
is needed is, not only that larger and larger telescopes should be constructed, but that the human mind should become increasingly aware of its own creative activity.  

Barfield goes on to argue that Newton with his 'gravity' (originally 'weight') and Kepler with his 'focus' (originally 'hearth') were developing meaning, not discovering 'fact'. These terms were as much part of their 'instruments' as the material instruments themselves; they were concepts applied to percepts in new ways which were judged to be illuminating, but were functions of the imagination rather than objective tools. Scientific and poetic knowledge are therefore indistinguishable in kind. The scientific method does not give us a new way of knowing, only a new way of testing.

It is this line of thinking with which Lewis closes *The Discarded Image* where he argues that, not only does a Model of the universe affect the way we think, but the way we think affects what kind of Model we will accept. The change from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican cosmos, or from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics, is not simply a progress from error to truth. Each Model is a serious attempt to save the maximum number of appearances, and each succeeds in saving a great many. 'But also, no less surely, each reflects the prevalent psychology of an age almost as much as it reflects the state of that age's knowledge ... [N]ature gives most of her evidence in answer to the questions we ask her."

Lewis is not recommending a return to the medieval model, only that we acknowledge the provisionality of all cosmological models. To say that Lewis achieved 'a Christian mind by living in a prescientific world' is, as Farrer recognizes, 'the easiest way of writing him off as a thinker'. But to engage with what Lewis was trying to achieve here requires that we ask far larger questions of ourselves. Lewis's presentation of the medieval worldview was intended not as a lament for things past so much as a reminder, in Farrer's words, that 'no science-based picture of the sum of things is better than a symbol'. Having studied Lewis's presentation of that cosmological image provided by Ptolemy and discarded by Copernicus, people 'may be better placed for viewing with a reasonable detachment the scientific myths of their own'.

And not only did Lewis wish to emphasize the provisionality of cosmological models, he was also determined to keep his eye on those answers which Nature used to give when scientists asked her different questions from the ones which became fashionable to ask from the time of Cusanus onwards. In this he was considerably influenced by Ernst Cassirer, whose *Individuo e Cosmo* he read.

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Ibid. 138.

DI 222f.

Ibid.


Ibid. 28.
and noted carefully'. Before Cusanus, cosmological questions had had more to do with what things were than with how they moved; after his time, according to Lewis’s marginalia, ‘the central position now given to Motion determines a whole new cosmology. Admittedly, in some sense Motion had always been central. But Motion, in Aristu, is a result of the qualitative differences of the things moved, their absolute levity or weight, and this means that Places have quality and produce effects - qualities and effects not amenable to mathematical treatment.’ In modern physics ‘relations determine things’, whereas Aristotle had denied that the distance of a body from its kindly stede could affect its movement. To measure Motion, irrespective of the concept of kindly stede, ‘involves choosing a “here” - arbitrarily. No Place has a natural supremacy’.

‘Motion depends on the reciprocal relation of all parts of Nature and there is no need for a First Mover from without.’ ‘Having abandoned fixed Place we start looking for fixed Laws’ and Newton supplies such Laws with a plausibility which lasts till Einstein. ‘The work of the Renaissance was to substitute space (as a system of relations) for Place (as an aggregate of Places).’ ‘Cusanus first made this possible by neutralising space - emptying it of all quality: but Galileo’s theory of motion actually carries it out.’

Lewis’s marginal commentary in his copy of *Individuo e Cosmo* is unusually detailed. It suggests that Cassirer’s understanding of the Copernican revolution struck Lewis with particular force, and there were good reasons why it should have done so. Lewis had grown up reading the works of H.G. Wells and Sir Robert Ball which lodged firmly in his imagination ‘the vastness and coldness of space’: he expounds that view of the cosmos at the beginning of *The Problem of Pain* (1-3). Cassirer’s book, which Lewis probably read shortly after its publication in 1927, showed cogently how this bleak vision had not always been man’s view of the heavens and exposed some of the mental presuppositions which led to the modern perspective.

Lewis became determined to counteract the imaginative effects of ‘the empty universe’ and to dramatise the benefits that accrue to a mind predisposed in favour of the genius loci. Thus he presents History as one who knows ‘the genius of places’; he argues that ‘local association’ is a

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*Cassirer, Ernst. *Individuo e Cosmo nella Filosofia del Rinascimento*, traduzione di Federico Federici (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1927). Lewis’s copy is in the Wade Center. There also is his copy of Cassirer, Ernst, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), in which Lewis marked the following passage: ‘Myth arrives at spatial determinations and differentiations only by lending a peculiar mythical accent to each “region” in space, to the “here” and “there”, the rising and setting of the sun, the “above” and “below” . . . Space is not a homogeneous whole, within which the particular determinations are equivalent and interchangeable. The near and far, the high and low, the right and left - all have their uniqueness’ (150).


*SBJ* 57.

And, conversely, some of the presuppositions of the old perspective. In this connection, it seems probable that Lewis’s ruminations on the Aristotelian search for a ‘fixed place’ may underlie the divine prohibition against sleeping on ‘the Fixed Island’ in Per.


*PR* 188.
good thing"; he supports the parish system which, 'being a unity of place' is one of the things God desires"; he says as narrator in That Hideous Strength that 'locality itself is of importance'"; that 'it is well to have specifically holy places"; that the eucharist is 'the appointed place' for meeting God"; and in both The Magician's Nephew" and Till We Have Faces" he uses initial capital letters to denote a place with a special significance. Perhaps the most powerful evocation of the idea comes near the start of Out of the Silent Planet:

[Ransom] 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 could not call it 'dead'; he felt life pouring into him from it every moment. How indeed should it be otherwise, since out of this ocean the worlds and all their life had come? 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!" No: Space was the wrong name. Older thinkers had been wiser when they named it simply the heavens - the heavens which declared the glory."

Ransom is Lewis's proxy: his movement from a belief in dead space to a delighted participation in the living heavens mirrors Lewis's own development, which was the reverse of the change that Kepler underwent. Before his conversion, Lewis had lived in a 'neat, explicable, mechanical universe". After his conversion, he lived, if not in an animistic cosmos, at least in an animated one, a cosmos packed with spiritual presence. So what if aether had been shown to be non-existent in the Michelson-Morley experiment in 1887? So what if - as Brown puts it - 'the space where the aether used to be is now a lumber room for mathematical symbols"? Physical 'emptiness' need not imply absence of spiritual significance. To assume that it must is to fall prey to the unscientific mythology which follows in the wake of science. Hence, Lewis's planets roll 'not through emptiness but through some densely inhabited and intricately structured medium". Imagining such a medium provides an objective correlative of God's omnipresence, an omnipresence which has not been shown by Michelson and Morley to be non-existent. Thus, as Matthews correctly asserts,
'Lewis is not a man who stands outside his time, who wants to tear down the modern world and reestablish the medieval order; he is a modern man, fully ‘engaged’... with the conditions of his world and of the people who inhabit it... He lives in the present, trying to do what he can to nurture, to strengthen, to expand the modern self, to give it the best chance to flourish in a time of negations.'

Negating negations neatly summarises Lewis’s imaginative strategy in this respect, and it is a strategy more subtly implemented in the Narnia Chronicles than the Ransom Trilogy. Scott Oury has argued that, in the trilogy, Lewis’s presentation of his imagined cosmos is hampered by his overt insistence on linking ‘fictional elements’ with elements in ‘the actual world’. ‘Thus we are told that Maleldil might really be God. No attentive reader could have missed the implication. Nor is the explicit statement that Space should be replaced by the idea of Heaven in the minds of the readers any more necessary. Lewis’s descriptions of the voyages through deep heaven are quite sufficient. The straightforward message might well have the opposite effect. In general the imaginative shape, the “mythic core”, of Lewis’s fiction invites a far more attentive reading for the thing that it is in itself than do his messages. With many of his messages, secondary considerations of validity and, at this point, datedness, are bound to obtrude.’

This is a fair point. Readers who think scientifically, rather than imaginatively, will not find the trilogy a compelling read. Haldane is a good example*. But in the Narniad these problems do not obtrude. Oury’s distinction between Lewis’s ‘messages’ and ‘the thing that his fiction is in itself’ is another version of the distinction between Contemplation and Enjoyment, and in advancing from the Ransom books to the Narniad, Lewis moved from making his readers Contemplate a ‘message’ towards making them Enjoy a story in which this message was interwoven with the whole imaginative experience. Rather than explicitly talking about ‘Space’ versus ‘the Heavens’, Lewis simply takes his readers inside ‘the Heavens’. Each Chronicle is itself an intricately structured medium which communicates a particular sense of astrological Place. In this respect, ‘the medium is the message’ in Narnia, which may partly explain why the septet has proved so much more successful than the trilogy.

ii) imitating Dante and other medievals

A second factor motivating Lewis to focus on the Ptolemaic cosmos was his desire to imitate Dante and other medieval writers. One thing that Lewis particularly admired in Dante was his presentation

'Mr Lewis is often incorrect, as in his account of the gravitational field in the spaceship, of the atmosphere on Mars, the appearance of other planets from it, and so on. His accounts of supernatural intervention would have been more impressive had he known more of nature as it actually exists.' J.B.S. Haldane, 'Auld Hornie, F.R.S.', The Modern Quarterly (Autumn 1946) 32-40: 33.

For more on this famous dictum, which Lewis did not quite live to hear, see McLuhan, Marshall. Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964).
of the best cosmological thought of his day, his 'acting as a medieval Jeans or Eddington'. The medieval cosmos was 'perhaps, after all, the greatest work of art the Middle Ages produced', and Dante's presentation of it was only the most perfect of the various versions on offer. 'They wrote it, they sang it, painted it and carved it. Sometimes a whole poem or a whole building seems almost nothing but verbalized or petrified cosmology.'

We do not have space to examine any of the songs and paintings which Lewis was referring to, but when speaking of the poems which verbalized this cosmology, Lewis had in mind not just the Commedia, but also the De Mundi Universitate of Bernardus Silvestris where the 'journey through the various planetary levels is well described'; Chaucer's The Knight's Tale and Henryson's Testament of Cresseid where the 'character and influence of the planets are worked into' the storyline; and the Faerie Queene which is both 'a representation of, and hymn to, the cosmos as our ancestors believed it to be. There has been no delight (of that sort) in 'nature' since the old cosmology was rejected. No one can respond in just that way to the Einsteinian, or even the Newtonian, universe.'

And when speaking of the buildings which petrified the old cosmology Lewis has in mind the Doge's palace in Venice, the Salone (Palazzo della Ragione) at Padua, and the churches of Santa Maria del Fiore and Santa Maria Novella in Florence. Lewis observes:

just as the planets are not merely present in the Testament of Cresseid but woven into the plot, so in the buildings the cosmological material is sometimes woven into what we may call the plot of a building. One might at first suppose that the constellations depicted on the cupola above the altar in the old sacristy of San Lorenzo at Florence were mere decoration; but they are in the right position for 9 July 1422 when the altar was consecrated. In the Farnesina Palace they are arranged to suit the birth-day of Chigi for whom the work was done. And the Salone at Padua is apparently designed so that at each sunrise the beams will fall on the Sign in which Sol would then ride.

The intricate architectural design necessary to achieve these astrological ends is nothing to be surprised about, for 'intricacy is the mark of the medieval mind.' The astrological imagery woven into the architectonics of the Narniad likewise required detailed effort on the part of its creator, but again, this should not surprise us, for, as we have shown, Lewis's 'imagination and modes of thought were essentially medieval'.

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**Notes:**
- 'Dante's Similes', paper read to the Oxford Dante Society (13/2/40); reprinted SMRL 64-77: 75.
- 'Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages', SMRL 62.
- Ibid. SMRL 60.
- AOL 95.
- DI 198.
- DI 201.
- Ibid. 201-202.
- 'Tasso', SMRL 111-120: 117.
Furthermore, 'almost the typical activity of the medieval author consists in touching up something that was already there . . . as Layamon works over Wace, who works over Geoffrey, who works over no one knows what.'' Lewis's own 'touching up' of Chaucer and Henryson, following their example by working the character and influence of the planets into the warp and weft of his Narnian romances, is itself an aspect of his medievalism. Henryson's Cupid says to the planets: 'ye are all sevin deificait, / Participant of devyne sapience'". By bodying forth his divine figure under the seven forms supplied by the planets and by having the other actors in each story participate in His 'sapience', Lewis adopts and adapts Henryson's model.

'Gods and goddesses could always be used in a Christian sense' by a medieval or Elizabethan poet"; Paganism was not just 'plumb wrong' to their minds". To the Florentine Platonists Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, ancient myths and hieroglyphics hid a profound meaning that was 'really in agreement with Christianity". Although Lewis might not have gone quite as far as this, he would certainly have viewed such things as potentially agreeable with Christianity, that is, baptisable. The redeemed gods could perform all sorts of good, true and beautiful tasks, as was recognised by Sidney and Spenser for whom 'the gods are God incognito and everyone is in the secret. Paganism is the religion of poetry through which the author can express, at any moment, just so much or so little of his real religion as his art requires." This practice 'of using mythological forms to hint theological truths was well established and lasted as late as the composition of Comus. It is, for most poets and in most poems, by far the best method of writing poetry which is religious without being devotional". Lewis, as a good medievalist, was likewise not concerned to keep separate the pagan deities and the deity of his believed religion. On the contrary, he is ever prepared to present God 'sub figuris vilium corporum".

In addition to these poets and architects, there was one theologian of the period who was a particular influence on Lewis: Richard Hooker. Lewis affords Hooker pride of place at the climax of his chapter on Prose in the 'Golden' Period in English Literature in the Sixteenth Century. There he writes: 'Every system offers us a model of the universe; Hooker's model has unsurpassed grace and majesty . . . Few model universes are more filled - one might say, more drenched - with Deity than his" for, according to Hooker "every effect proceeding from the most concealed instincts of nature" manifests His power". Enamoured of this vision, Lewis sought to recreate it in the Narniad where even what is 'concealed' from the reader manifests the divine character being depicted.

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" DI 209.
" 'Imagination and Thought in the Middle Ages', SMRL 44.
" SIL 9.
" EL 342.
" AOL 355-356.
" EL 459.
" Ibid. 460.
Cantor notes that Lewis's 'fictional fantasies cannot be separated from [his] scholarly writing'; rather they show how he sought 'to transmute [his] medieval learning into mythopoetic fiction, fantasy literature for a mass audience that communicated the sensibility of medieval epic and romance'\textsuperscript{114}. If we add to epic and romance the sensibility of medieval architecture and the sensibility of the early renaissance theology of Hooker we will have a fair picture of the various models whom Lewis sought to imitate or emulate in the donegalitarian technique underpinning the Chronicles of Narnia.

### iii) the Inklings

A third factor motivating Lewis to concentrate so firmly on the imaginative significance of the heavens is his membership of the Inklings. His fellow Inklings (or, at any rate, the chief three of them) were also interested to a more than usual degree in the planets. We summarise these interests briefly as follows.

Williams's special interests in Jupiter and Venus have already been glanced at above (Chapter Five, section 4, and Chapter Ten, section 4). His doctrine of 'co-inherence' is imagined in \textit{Taliessin Through Logres} by means of his own myth of the Houses of the Zodiac\textsuperscript{117} and Lewis thought sufficiently highly of it to publish his own analysis of Williams's understanding of 'the different forms under which the Divine appears ... 'climax tranquil in Venus', and Deep Heaven opening beyond Jupiter'\textsuperscript{118}.

Tolkien wrote a poem in which Williams was depicted as a constellation\textsuperscript{119} and in his own myths renames the planets as follows in his invented language of Quenya: Isil (Luna), Elemmírë (Mercury), Earendil (Venus), Anar (Sol), Carnil (Mars), Alcarinquë (Jupiter), Lumbar (Saturn). Tolkien's understanding of the more than merely material significance of stars had an important part to play in Lewis's conversion\textsuperscript{120}. Lewis advised emendations to one of Tolkien's poems so that it contained references to the 'swinging wheels of heaven' and men getting children on a star\textsuperscript{121}.

\textsuperscript{117} Taliessin ascends to the Heaven of Heavens through four planetary zones: Mercury, Venus, Jupiter and Saturn (AT 171). He learns, through 'the myth of the twelve Houses of the Zodiac, that, as St. Paul said, there is a diversity of operations, but the one Spirit. Each House gives access to all the rest. In Aquarius, the House of Sight, for example, he 'sees' all the other Houses. 'As long as Gemini, the House of the operative hands, or Scorpio, the House of generation, or Libra, the House of earth ... remain in their obedience, every one of them is an 'entry' into the total empire' (AT 147). 'In the state of innocence all the Houses of the Zodiac are 'co-inherent': each is in all; whichever you go into, you will find you are at the centre. But since the Fall, instead of Co-inherence there is Incoherence. Aquarius is bloodshot: the Twins tear each other: the Scorpion 'in its privy place' stings' (AT 149f). We must not prefer one House to another in an effort to mould ourselves in a particular way. ‘If we enter wholeheartedly the House whose door is presented at any given moment, if we prefer the given, God will do the changing’ (AT 169). Cf. letter to Anne Scott, 28/7/52 (Bodleian Library).
\textsuperscript{121} AT 192.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid. 43. See Tolkien's poem, 'Mythopoeia' for more on his attitude to stars.
Barfield, an occasional attender at Inklings sessions (he lived in London, not Oxford), but a regular correspondent with Lewis, wrote a poem in which Lewis was depicted as a constellation\(^\text{113}\). His ruminations on the Copernican revolution were clearly a subject of considerable interest to Lewis\(^\text{113}\). The very last words of *Poetic Dictum* (dedicated to Lewis) are 'the music of the turning spheres’\(^\text{114}\).

We cannot do more than indicate the existence of this shared interest in the heavens; full exploration of the mutual indebtedness and reciprocal influences between these four men would require a thesis all to itself. But there seems to have been something of a common mind among the principal Inklings about the importance of sidereal matters, both imaginatively and scientifically considered. We submit that this common mind stimulated and supported Lewis as he wrote so frequently and so variously on astrological and astronomical themes.

iv) inspiring awe

A fourth and final factor motivating Lewis to focus so strongly on astronomical/astrological themes is the awe that naturally overcomes the human mind when it considers the heavens. Chalcidius, the fourth-century translator of Plato, wrote that 'no man would seek God nor aspire to piety unless he had first seen the sky and the stars’\(^\text{115}\), and Lewis, who considered awe to be a necessary element in religious experience\(^\text{114}\), carries his reader’s minds to the heavens in order to engender an imaginative sense of the numinous. An awestruck Spirit (Sense 1 and Sense 2) creates a humility in which *novitas* (Spirit, Sense 3) may be more likely to take root. In this respect it is interesting how closely the character of Aslan is connected with the Narnian heavenly bodies. At the creation of Narnia, Aslan announces to his new creation all the things that he is giving it, a list which concludes with the discrete sentence: 'I give you the stars and I give you myself’\(^\text{116}\). And in *The Silver Chair*, when the wanderers are lost in the Underworld, they remember the ‘sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself’\(^\text{117}\). It seems natural in Narnia to pass from consideration of the heavenly bodies to consideration of Aslan. And this is to be expected, for human minds have been designed to respond to the heavens in a way which is analogous to true worship. ‘The huge dome of the sky is of all things sensuously perceived the most like infinity. And when God made space and worlds that move in space, and clothed our world with air, and gave us such eyes and such imaginations as those we have, He knew what the sky would mean to us.’\(\text{118}\) Reverence for ‘the starry heavens’ is a natural


\(^{113}\) The real reason why Copernicus raised no ripple and Galileo raised a storm, may well be that whereas the one offered a new supposal about celestial motion, the other insisted on treating this supposal as fact. If so, the real revolution consisted not in a new theory of the heavens but in 'a new theory of the nature of theory’\(\text{, DI 16; cf. EL 3. The quoted phrase is from Barfield’s Soving the Appearances (1957). Cf. letter to Barfield, 10/11/48 (CLII 889).}\)


\(^{115}\) POP 7-8. Cf. his comments about Psalm 8, ROP 110-112.

\(^{116}\) MN 109.

\(^{117}\) SC 156.

\(^{118}\) M 162.
function of our ‘imaginative energies’" and when we are ‘frightened by the greatness of the universe, we are (almost literally) frightened by our own shadows: for these light years and billions of centuries are mere arithmetic until the shadow of man, the poet, the maker of myth, falls upon them. I do not say we are wrong to tremble at his shadow; it is a shadow of an image of God.’

4. The occasioning of the Chronicles

In addition to these four background motivating factors, there is one particular factor which we would argue specifically occasioned the composition of the first Narnia Chronicle and it has to do with the work which Lewis published in 1947, the year before he began writing The Lion. It was Miracles, A Preliminary Study, his most serious work of apologetics, which the philosopher, Elizabeth Anscombe, famously criticised at a meeting of the Socratic Club. Carpenter asks, ‘What kind of mind was it that could switch from rigorous theological argument to children’s fantasy?’ Wilson answers by arguing that ‘The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe grew out of Lewis’s experience of being stung back into childhood by his defeat at the hand of Elizabeth Anscombe.’ We would agree with Wilson that the debate with Anscombe was intimately connected with the conception of the Narniad, but wish to contend that, far from Lewis being ‘stung back into childhood’, his composition of The Lion - with its innovative donegalitarian technique - was his imaginative engagement with and response to, rather than retreat from, Anscombe’s critique.

‘Writing had always been Lewis’s way of coping with life,’ according to Carpenter. Sayer agrees: ‘The way to freedom for him was through writing.’ They are quite right. After his bereavement he wrote A Grief Observed: ‘By writing it all down . . . I believe I get a little outside it’ In his twenties Lewis confided to his diary: ‘I hoped the “King of Drum” might write itself so as to clear things up - the way “Dymer” cleared up the Christina Dream business.’ As early as 1916, he advised a friend: ‘whenever you are fed up with life, start writing: ink is the great cure for all human ills.’

The ink used in writing The Lion cured the ills caused by the bruising encounter with Anscombe. It is important not to overstate, as Wilson does, the emotional depletion which Lewis felt after the Socratic debate. Anscombe herself remembered the occasion as ‘sober’ and dismissed as ‘projection’ those accounts which described it as ‘a horrible and shocking experience which upset him very

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113 Carpenter, The Inklings 217.


115 Carpenter, The Inklings, 249.


117 AMR 432.

118 Letter to Arthur Greeves, 30/5/16 (CLI 187).
much"\textsuperscript{114}. Sayer records Lewis’s own reaction as unhappy and reflective, but not traumatised: he had a pastoral concern for those to whom the defeat of an argument for God’s existence amounted to the defeat of God’s existence\textsuperscript{115}, but he also thought that his main position was still defensible. Anscombe had exposed a chink in his armour; she had not utterly stripped it away. He was prepared publically to admit that there was a ‘serious hitch’ in the original edition of Miracles which ‘ought to be rewritten’\textsuperscript{116}, and in 1960 he did rewrite it, taking into account Anscombe’s criticisms\textsuperscript{117}.

Wilson omits to mention this second edition and instead develops a fanciful account of the upshot of the debate, in which Lewis ‘became a child, a little boy who was being degraded and shaken by a figure who, in his imagination, took on witch-like dimensions’\textsuperscript{118}. Lewis’s imagination was indeed involved in his response to the Anscombe debate, but not in this manner.

In order to show how The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe was Lewis’s imaginative response to the Socratic Club debate we must briefly summarise the main argument forwarded in Miracles. As touched upon in Chapter Three above, Lewis’s central point was that if human thought gives access to truth about the world it must be not merely human, not something locked up inside our own heads, but a participation in a cosmic logos. The alternative, which Lewis labels ‘Naturalism’, refutes itself for the reason given by Haldane: ‘If my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain, I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true . . . and hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms’\textsuperscript{119}.

Since this position is self-refuting, Lewis concludes that it cannot be true: human thinking must rather be a sharing in a ‘supernatural Reason’. By ‘supernatural’ Lewis means that thought is independent of the interlocked system of natural causes and effects. Rational knowledge is not caused by effects; rather it is the consequence of grounds, being determined only by the truth it knows, not by digestion or heredity or the weather or any other non-rational causation. The ultimate ground of reason itself is that ‘eternal, self-existent, rational Being, whom we call God’\textsuperscript{120}. Although human reason is dependent on Divine Reason, the two are distinct: ‘human thought is not God’s but God-kindled’\textsuperscript{121}. We might summarise Lewis’s position with the dictum: ‘I AM, therefore I think.’

\textsuperscript{114} Anscombe, G.E.M. 
\textsuperscript{115} Sayer, op. cit. 187.
\textsuperscript{116} ‘Rejoinder to Dr Pittenger’, reprinted TAH 110-117. Cf. letters to Kenneth Brewer, 9/5/62 and 15/6/62 (Wade Center).
\textsuperscript{117} ‘Lewis refurbished but did not abandon it . . . Philosophically, this representation of reality is eminently defensible. It is traditional, and within certain limits can claim as authorities Plato, Plotinus, Dionysius, and in part St Augustine and St Thomas, as well as Leibniz and Berkeley.’ James Patrick, ‘C.S. Lewis and Idealism’ in Walker, Andrew & Patrick, James (eds.). \textit{A Christian for All Christians: Essays in Honour of C.S. Lewis} (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990) 156-173: 162. Alvin Plantinga’s \textit{Warrant and Proper Function} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) defends a version of the argument from reason (216-237) and notes its similarity to Lewis’s case in the final footnote of the book. See also Reppert, Victor. C.S. Lewis’s Dangerous Idea: In Defense of the Argument from Reason (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).
\textsuperscript{118} Wilson, op. cit. 214.
\textsuperscript{119} M 19. The quotation is from Haldane, I.B.S. \textit{Possible Worlds and other essays} (London: Chatto & Windus, 1927) 209.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid. 32.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid. 33.
This is the briefest of summaries of the first few chapters of *Miracles* and it must be borne in mind that they are not set forth as Lewis’s complete anthropology. He is not arguing that reason constitutes the *imago Dei*, or that, besides reason, imagination and will are unimportant. He is simply contending that ‘rationality is the little tell-tale rift in Nature which shows that there is something beyond or behind her’ for, Lewis states (with a certain hyperbole):

The discrepancy between a movement of atoms in an astronomer’s cortex and his understanding that there must be a still unobserved planet beyond Uranus, is already so immense that the Incarnation of God Himself is, in one sense, scarcely more startling. That a hidden planet can make its presence known via rational thought to a human mind is ‘in one sense’ no less startling than the coming down to earth of the Son of God. Both rational thought and the incarnation of Christ make present to human beings realities which are otherwise invisible and intangible. Of course, there is a vast difference both of degree and kind between the ministrations of ‘supernatural Reason’, and the incarnation of the Divine Reasoner, but there is nonetheless a parallelism. Reason enters our natural being ‘like the arrival of a king among his own subjects’, like a ‘lawful sovereign’ who ‘saves and strengthens’ the whole human system, psychological and physical: likewise, God has the jurisdiction of ‘a sovereign’ (136) over the whole of Nature, rational souls included. Acknowledging the former king is a significant step towards acknowledging the latter King on whom the former depends. Naturalists, on the other hand, live in ‘a democratic universe’ in which rationality is on the same level as every other action of the human brain - or for that matter of the human body. In Naturalism, rational thought is qualitatively the same as emotion or sensation: all three are equally caused by natural effects.

At this point we return to Carpenter’s question: ‘What kind of mind was it that could switch from rigorous theological argument to children’s fantasy?’ And the answer is: a mind which thought both

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134 See M 33.
135 Nevertheless, it is his favourite argument in defence of the existence of God: e.g., ‘What is behind the universe is more like a mind than it is like anything else we know’, MC 30. Cf. ‘The demonstration of the permeation [of the universe with mind] was the most basic part of Lewis’s total purpose [in the Ransom Trilogy], since his world view rests on a conviction that behind the apparently mechanical processes of the universe are both Divine awareness and Divine purpose. The Empirical Bogey (“the great myth of our century with its gases and galaxies, its light years and evolutions, its nightmare perspectives of simple arithmetic” [Per 164]) had to be overborne by images with contrary implications. But how image Divine Mind, which, although totally present at every point in space and therefore immanent in every setting and event, is nonmaterial and therefore nonsensory?’ Wayne Shumaker, ‘The Cosmic Trilogy of C. S. Lewis’ in Schakel, Peter J. (ed.) *The Longing for a Form, Essays on the Fiction of C. S. Lewis* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1977) 51-63: 55.
136 M 33.
137 Ibid. 47.
138 Ibid. 114-115.
139 Ibid. 36.
140 Ibid.
rationally and imaginatively. Lewis, we submit, turned to romance not as a retreat from apologetics after his debate with Anscombe, but precisely as a way of explaining his case to himself in imaginative form. He had made a brief and provisional adjustment of his intellectual position as soon as he could\textsuperscript{44}, but it would be another twelve years before he published the second edition of *Miracles*. However, in the summer of 1948 he began working on a book ‘in the style of E. Nesbit’\textsuperscript{45}, that work which became *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

In turning from apologetics to romance, he did not exchange a more complex for a simpler genre. If anything, the change was from simpler to more complex. Lewis was of the opinion that rational argumentation was too simple for the task of conveying Christian truths, that there were ‘great disadvantages under which the Christian apologist labours. Apologetics is controversy. You cannot conduct a controversy in those poetical expressions which alone convey the concrete...And this means that the thing we are really talking about can never appear in the discussion at all.’\textsuperscript{44} But the genre of romance allowed, indeed required, ‘poetical expressions’. So he transported his ideas about human reasoning and the Divine Reasoner into the imaginative architectonics of the first Chronicle of Narnia.

*Miracles* had been Lewis’s apologetic attempt at showing that ‘Naturalism gives us a democratic, Supernaturalism a monarchical, picture of reality’\textsuperscript{147}. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, as demonstrated in Chapter Five above, he imagines an entire world by means of the monarchical imagery of Jupiter. In *Miracles* he had written: ‘the human mind in the act of knowing is illuminated by the Divine reason’\textsuperscript{148}. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Peter’s mind is illuminated by Jupiter. (Jovial influence, as Ficino wrote, is especially attracted by discursive reason\textsuperscript{149}). When the children stumble through the wardrobe into Narnia they do not instantly know where they are. All that they can sense is darkness, coldness and wetness:

> ‘O-o-oh! said Susan suddenly. And everyone asked her what was the matter. ‘I’m sitting against a tree,’ said Susan, ‘and look! It’s getting light - over there.’
> ‘By jove, you’re right,’ said Peter, ‘and look there - and there. It’s trees all round. And this wet stuff is snow. Why, I do believe we’ve got into Lucy’s wood after all.’\textsuperscript{149}

Peter’s ‘By jove’ might sound like a casual expression. It is. It has a very different meaning from Ransom’s ‘By jove’ at the beginning of *Perelandra*. Ransom, both as a philologist and space-traveller, knew the significance of what he was saying; Peter does not. For him ‘By jove’ is an

\textsuperscript{44} See ‘Reply - Note’, *The Socratic Digest*, No. 4 (1948) 15-16.
\textsuperscript{147} ‘The Language of Religion’, EC 255-266: 261.
\textsuperscript{148} M 11.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid. 26-27. Although this is a quotation from the revised version of the third chapter of M, it may be taken to represent what Lewis was trying to say in the first edition. Incidentally, before the revised edition appeared Lewis’s publisher planned to bring out an abridged version. See letter to Jocelyn Gibb, 22/2/58 (Bodleian Library): ‘By Jove, of course there must be a note showing that the paper-back *Miracles* is the abridgement.’
\textsuperscript{150} See Walker, D.P. *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1958) 15.
\textsuperscript{151} Lewis was well-acquainted with Ficino’s works; see ‘The Empty Universe’, EC 636.
empty metaphor. He does not recognise that, in the Narnian world which he has just entered, it is indeed by Jove (Jove properly understood) that he is able to see light and know it as such. However, his Spirit (Sense 1) and his Spirit (Sense 2) are sufficiently in tune with this Jovial world for him to ask Lucy to lead the way (55), to trust the red-breasted robin (59) and the beaver (63f). His brother Edmund, on the other hand, is resentful (55), discontented (57), mistrustful (59) and fearful about getting lost (60). His soul and his reason are out of harmony with the world. After Edmund deserts his siblings, Lucy recalls that he had even asked whether the Witch could turn Aslan into stone. ‘So he did, by Jove,’ says Peter (81). Edmund’s ability to be sceptical is itself supported ‘by Jove’, even though he does not acknowledge it. Unlike Peter, who feels ‘suddenly brave and adventurous’ when Aslan’s name is mentioned, Edmund feels a sensation of ‘mysterious horror’. He resembles the Naturalist who tries to use reason to deny human reason and, therefore, the Divine Reasoner. Thus, within the overarching Jovial symbolism of the book, Lewis achieves what he had not achieved in ‘The Planets’ or the Ransom Trilogy, showing both the regenerate man and the ‘old Adam’: Peter looks along the Jovial beam while Edmund, with his back to Jove’s influence, looks along the beam of his own shadow.

Understood in this light, we can see how The Lion is Lewis’s imaginative response to the Anscombe debate. While his rational mind took over a decade to formulate a new version of Chapter III of Miracles, his imagination set out almost immediately to re-express the position which, owing to Anscombe’s dialectic, he had been forced to re-evaluate. By means of Jovial imagery he portrays a world in which human reason and Divine Reason are fundamentally, though imperceptibly (because Enjoyably), connected. And in addition to these Enjoyable Jovial realities, there is, for the children, a Contemplatable version of Jove, an incarnation of Jupiter in the form of the Jovial Lion. In Miracles Lewis had argued that Christ’s miracles ‘proclaim that He who has come is not merely a king, but the King, [Nature’s] King and ours’ and that His incarnation demonstrates the arrival of a cosmic ‘spring’ (M 127), ‘spring-time’ (M 128), ‘Summer is coming’ (M 146). In The Lion, he presents the same idea with the advent of ‘the King of the Wood . . . the King of the Beasts’ whose coming brings about ‘Spring’ (LWW 112), ‘magic spring’ (LWW 113), ‘spring’ (LWW 150).

The original edition of Miracles was the only one of Lewis’s works which he reworked after public criticism and may rightly be called his least successful book. The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe in contrast is by critical consensus recognised as his most successful work, the one title in the Lewisian corpus which is assured of a permanent place in the canon of English literature. As Patrick notes: ‘when Lewis moves on to poetic ground, imagination carries reason with it and the perplexities of his metaphysics move into the background’.

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125 Ibid.
126 Ibid. 65.
127 M 136.
128 LWW 75.

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The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe may be taken then, in a sense, as one large metaphor, a metaphor for the human situation vis-à-vis reason and Divine Reason. It is an example of a ‘true, imaginative metaphor’ which, according to Barfield, ‘expresses and may communicate participant knowledge’[^14]. Readers participate in a story which is the romance equivalent of the philosophical argument advanced in Miracles.

5. Theological reasons for silence

It may be asked how The Lion could communicate participant knowledge to a reader who was unaware of the arguments presented in this thesis. Have not generations of readers read the first Chronicle without becoming cognizant in the slightest degree that it had anything to do with the case which Lewis tried to make in Miracles?

All depends on one’s definition of cognizance. We have seen how, for Lewis, there were two kinds of cognitive experience: ‘looking at’ and ‘looking along’. In the latter, the ‘beam’ of knowledge is invisible: it is Enjoyed, not Contemplated, providing the medium of knowledge as distinct from the object of it. If Lewis has successfully rendered the arguments of Miracles into an Enjoyable, as distinct from a Contemplatable, form, it would not follow that they ceased either to exist or to exert influence upon readers, only that their existence and influence would be of a different order. The order in question would be a pupillary symbolical one, an order which engages the reader in a fuller, more life-like way than the abstractions of philosophical ratiocination can achieve. Lewis thought that ‘symbols are the natural speech of the soul, a language older and more universal than words’[^17] and that ‘symbolism exists precisely for the purpose of conveying to the imagination what the intellect is not ready for’[^18]. He realised, as Ware puts it, ‘that the rational discourse of philosophical theology can do no more than hint at the unsayable’[^19]. Equally he realised that, in contrast, ‘the fairy way of writing . . . builds a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious mind’[^20]. It was of the nature of romance to circumvent conscious intellectual apprehension, and that was all to the good, for ‘an influence which cannot evade our consciousness will not go very deep’[^21].

[^16]: Letter to Sister Penelope, 25/3/43 (CLU 565).
[^18]: AOL 210. Cf. ‘There is general agreement that myths and fairy tales speak to us in the language of symbols representing unconscious content. Their appeal is simultaneously to our conscious and unconscious mind.’ Bettelheim, Bruno. The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976) 36. See also: ‘As the lights and influences of the upper worlds sink silently through the earth’s atmosphere . . . so doth Faerie invade the world of men’, MacDonald, George. Phantastes, A Faerfe Romance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 85.
Watson assesses Lewis's position well when he writes: 'There is a potent intellectual myth that to conceptualise is to understand, and for the first time; and the story-teller's task, as Lewis saw it, is to help us to climb out of that imprisoning assumption.' So *The Lion* communicates Lewis's argument from *Miracles*, even if not in a conceptual and Contemplatable fashion. And it makes especially good sense to communicate it in this way, because the very thing he is trying to communicate is itself a mode of Enjoyment.

Peter and Edmund's reasoning power is located within the Jovial logos which permeates the Narnian universe. Neither character can step outside it for the reason Lewis gives elsewhere: 'the critique of a chain of reasoning is itself a chain of reasoning.' And not just their reason (Spirit, Sense 2), but also their soul (Spirit, Sense 1) and in due course their novitas (Spirit, Sense 3) are located within Jove for the Narnian Jove, as the symbol of Christ, is 'the all-pervasive principle of concretion or cohesion whereby the universe holds together' (Lewis's paraphrase of Colossians 1:17, in *Miracles*). As Farrer wrote in *The Glass of Vision*: 'Our relation to our Creator is real enough, but what arises on the basis of it is not a particular state or act of our conscious existence, but our whole conscious existence."

And this helps explain - from a theological point of view - why Lewis kept the planetary scheme secret. He was wanting to portray symbolically the human predicament which he had portrayed conceptually in *Miracles*. There he had written:

> the fact which is in one respect the most obvious and primary fact, and through which alone you have access to all the other facts, may be precisely the one that is most easily forgotten - forgotten not because it is so remote or abstruse but because it is so near and so obvious. And that is exactly how the Supernatural has been forgotten.

*Miracles* uses a variety of images to symbolise this natural human forgetfulness, including transparent windows, native grammar, and breathing. Aristotle is quoted to the same effect: 'For as bats' eyes are to daylight so is our intellectual eye to those truths which are, in their own nature, the most obvious of all.'

And it is not just in *Miracles*, but throughout his writings, that Lewis points out the natural tendency to be oblivious to the obvious. In *Mere Christianity* he writes: 'Since that power, if it exists, would not be one of the observed facts but a reality which makes them, no mere observation of the facts can find it.' In *The Problem of Pain* he writes: 'You may reply, as a Christian, that God (and Satan) do, in fact, affect my consciousness in this direct way without signs of "externality". Yes:

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145 PPL 11.
146 M 80.
148 M 45.
149 Ibid. 45.
150 Aristotle: *Metaphysics*, I (Brevior) i; quoted in M 43.
151 MC 32.
and the result is that most people remain ignorant of the existence of both. In *Letters to Malcolm* he writes: ‘We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito.’ And ‘The Weight of Glory’ concludes with the declaration that, ‘In [the Christian] Christ vere latitat - the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself - is truly hidden.’ The hiddenness of the divine is, we contend, the major theme of his theology. Correlatively, exercising Enjoyment consciousness in order to discover that hidden divinity is the major feature of his spirituality.

In attempting to imagine a ubiquitous but unperceived presence, Lewis turned (we suggest) to that image provided by the music of the spheres, that ‘music heard so deeply that it is not heard at all.’ And in attempting to imagine human participation in that silent music, he recalled (we suggest) Herbert’s poem about thoughts which work ‘like a noiseless sphere’. Although, of course, we cannot prove these precise links, we submit that, in moving from *Miracles* to *The Lion*, Lewis trod an imaginative path which involved these or similar steps. By some such route he arrived at his depiction of children who do not realise that they are surrounded and upheld by Jupiter. Through their ignorance, Lewis symbolises what he believes to be our common human condition: unawareness of the supernatural. He could not have disclosed that this was his intention without cutting off the branch upon which, so to speak, he was constructing this theological symbol.

This thesis is the first work to have identified what Lewis was trying to achieve in this regard, but other critics seem to have sensed it unconsciously. For instance, Como has perceived that the best

\[\text{PPL 18.} \]
\[\text{LTM 77.} \]

‘The Weight of Glory’, sermon preached at the University Church, St Mary the Virgin, Oxford, published in *Theology*, XLIII (November 1941) 263-274; reprinted EC 96-106: 106. The phrase vere latitat is borrowed from one of sacramental hymns of Thomas Aquinas which begins: ‘Adoro te devote, latens Deitas, / quae sub his figuris vere latitas’ (‘I worship thee with reverence, hidden Deity, / thou who hidest truly in these shapes’).

As we showed in Chapter Eleven, Lewis engaged more often with Ps. 22:1 than with any other scriptural text. The way that the divine is inaccessible to the natural senses and sometimes apparently imperceptible even by novitas antennae is ubiquitous in his writings. Many examples have been given throughout this thesis. One example which deserves particular attention is found in *TWHF* where Orual complains, ‘Nothing that’s beautiful hides its face. Nothing that’s honest hides its name’ (168). As Ware notes, ‘The leitmotif of the whole work [TWHF] is the hiddenness of the Divine’:

\[\text{Kallistos Ware, ‘God of the Fathers: C. S. Lewis and Eastern Christianity’ in Mills, David (ed.). The Pilgrim’s Guide: C-S Lewis and the Art of Witness, 58. If we are looking for the theological leitmotif of Lewis’s oeuvre in general, we may find it here too.} \]

\[\text{PPL 61, a rare example of Lewis referring to Eliot’s poetry with apparent approbation. See T.S. Eliot: ‘The Dry Salvages’ (V, 27f).} \]

\[\text{George Herbert, ‘Conscience’, line 8, Lewis’s undertining. See his copy of Herbert, George. The Temple and A Priest to the Temple (London: Dent, undated now in the Wade Center, page 105. Cf. letter to Kay Farrer, 3/2/54 (Bodleian Library); LTM 37.} \]
explanation of the secret of Lewis’s appeal is that his writings communicate, in Pope’s words, ‘Something, whose truth convinced at sight we find, / That gives us back the image of our mind.’" And Franz Rottensteiner is of the opinion that ‘The fantastic setting is as important as the story, for the beauty of Narnia . . . is perhaps designed to awaken an unrecognized desire in the reader, which may be turned into a mystic experience of divine presence.” These critics intuit something of Lewis’s underlying purpose in the Narniad, his symbolising of the operation of the human mind in the divine presence. And the many other critics and readers who have not articulated any similar perception, may nonetheless have been affected in similar ways as they have read the books and responded imaginatively to their donegalitarian vision. As Farrer argues: ‘Our ignorance of what we are does not make us cease to be, and our unawareness of the profound levels of our imagination neither abolishes them nor prevents them from acting upon our wills, nor, even, on the wills and minds of others.”

6. Pedagogical reasons for silence

Lewis’s secrecy not only preserved the imaginative force of his theological symbol, it also served a particular pedagogical purpose. He was of the view that ‘the Planets . . . need to be lived with imaginatively, not merely learned as concepts.”

In his poem ‘The Planets’ and in ‘The Descent of the Gods’ chapter in That Hideous Strength, he went some way to helping his readers live with the planets imaginatively, but he wanted to achieve more than a Contemplatable imaginative relationship. He thought that ‘the planetary characters need to be seized in an intuition . . . we need to know them, not to know about them, connaissance not savoir”’ And given that he elsewhere wrote that ‘the arts depend on turning savoir into connaissance as far as possible”’ it would appear that it was just this purpose that he had in mind, in addition to the theological purpose mentioned above, in his donegalitarian technique in the Narniad. In his chapter on ‘The Heavens’ in The Discarded Image he had performed something of the role of the anthropologist, who gives ‘knowledge-about (savoir)” his scholarly overview of the planets provided plentiful information regarding how they were understood and written about in medieval and renaissance times. In the Chronicles he performs the function of a true artist, who gives ‘knowledge-by-acquaintance (connaissance)” allowing his readers to live inside the discarded mindset, for ‘it is either in art, or nowhere, that the dry bones are made to live again.” The characters of

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10 Como, James T. (ed.). C.S. Lewis at the Breakfast Table and Other Reminiscences (London: Collins, 1980) xxxiv.
13 DL 173.
14 Ibid. 109.
15 Letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 14/9/36 (CLII 206).
17 Ibid. SLE 304.
18 Ibid. SLE 305.

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the planets are all but extinct in the modern imagination. But if the extinct experience ‘infused its quality into some other thing which we can get inside, then this other, more penetrable, thing would now be the only medium through which we can get back to the experience itself. Such a ‘more penetrable thing’ might be provided by a work of plastic or literary art which we can still appreciate.’

This, we contend, was Lewis’s motivation at the purely pedagogical level. If he has been successful then accordingly, when we think about the imaginative effect upon us of The Lion, we are intuiting the character of Jupiter, and the character of Mars when we think of Prince Caspian, and so on. Again, this purpose would have been frustrated if he had revealed that it was his aim.

7. Conclusions

What are the consequences of this thesis for our understanding of Lewis’s most famous work? Does our disclosure of the planetary theme frustrate Lewis’s purposes? We make the following closing remarks:

i) The septet becomes a richer and more coherent reading experience.

It becomes richer in two ways. First, it gives readers the pleasure of comparing their old reading with the new one suggested here. Under the old interpretation, the books were ‘all fact and no meaning’ at the planetary level. Under the new interpretation, readers acquire a literary equivalent (a kind of objective correlative) of spiritual awakening: the Narnian universe becomes full and alive in a way which it was not before. It was a frequent aim of Lewis’s to provoke such an awakening and it was a continual mystery to him why some people’s eyes were open and others’ not to the Christian perspective. It may be supposed that this provided him with a further reason for silence: he was curious to see how long it would take for the scales to fall from his readers’ eyes.

It becomes richer in a second way because the penetration of the secret, although it frustrates the old Enjoyment experience, at another level opens up a more complex kind of Enjoyment. It now becomes possible to Enjoy the Narniad as a set of seven magisterial symbols (or allegorical symbols), rather than as seven pupillary symbols. The new reading experience, as with all good

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allegories, 'is double. It is divided between sharing the experiences of the characters in the story and looking at their life from somewhere outside it, seeing all the time meanings that are opaque from within."

To change the metaphor from opacity to inaudibility, we may observe how the children in each story cannot hear the 'music' of their particular sphere. It comprises their whole auditory world and therefore cannot be heard, just as the music of the medieval spheres was universally inaudible because it was heard all the time. But though the characters in the story may find their world silent, the reader can now discern its music, the 'incessant orchestration' with which Lewis, as poet, composes his sub-created universe. The reader thus enjoys a symbol of that spiritual awareness communicated in Psalm 19, which was to Lewis the greatest poem in the Psalter:

The heavens declare the glory of God:
and the firmament sheweth his handywork . . .
There is neither speech nor language:
but their voices are heard among them.
Their sound is gone out into all lands:
and their words into the ends of the world."

Farrer wrote in his commentary on this psalm: 'the heavens declare the glory of God, their voiceless words sound in the ear of an attentive reason'". The voiceless words of the seven donegalities likewise may now sound in the ear of the Narniad's readership. We hear more than the characters in the stories are able to hear.

And in addition to opening up these richer reading experiences, this interpretation enables us to understand each book equally well so that the series coheres in a better way than has hitherto been perceived. Rather than viewing the septet as three 'Biblical' books plus four miscellaneous others, we can see how each story is uniformly founded on Lewis's donegalitarian intent. He started with the intention of doing just one, Jupiter, because its kingly aspect was connected with the ideas he had expressed in Miracles and because it was, in any case, his favourite, part of the 'habitual furniture' of his mind, out of which he believed an author should write". The Lion was thus the first

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SIL 29.

Psalm 19:1, 3-4 (Coverdale). Lewis considered Psalm 19 'the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world': ROP 56; cf. 49, 70. See also letter to Mary Van Deusen, 5/2/56 (Wade Center); letter to Jocelyn Gibb, 2/1/58 (Bodleian Library); EL 216, 247. Lewis's interest in the music of the spheres may also be seen in the discussion he had with his wife on the eve of her death: 'Even after all hope was gone, even on the last night before her death, there were 'patins of bright gold', letter to Chad Walsh, 18/10/60 (Wade Center). The allusion is to Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice, V, 1, 58ff, where Lorenzo says:

Sit Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

Farrer, Austin. The Glass of Vision, 79.


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example of that 'idea that he wanted to try out'\textsuperscript{114}. At some point after completing \textit{The Dawn Treader} he decided to do all seven\textsuperscript{115}, for seven such treatments of his idea would mean that he had 'worked it out to the full'\textsuperscript{116}.

That each book is its own integrated conception also helps explain certain otherwise puzzling differences in characterisation. For example, Jadis in \textit{The Lion} is a Hans Andersen Snow Queen because she represents that wintriness which Joviality is going to counteract; in \textit{The Magician's Nephew} she is a brazen Boudicca because there she does duty as Venus Infernal. In Spenser, 'a single emblem might have many meanings' and Spenser's readers 'would not have objected to this as a contradiction'\textsuperscript{117}. Jadis's emblematic meanings vary according to the donegality on display. The apparent inconsistency in her portrayal becomes explicable once it is accepted that Lewis's imaginative purpose in each book was largely discrete.

As well as accounting for certain otherwise puzzling differences between the books, this interpretation accounts for the apparent heterogeneity or gratuitousness within the books. For example, Father Christmas finally becomes reconciled to the rest of \textit{The Lion}; the corporal punishment at the end of \textit{The Silver Chair} becomes integral to the story.

It may be objected, however, that, as certain problems are removed, new ones arise. Why, for instance, does the word 'lunatic' appear not only in \textit{The Silver Chair}, but also in \textit{The Magician's Nephew} (78, 103) and why does that same book contain the word 'quicksilver' (136), a Mercurial vestige? Why are there 'By Joves'\textsuperscript{118} and 'By Gums'\textsuperscript{119} outside their 'home' books? By way of answer we may point out that 'in a certain juncture of the planets each may play the other's part'\textsuperscript{120} and since 'all the planets are represented in each'\textsuperscript{121} we should not expect the imagery in each book to be chemically pure\textsuperscript{122}. And it must be acknowledged that these admixtures constitute only a minute fraction of each story. They are sufficient to demonstrate the planets' inter-relatedness, but they do not undermine the integrity of each work.

\textsuperscript{115} See letter to Laurence Krieg, 23/4/57 (LTC 68). Green had the first two chapters of \textit{LWW} read to him on 10/3/49 and assumed that the MS was complete; it was in proof form by 22/6/50 and published on 16/10/50. PC was finished by the beginning of December 1949 and VDT by the end of February 1950. HHB was ready for Green to read by 26/7/50. If we take the composition of HHB as evidence of Lewis's decision to write all seven, it means that he had conceived the septet at least three months before the publication of the first book. Several chapters of SC were written by 3/10/50 and the rest by March 1951. Green had a fragment of an early draft of MN read to him by Lewis on 14/6/49. The revised version of MN was half written by 31/5/51, and three-quarters done by 31/10/51; Green read the complete MS in February 1954. In the meantime, Lewis told his publisher on 11/3/53 that he had 'just finished' LB. See Hooper, Walter. \textit{C. S. Lewis, A Companion and Guide} (London: HarperCollins, 1996) 401-405.
\textsuperscript{118} Sil 99.
\textsuperscript{119} PC 18, 34; SC 32, 89, 130, 152; LB 164.
\textsuperscript{120} LWW 114; SC 18.
\textsuperscript{121} Letter to A.K. Hamilton Jenkin, 4/11/25 (CLI 653).
\textsuperscript{122} THS 316. Cf Williams's doctrine of coinherence in the houses of the zodiac: 'each is in all' (AT 149).
\textsuperscript{123} Also, of course, we need not require Lewis to be a perfectly successful author. He may have been inadvertent at times and was himself of the view that he had 'improved as the stories went on', letter to Pauline Baynes, 24/5/56 (Bodleian Library).
ii) The septet becomes more clearly related to Lewis's professional expertise as a literary historian. For nearly forty years, he taught and wrote about the Ptolemaic cosmos as a scholar of medieval and renaissance literature: this thesis shows how the Narniad was integrally connected with those scholarly concerns. Within his field, Lewis highly approved literature which called for 'both a simple and a sophisticated response'\textsuperscript{143}, citing the Faerie Queene, the Divine Comedy and Hamlet as examples. The planetary reading outlined here, which of course does not replace simple reception of the Chronicles as entertaining and accessible stories, suggests that he was trying to achieve something similar in his own work.

iii) The septet becomes more clearly related to two of Lewis's chief interests as a literary critic: first, the importance he attached to the kappa (or hidden) element in romance, its atmosphere or quality; and second, his theory of reader response, that the good reader should surrender 'with childlike attention to the mood of the story', looking more to its \textit{poema} than its \textit{logos}.

iv) The septet becomes more clearly related to two of Lewis’s chief concerns as a philosopher: first, the importance he attached to Alexander’s distinction between Enjoyment and Contemplation\textsuperscript{144} and the need he saw to rehabilitate the former kind of knowledge\textsuperscript{145}; and second, his argument that Naturalism was self-refuting. In this latter connection, the thesis uncovers a specific biographical occasion for the composition of the first Chronicle.

v) The septet becomes more clearly related to his chief concerns as an amateur theologian. Far from Lewis having a ‘Talmudic emphasis on the divine transcendence’\textsuperscript{146}, as Barfield contends, his tendency was to stress how nature was (in Farrer's term) ‘diaphanous’ of God’s presence and how

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\textsuperscript{143} SIL 1.
\textsuperscript{144} The way in which the children respond to the various manifestations of Aslan, becoming progressively more Jovial, Martial, Solar, etc, is Lewis’s attempt to communicate imaginatively the otherwise incommunicable process of learning the divine nature by acquaintance or Enjoyment. '[Non-Christians] cannot be expected to see how the quality of the object which we think we are beginning to know by acquaintance drives us to the view that if this were delusion then we should have to say that the universe had produced no real thing of comparable value... That is knowledge we cannot communicate': 'On Obstinate in Belief’, paper read to the Socratic Club and published in \textit{The Socratic Digest} (1955); reprinted EC 206-215: 215.
\textsuperscript{145} Lewis’s interest in participatory knowledge has many affinitics with the ideas of Michael Polanyi whom Lewis knew through the Socratic Club (which Polanyi addressed in 1952 and 1953) and for whom all knowing was personal knowing, participation through indwelling. Polanyi thought well of Lewis’s writings; several Lewis titles are to be found in his library now in the Regenstein Library, University of Chicago (Boxes 57 & 58): SBJ, POP, AOM, GD and ‘De Descriptione Temporum’. Polanyi refers sympathetically to AOM: see Polanyi, Michael and Prosch, H. \textit{Meaning} (Chicago, 1975) 28.
man might participate in the divine supra-personality". He believed in theosis: human beings are ‘potential gods and goddesses’ and ‘the Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God’. Thus, in *The Lion* the children become monarchs under sovereign Jove; in *Prince Caspian* they harden under strong Mars; in *The ‘Dawn Treader*’ they drink light under searching Sol; in *The Silver Chair* they learn obedience under subordinate Luna; in *The Horse and His Boy* they learn to love poetry under eloquent Mercury; in *The Magician’s Nephew* their bodies tingle at the orgasmic conception of Narnia under life-giving Venus; and in *The Last Battle* they age and die under chilling Saturn. Ware perceptively points out how interested Lewis was in ‘interpenetration’, and Payne remarks that his poetic vision amounted to a ‘mysticism’ which ‘consists of the knowledge of an indwelling Christ and the practice of the Presence of God within and without.” In the Narniad, no less than elsewhere in his writings, we may now see how this is the case.

vi) The septet becomes more clearly related to his interest in the pagan gods. In the Chronicles, Aslan is presented, like old Hamlet, with

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\begin{align*}
\text{the front of Jove himself,} \\
\text{An eye like Mars, to threaten and command,} \\
\text{A station like the herald Mercury} \\
\text{New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill,} \\
\text{A combination and a form indeed,} \\
\text{Where every god did seem to set his seal.}
\end{align*}
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And it is in connection with the different divine guises under which Aslan appears that Lewis came nearest to disclosing the planetary secret. One of his correspondents, Professor William Kinter, had suggested that Lewis’s publications could be laid out to form a kind of literary cathedral. Lewis wrote back saying, ‘It’s fun laying out all my books as a cathedral. Personally I’d make Miracles and the other “treatises” the cathedral school: my children’s stories are the real side-chapels, each with its own little altar.’

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274 E.g., ‘God is both further from us, and nearer to us, than any other being’, POP 29; ‘There is no question of a God ‘up there’ or ‘out there’; rather, the present operation of God ‘in here’, as the ground of my own being, and God ‘in there’, as the ground of the matter that surrounds me, and God embracing and uniting both in the daily miracle of finite consciousness’, LTM 81; ‘God, Nature and Man are distincts . . . I don’t say they are necessarily distinct to just the degree and in just the way the modern mind instinctively assumes’, letter to Dom Bede Griffiths, 14/9/36 (CLII 207). See above, Chapter Three, section 3.


280 Letter to William Kinter, 28/3/53 (Wade Center). The relationship of God to the gods is a recurrent theme in Lewis’s quasi-henotheistic works. Ransom wonders whether ‘there might, if a man could find it, be some way to renew the old Pagan practice of propitiating the local gods of unknown places in such fashion that it was no offence to God’, Per 170. And in his own person, Lewis wrote that he ‘would gladly believe that the gesture of homage offered to the moon was sometimes accepted by her Maker’, ROP 69. On honeymoon in Greece with his dying wife, he found it hard not to pray to Apollo the Healer; ‘but somehow one didn’t feel it wd have been very wrong - wd only have been addressing Christ *sub specie Apollinis*, letter to Chad Walsh, 23/5/60 (L 488).
vii) And the seventh and final consequence of this reading has to do with the depiction of Aslan in each book. Lewis once told a correspondent that the series was ‘about Christ’", and it is the way in which Aslan relates to the Narnian world of each tale that is Lewis’s greatest imaginative achievement. Aslan has previously been thought to be simply ‘a Christ figure’, a particular individual character moving about a neutral stage. The donegalitarian interpretation shows that the Christology of the books is far more sophisticated. Aslan in each book is not just incarnate as an identifiable, locatable character; he is also discarnate as the Word who sustains the cosmos of each romance. He is present in two modes at once.

The local manifestation of his character may thus be taken as symbolic in a way which critics and theologians have often held to be ideal. This kind of symbol is what Coleridge called tautegory, ‘a Symbol (ο εστὶν ἄλῳ ταυτογραφία) . . . characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General . . . It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative." Coleridge’s tautegory is very close to Rahner’s real symbol. To Rahner, a real symbol ‘does not divide as it mediates but unites immediately, because the true symbol is united with the thing symbolized, since the latter constitutes the former as its own self-realisation." As Farrer writes: ‘a symbol endeavours, as it were, to be that of which it speaks’". Within the subcreated world of Narnia the depiction of Aslan accords well with these three definitions of symbol. In The Lion, for example, Aslan is the especial presence of Jupiter in a generally Jovial world he; he is constituted by Jove as Jove’s own self-realisation; he is that of which he symbolically speaks.

And across the series Aslan performs this role seven times over, so that the One is radiated through the Many. Lewis’s technique is the opposite of Hardy’s in The Dynasts, a play which consists of ‘the invention of a whole pantheon to symbolise the non-existence of God’". Lewis’s ‘dynasts seven’" are a planetary pantheon deployed in order to present Christ under seven different veils: King, Commander, Light, Son, Word, Life, Mystery. Lewis exercises his inspired imaginative reason to create, within the genre of romance, a menorah of Christological titles.

This variety of titles is itself of theological significance. An image of Christ, in Lewis’s view, is only ‘a model or symbol, certain to fail us in the long run and, even while we use it, requiring correction from other models’". To that extent it is like an image of the cosmos. The universe is not just Einsteinian, but also continuously Newtonian and Ptolemaic, for whatever we have been in

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\[\text{Letter to Anne Jenkins, 5/3/61 (Bodleian Library).}\]


\[\text{Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations 4, DLT, 1966, p252.}\]

\[\text{Farrer, Austin. A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St John’s Apocalypse (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1949) 19.}\]

\[\text{Letter to Janet Spens, 18/4/38 (CLI II 223).}\]

\[\text{‘The Small Man Orders his Wedding’, line 51 (CP 47).}\]

\[\text{FL 115.}\]
some sense we still are. Aslan is not just Jovial, but also Martial, Solar, Lunar, Mercurial, Venereal, Saturnine. Christologies, no less than cosmologies, are human constructs, and must therefore be approached with due provisionality. ‘My idea of God is not a
divine idea”11 and ‘No Model [of the universe] is a catalogue of ultimate realities”122. Insofar as a theological image becomes divine it becomes demonic and then the true God, in mercy, shatters it: ‘He is the great iconoclast”124, ‘Symbols (I know) . . . cannot be the thing Thou art”124. Likewise, ‘it is not impossible that our own [Einsteinian] Model will die a violent death, ruthlessly smashed by an unprovoked assault of new facts”126; therefore let us continually bear in mind those ‘considerations that may induce us to regard all Models in the right way, respecting each and idolising none’126.

The seven kinds of iconography in the Narniad help establish this provisional perspective. Each is useful, none is sufficient. However, taken together, like Lewis’s ‘mental images’ in prayer, ‘all correcting, refining, ‘interinanimating’ one another”127, they become much more sufficient. As one picture is replaced by a second and then a third and then a fourth, and so on, a ‘family likeness’ emerges; a certain Christological essence begins to be learnt imaginatively by acquaintance18. But the process only works if each image is treated as a channel of something else: we must not turn our spoon into our meat”22, or hold on to the golden apple”20, or keep the manna”21, but kiss the image as it flies”20, Enjoying it with a childlike purity of heart, neither clutching it with idolatrous intensity nor ‘looking at’ it with sceptical detachment. Treating images in this way makes it possible to catch a glimpse of that secret and holy thing, that ‘thought too swift and shy / For reason’s grasp”22. It is the ‘law of inattention”124.

Simon Barrington-Ward, who was the proximate cause of the discovery which led to this thesis (see Appendix), may have the last word. He observes this very trait in Lewis, the significance of the tangential, the great importance of what is not explicitly said. It is through being ‘oblique’ about them, he argues, that Lewis brings home to us ‘the great realities’. ‘Indirectly, not by a frontal assault’, the burden of his works is imparted. ‘Gradually, almost insensibly’, we come to share his feeling ‘for the majestic order that runs through all things, L’amor che move il sole e l’altr e stelle’128.

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10 AGO 55.
11 DI 222.
12 AGO 55.
13 ‘He whom I bow to only knows to whom I bow’, PR 183, line 4; reprinted as ‘Footnote to All Prayers’ (CP 143).
14 DI 222.
15 Ibid.
16 LTM 87f. Cf. ‘a dozen changing images correcting and relieving each other are supplied [in the scriptural depiction of
17 See letter to Gracia Bouwman, l9n160 (Wade Center).
18 ‘The Phoenix’, line 13 (CP 135).
19 POP 141.
20 PR 164.
21 LTM 88, alluding to William Blake, ‘Eternity’, line 3f: ‘he who kisses the joy as it flies / Lives in eternity’s sunrise’.
22 ‘An Expostulation: Against Too Many Writers of Science Fiction’ (The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction 16, No. 6 (June 1959), page 47, lines 19-20; reprinted CP 72.
APPENDIX

The medieval planetary *geistes* which animate the Chronicles of Narnia remained unrecognised for over half a century. Many better minds than mine have studied these books in the five decades since their publication without identifying the cosmological theme, and so it may be of interest to explain how the discovery was made. I had not been looking for the books' governing idea: the thing was entirely unexpected and fortuitous. Nevertheless it is of some personal importance to the author to explain how it came about.

First, it is worth noting that any 'Eureka' moment however unplanned, inevitably has a history. In this case it consisted of thirty years' exposure to the texts in question, ten years' teaching Lewis to undergraduates, three years' residence at The Kilns, Lewis's Oxford home, and eighteen months' work on this doctoral research, which originated under the provisional title, 'C.S. Lewis and the Word: Christ, Scripture and Language'.

As for the discovery itself, it occurred in 2003 after two things had happened. A friend, Christopher Holmwood, gave me the soundtrack to the RSC production of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; I began listening to it frequently. Then, less than a week later, on what turned out to be the red-letter day (5th February), came a meeting with the Rt Revd Simon Barrington-Ward. Bishop Simon, who knew Lewis well, was helping me to understand what he might have meant by 'wordless prayer', a significant theme of *Letters to Malcolm* which had occupied much of the first year of this research. Taking up a book by Archimandrite Sophrony, he read aloud the following passage:

> When I was with [Father Silouan] my one desire was not to miss any of his spiritual teaching but to gather and assimilate into my inmost self the essence of his thought, his personality, his spirit [. . . ]

> I remember his account of his meeting with the Russian ascetic, Father Stratonicos, who came on a visit to Athos from the Caucasus. Father Stratonicos had rare gifts of speech, prayer and tears [. . . ] But after nearly two months on the Holy Mountain he began to feel sorry that he had made the long and difficult journey to Mount Athos, in quest of spiritual edification, for it had apparently been in vain - he had discovered nothing new in his meetings with the monks there. He decided to go and see his father-confessor [. . . ] Staretz Agathodoros, and ask him to tell him of some father with whom he could profitably discuss the question of obedience and other matters connected with monastic life. Father Agathodoros sent him to stay at Old Rossikon [. . . ]

> Father Stratonicos had many conversations with the Rossikon brothers, both singly and in groups, and one feast-day one of them invited him to his cell, together with Father Silouan and several other monks. The conversation covered a wide range of subjects and all those present were carried away by what Father Stratonicos said. Father Silouan, who was the youngest there, naturally sat in a corner, saying nothing but

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1. He was Chaplain of Magdalene College, Cambridge, 1956-60, and Dean, 1963-69. He is mentioned in Lewis’s letter of thanks to the Master and Fellows of Magdalene, 25/10/63: ‘The ghosts of the wicked old women in Pope ‘haunt the places where their honour died’. I am more fortunate, for I shall haunt the place whence the most valued of my honours came.

2. ‘I am constantly with you in imagination. If in some twilit hour anyone sees a bald and bulky spectre in the Combination Room or the garden, don’t get Simon to exorcise it, for it is a harmless wraith and means nothing but good’ (L 509).
listening attentively to the Caucasian ascetic. When the conversation was over, Father Stratonicos, who had not yet met Father Silouan alone, expressed the wish to call on him [. . .] It was arranged that he should come at three o'clock the next afternoon. That night Father Silouan spent in prayer, entreat ing the Lord to bless their meeting and discussion.

When Father Stratonicos arrived the two began talking swiftly and easily, for both of them were fixed on the same spiritual goal and their minds were wholly preoccupied by the same questions.

Listening to Father Stratonicos the day before, Father Silouan had noticed that he 'spoke from his own mind', and that what he said about the meeting of man's will and God's will, and about obedience, had been obscure.

He began the conversation by asking Father Stratonicos the answers to three questions:

'How do the perfect speak?'
'What does surrender to the will of God mean?'
'What is the essence of obedience?'

In all probability the spiritual atmosphere in which Father Silouan dwelt immediately affected Father Stratonicos. He sensed the deep significance of the questions and became thoughtful. After a long silence he said:

'I don't know. You tell me.'

Father Silouan then answered:

'The perfect never say anything of themselves . . . They only say what the Spirit suffers them to say.'

The passage made a very deep impact on me, and that night, as I lay reading Lewis's poem 'The Planets', comparing it to Chapter V of The Discarded Image, the phrase 'winter passed / And guilt forgiven' jumped off the page. That was the spark that connected Jupiter to The Lion in my mind; the rest of the scheme came alive as I followed up that lead. As the whole pattern came into focus I believed that the Spirit was suffering me, though far from perfect, to see and say something much better and deeper than I had originally planned to produce. And I wish frankly to testify to that illumination and give thanks to God for opening up a dimension of these books which is so rich and suggestive, both from the theological and from the literary points of view.


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In memoriam

Robert Hicks

ob. Oxford, MCMLXXXVIII